



Distr.: LIMITED

ECA/ACW/AHEGM/GN/97/3
DECEMBER 1997

**UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL**

Original: ENGLISH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

Ad-hoc Expert Group Meeting on
Gender Networking

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
16-18 June 1997

**REPORT ON AD-HOC EXPERT GROUP MEETING
ON
GENDER NETWORKING**

**REPORT ON THE EXPERT GROUP MEETING
ON GENDER NETWORKING**

Contents

Introduction	2
The Expert Group Meeting on Gender Networking	2
Day One Monday, 16 June 1997	2
Presentation of Expert Papers	
Working Groups on Opportunities for Networking in Three Priority Areas	
Group One	The Economic Empowerment of Women
Group Two	Women in Decision Making
Group Three	Women's Legal and Human Rights
Day Two Tuesday, 17 June 1997	9
The Economic Empowerment of Women by Minh Chau Nguyen, World Bank	
Human Rights and Development by Joanna Foster, Women in Law and Dev. in Africa	
Women in Decision-Making	
By Honorable Winnie Byanyima, Foundation for Women in Democracy	
Working Groups on Networking for Economic Empowerment of Women	
Group One	Southern and Eastern Africa and the Great Lakes Countries
Group Two	West, North and Central Africa
Day Three Wednesday, 18 June 1997	17
Recommendations of Expert Group on Gender Networking	
Closing Remarks	
Appendix I	Introductory Note of Josephine Ouédraogo, Chief, ACW
Appendix II	Program of Expert Group Meeting on Gender Networking
Appendix III	Participant List
Appendix IV	Sub-Regional Expert Papers
	i. West Africa Expert Paper
	ii. North Africa Expert Paper
	iii. Eastern Africa Expert Paper
	iv. Central Africa Expert Paper
	v. Great Lakes Countries Expert Paper
	vi. Southern Africa Expert Paper

Introduction

In June 1997, at the Economic Commission for Africa, a revitalized African Center for Women held an Expert Group Meeting on Gender Networking. The meeting is among the initiatives sponsored by the African Center for Women as it begins to implement the ECA's ground breaking Leadership Program for Women. The meeting brought together representatives of inter-governmental agencies, private and multi-lateral donors, government ministries and non-governmental organizations to discuss concrete strategies for networking based on their respective experiences. As an expert group meeting, it would be a detailed and substantive meeting. As a meeting on gender networking it would reflect the networking process itself - dialogue among diverse actors of similar or shared objectives. The objective of the Gender Networking Meeting was to suggest strategies for networking and, more specifically, to explore the role of the ACW in the networking process among actors in different sectors.

For the meeting, the ACW commissioned six sub-regional expert papers on the situation of women relative to three of its priority areas: economic empowerment, political participation and human rights. The papers served to contextualize the broader discussions on the need for inter-sectoral networking. The sub-regions were, West Africa, Central Africa, North Africa, Southern Africa, East Africa, and the Great Lakes.¹ While not intended to be exhaustive discussions of the situation of women at the sub-regional level, the papers nevertheless provided important and focussed insights useful to the purpose of the meeting. Participants were able to discuss similarities and differences in the economic, political and legal status of women in their sub-regions, to consider examples of successful partnerships and identify opportunities for future collaboration. Based on those discussions, participants recommended strategies for networking in support of the three ACW priority areas.

This report details the process and results of the Expert Group Meeting on Gender Networking. Attention has been paid to reflect, to the extent possible, the content and spirit of the group work and plenary discussions held over three days. The African Centre for Women extends its gratitude and solidarity to the participants of the Gender Networking Meeting. The Centre welcomes the results of the meeting and affirms its commitment to developing partnerships in support of African women's economic empowerment. [Ouédraogo introductory speech here or in the appendices.]

The Expert Group Meeting on Gender Networking

Day One Monday, 16 June 1997

The meeting was opened by Dr. K. Y. Amoako, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. Dr. Amoako welcomed ministers, Mrs. Gertrude Mongella and other participants to the ECA. Dr. Amoako stated that achieving gender equality is a matter of social justice and economic imperative. He further highlighted several issues of concern for the ECA including the need to mainstream gender in all sectors of national development programmes, supporting networks to work effectively and to assist governments to modify laws for equal opportunities for women and men, among other things.

The Executive Secretary outlined the efforts of the ECA in the past two years on gender equity both within the Commission and its work with governments. Major restructuring is taking place

¹ West Africa, Central Africa, North Africa, Southern Africa, East Africa, and, for the purposes of this report the Great Lakes countries are Rwanda, Burundi and Tanzania.

throughout the Commission where gender is a cross-cutting theme. The African Centre for Women has been upgraded and placed in the Cabinet office of the Executive Secretary, in view of the Commission's strategic vision that includes the promotion of women in all levels of society. Additionally, three of the seven chiefs of division at the Commission are now women.

Dr. Amoako stressed that the primary objective of the African Centre for Women is the promotion of the economic empowerment of women through the enhancement of their participation in decision-making and the protection and respect of their human and legal rights. He reiterated the Commission's commitment to support a new dialogue and partnerships between African governments and their citizens. Finally, the Executive Secretary outlined the charge of the African Centre for Women to facilitate partnerships and networking among different sectors in civil society. The ACW is strategically positioned to link and support the efforts of Member States and NGOs, to design interventions and implement policies that will advance the economic situation of women in Africa.

Mrs. Gertrude Mongella, Secretary-General of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the Commission's newly appointed advisor on gender concurred. In a moving speech, Mrs. Mongella encouraged the assembled participants to work diligently and to use the opportunity provided by the ECA to make concrete recommendations for networking sub-regionally and regionally. She highlighted the importance of being at one table among such diverse groups as NGOs, governmental representatives and members of the donor community. Mrs. Mongella urged the participants to focus on identifying opportunities for partnership, adding that networking strategies would flow out of participants' experiences, similarities and convergences of priority issues among the sub-regions. Mrs. Mongella offered a warm and congratulatory welcome to the chief of the ACW.

The in-coming chief of the African Centre for Women, Mme. Josephine Ouédraogo welcomed the participants and presented an introductory note, outlining her views on the imperatives of networking, partnerships and the role of the ACW (See Appendix 1). Mme. Ouédraogo posed several important questions as to the nature of a network and of African women's networks in particular. She queried characteristics, objectives, strengths as well as weaknesses. Offering a working definition of networking, Mme. Ouédraogo stated:

A network is first and foremost a means, an instrument of communication among actors with similar projects and objectives. In its active sense, a network is a process of mutual moral and institutional support. Furthermore, as we have seen from the numerous functional networks on our vast continent, networking is indeed a response to the need for information, for complementarity of skills and for some concrete form of solidarity.

Mme. Ouédraogo reaffirmed the important contributions of existing networks throughout Africa and urged that they go further to develop links with partners from a number of sectors. She likened existing NGO, inter-governmental and donor networking to the building of a house where one group of people build its walls, another its roof and still others its doors and windows. Each part of the house functions but the parts do not work together as a whole and, therefore, the house does not stand. Mme. Ouédraogo went on to say:

From our point of view, at the African Centre for Women, the missing link between the workers, which we all are, is shared vision, constant cooperation, concerted effort among all decision-makers, public and private sector operators and actors at the national, sub-regional and regional levels; there is a lack of ...

cohesion and communication among the actors on the plan and style of the house we intend to build, on the additional tasks which each and every one must accomplish in the building of the house and on the comfort reserved for everyone in the house once it has been completed – that is – the development of our continent.

She concluded by welcoming the collaboration among the ACW and participants representing different actors to define together useful and indispensable networks. Following Mme. Ouédraogo's speech, the general rapporteur, Ms. Seble Dawit, presented the three day programme and the organization of work (See Appendix II, Programme of the Expert Group Meeting).

Presentation of Expert Papers

The ACW commissioned expert papers from six sub-regions to serve as substantive foundations for discussions. For the meeting, the researchers presented synopses of their findings. Mme. Hassania Chalbi presented for the North Africa sub-region, Ms. Elizabeth Karonu for East Africa, Mme. Julianne Tsengueu for Central Africa, Dr. Athaliah Molokomme for Southern Africa, Mme. Fatou Ndiaye for West Africa and Mme. Christine Nyakamwa for the Great Lakes sub-region. The papers are appended to this report in their entirety (Appendix IV).

[Summaries of Expert Papers may be here or in their entirety in Appendix IV]

During the afternoon of the first day, participants met in three groups organized around the three priority areas. Group one deliberated on the economic empowerment of women, group two on women in decision making and group three on women's human and legal rights. The groups were asked to identify missing links/gaps/opportunities for networking in the respective priority area. Each group was assigned a facilitator and a rapporteur primarily from among the authors of the expert papers as well as from other participants.

Working Groups on Opportunities for Networking in the Three Priority Areas

Group One - The Economic Empowerment of Women

The group discussed the assigned subject matter by first discussing the opportunities identified by the experts in their papers and then "brainstormed" on new opportunities. The group treated as givens the recommendations in the Africa and Global Platforms for Action, of Dakar and Beijing, respectively. The group identified specific opportunities under five general headings: engendering economic policies, taking advantage of conducive legal environments, increasing women's access to credit, trade connection opportunities and role models.

Under the heading on engendering economic policies the group identified a number of opportunities for future collaboration and networking. They noted that the current macro-economic context does not provide women with enough opportunities and suggested building African women's economic capacities. In order to do that, gender must be mainstreamed into economic policies at macro and micro levels. The group stressed the importance of gender awareness among women chosen to guide programmes such as poverty alleviation as well as among all other actors in political and economic spheres. Specifically, they recommended gender analysis of all national budgets using the Australian "Women's Budget", noting a similar effort by the South African government through the support of the Commonwealth Secretariat. The group also recommended

that the ECA support academics, NGOs and parliamentarians to undertake such gender analyses of national budgets.

In terms of steps that government may take the group suggested monitoring of government contracts to determine gender ratios and impacts; development of gender equity policies for privatization programmes that often leave the less well remunerated positions for women; and investment in infrastructures such as roads, water supply, energy, schools, health facilities, shelter, day care facilities, etc., to enhance the economic productivity of women and men. Additionally, policy makers must be aware that women's control of their reproductive capacities, their access to education and health care will increase their productivity in other areas.

Under the heading of conducive legal environments, the group suggested making use of statutory and customary laws which give women the right to inheritance and ownership of land. Where such laws do not exist, states should consider promulgation of progressive inheritances laws. Buttressing such laws, the ECA could support regional land alliances where each country could set aside land or women farmers as well as the creation of small and medium agricultural enterprises. Furthermore, the group recommended the establishment of national and/or sub-regional level pressure groups to monitor enhanced economic opportunities for women. The group noted that periods of economic transition, political transformation and conflict resolution provide women concrete opportunities to change inequitable patriarchal structures and, thereby, encourage new decision making processes.

The group made several recommendations in terms of increasing women's access to credit. At the policy level, a system could be emplaced whereby women's contributions to various financial schemes such as provident funds and insurance are used as part of a micro credit fund. Savings and loan fund schemes might also provide training and credit for rural women and women working in the informal sector. Outside of government initiatives, the group recommended increased support for traditional women's credit cooperatives as well as special funds set-up by NGOs and existing women's credit organizations to provide "soft loans" or credit for local infrastructure.

In the area of trade connection opportunities, the group made specific suggestions for government, ECA and NGO initiatives such as more women's trade fairs to enhance the exchange of products and ideas, ECA facilitation of women's trade connections at various levels and World Bank contracts to NGOs. Additionally, the group recommended that the ECA spearhead regional economic integration through its sub-regional focal points and other regional and sub-regional economic bodies such as ECOWAS, SADC, COMESA, EDCAC-CEAC, C-EDO-UMA. The ECA was also targeted at the agency to devise mechanisms to operationalize the recommendations of the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) as well as the dissemination to women at all levels of the measures for integration and cooperation put in place by the sub-regional economic centers (RECS).

The group stressed the importance of affirmative action programs for women in male dominated economic trade systems; the deliberate targeting of women to expose them to opportunities for non-traditional goods, markets and jobs; and the exposure of women entrepreneurs to new communications technology such as internet and e-mail for accessing markets. This may be facilitated by NGO and the ECA through its focal points and collaborating partners. Finally, the group pointed to the importance of women role models as an opportunity for future work. They noted the work of successful African business women and women heads of household who have managed businesses and families without credit schemes or the support of male bread winners. Not only must these successes be promoted they must also be documented.

Group Two - Women and Decision-Making

The group on women and decision-making set a general framework within which their discussions would take place, identified opportunities which exist for women as well as gaps that can be filled and strategies for networking partnerships and for filling the gaps. The group felt the need to define women and decision-making and the parameters, thereof, at several levels. Women are often decision makers at the personal/family level, at the level of community and associations, in the private sector and at the national level in the public sector. The group agreed that women's leadership is always mediated by patriarchal structures which are manifested through political, economic, social and cultural structures and which impede women's access to power and resources.

In order to develop strategies for women's empowerment, the group suggested posing four key questions, a) do women have access to resources? b) do they have good support systems? c) do they have the necessary information? and d) do they have skills in leadership, management, advocacy, etc. When developing strategies for women's empowerment, there is need to pay special attention to the fundamental issue of exclusion, therefore, strategies should be geared toward creating a climate of inclusion for women.

Based on those premises the group posited seven reasons why women are needed in decision-making positions. First, women can influence power structures and have power to influence decisions. Women can constitute power structures in and of themselves. Decision-making is an entry point for changing policies and structures which affect women adversely. Women have a basic right to participate in the shaping of the futures of their countries. Women do not want just equity, they also need efficiency and quality. Women have to be involved in areas in which resources are decided and allocated. And, lastly, gender roles need to be challenged and subverted – society as we know it has been shaped and directed solely on men's visions and priorities.

In defining the opportunities which exist for women and the gaps that can be filled the group concurred on nine points. Capacity building for women was first in the list and includes development of self-esteem, community level leadership and basic skills training, training in civic education and organizational capacity building. At the family level, women must be encouraged to take more decisions and should be supported to use the family court systems where necessary. Thirdly, education for women at all level, including primary, secondary and vocational training among others, should utilize women's desire and drive to learn and improve themselves. Women should take advantage of political goodwill and affirmative action programs that encourage women in decision-making such as those in Uganda, South Africa, Ghana and Tanzania. Fifth, women should make use of post-Beijing commitments at regional and national levels.

Additionally, women may use the active peace movements regionally to advocate for change, for gender training of relevant actors, and making strategic use of the democratization process. Finally, the group advocated for the use of existing numbers of women in key decision-making positions who are respected for their seniority, experience, their integrity and their commitment to social justice.

The group went on to identify the following strategies and examples for networking, partnerships and for filling the gaps. First, it is important to identify key players within the region for training, research, advocacy, information, etc. Second, the group felt that more attention needs to be given to areas such as food security and women's contemporary experiences of democratization policies. Thirdly, it will be important to develop networks specifically to support female politicians in the run up to elections. Fourth, there is need to build up the capacity of young African women in

leadership and, lastly, women must draw on the expertise of key regional networks and training institutions such as Women in Law and Development in Africa, the African Women's Leadership Institute, FEMNET and the Foundation for Women in Democracy, among others.

Group Three - Women's Legal and Human Rights

The third group, working on women's legal and human rights began the discussion with a four point preambular introduction 1) reaffirming the need for broad interpretations of human rights 2) that women's poverty is due to denial of some basic human rights, 3) that violations of women's rights stem from their poverty and vulnerability within communities, and reaffirming 4) the indivisibility of civil and political rights from economic, social and cultural rights. The remainder of the discussion focussed on a number of international, regional and national human rights and other legal instruments. For each instrument the group identified the gaps and the opportunities for filling them.

The first human rights instrument the group considered is the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Among the gaps, the group noted that a number of countries have not ratified CEDAW, of those who have ratified, significant reservations have been made which hamper the efficacy of the treaty. Also for those states that have ratified CEDAW there has been a significant failure to incorporate the treaty into national laws. The group identified a gap in the failure of states to involve civil society and women's groups in the preparation of national reports to the CEDAW committee. There exists a limited knowledge about CEDAW among women's groups and, generally, limited availability and dissemination of CEDAW state reports to groups inside the country.

The group identified specific opportunities for filling these gaps. Among these, the group held that member states should explain their reservations and that activists should share/study these explanations, collaborate to deal with them, provide rebuttals to government arguments and pressure governments to remove reservations. Concerned organizations and individuals should network on methods of incorporating CEDAW into national laws and use best practices from other settings. Additional networking should support the translation of CEDAW into local languages, its simplification and dissemination. Support should also be sought for the drafting by women's NGOs of alternative or shadow reports, making known the questions that governments are asked regarding the involvement of NGOs in the production of national reports. NGOs should also prepare expert opinions for the CEDAW committee to counter-balance government reports. Ultimately, sub-regional and regional structures should be used to make state reports available to women and to NGOs.

Secondly, the group considered the regional treaty the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. They identified three significant gaps: the lack of specific and strong provisions protecting women's rights; the insufficient number of women commissioners and the limited knowledge among Africans in general about the Charter. Among the opportunities the group identified are a network for the drafting and passage of an Optional Protocol specific to women in collaboration with the International Commission of Jurists, Women in Law and Development in Africa and International Legal Aid of the Netherlands. There should also be networking on vacancies on the Commission such that women's NGOs may help to identify and propose nominees to governments. Finally, as was the case for CEDAW, the African Charter should also be translated into local languages, simplified and disseminated.

The group also considered sub-regional treaties and agreements such as SADEC and COMESA, stating that the most crucial gap is the lack of knowledge of the larger purposes of these treaties. The group recommended that sub-regional treaties be investigated to identify and utilize them for the promotion and protection of women's legal and human rights. Next, the group considered national constitutions noting gaps in the level of public knowledge about the documents; the mystification of the language and over-legalization; incompatibility/contradiction with regional and international human rights treaty obligations; and a general lack of specificity on provisions for the rights of women. The group combined the opportunities for remedying these gaps with those for the next section on national laws.

The fifth area that the group identified for further networking is that of national laws. In this area, the group highlighted a number of important gaps. Among them, the disparity between the written law and its application; the contradiction between statutory laws and customary and/or religious laws; the limited legal literacy of the general population and of women in particular; inadequate political will for promoting and enforcing women's legal and human rights; inadequate legislation of private domain; lack of information and remedy of specific violations of women's rights as in the case of violence against women; and inadequate protection of women rights in conflict situations. The group added three secondary areas for future work, the dominance of men in the legal field, the limited availability of legal aid for women and the need for safe houses for women in abusive situations.

The group recommended a number of opportunities for networking to fill the gaps on both the issues of national laws and that of national constitutions. First, the group stressed the importance of networking to share strategies for enforcement of existing laws, their simplification, publicity and dissemination, including training of pertinent personnel. Networking should focus on strategies to make the legal system under which they live accessible to women. Part of that work should be to introduce human rights education into the general curriculum as well as into larger communities through civic education and legal literacy programs. Such programs should target women but they should also include men and youth. In this regard, mainstream human rights organizations and other civic groups could be useful allies.

Finally, the group noted that a number of important anniversaries in the next several years may be used as rallying points to advocate for increased regional attention to the issue of women's human and legal rights. Among them, the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the 40th anniversary of the Economic Commission for Africa, the 5th anniversary of the Vienna Declaration on Human Rights and the Commission on the Status of Women's examination of human rights among other areas as it approaches its 50 years of existence.

Following the group sessions, the rapporteurs for each group presented a summary of the group work to the plenary. Plenary discussion centered around clarification of points of the three group reports and specific examples from the sub-regions. The meeting was then adjourned until the following day.

Day Two Tuesday, 17 June 1997

The second day of the Expert Group Meeting on Gender Networking began with a debriefing on the previous day's activities and a quick run down of activities pending for the day. The program for the second day opened with three short papers on the three priority areas presented by women actively involved in those areas. The paper on Economic Empowerment of Women was presented by Ms. Minh Chau Nguyen, of the World Bank; Ms. Joanna Foster of WILDAF presented on

Women's Human and Legal Rights; and the Honorable Winnie Byanyima of Forum for Women in Democracy and member of parliament of Uganda presented on Women in Decision Making. The papers are presented below in their entirety.

The Economic Empowerment of Women

By Ms. Minh Chau Nguyen, World Bank

Human Rights and Development

By Ms. Joanna Foster, Women in Law and Development in Africa

Human rights can generally be defined as those rights which are inherent in our nature and without respect of which we cannot live as human beings. They are rights belonging to everyone anywhere at all times irrespective of race, sex, religion and language.

Development is a process of allocating and utilizing resources for the social and economic benefit of society as a whole. It is universally recognized that development without the involvement of women is not sustainable and as women are largely deprived of their human rights which systematically excludes them from full economic and political participation in the production and benefits of development, then for any development to be sustainable, it must be squarely placed within a human rights framework.

Throughout the 70's and 80's Governments, International Agencies and NGOs attempted through their women in development programmes to remedy the situation through income-generating projects. The objective of this process has been to incorporate women into the development process by altering policies which limited women's access to economic benefits and by providing greater opportunities for generating new sources of income. But the attempt has failed as the activities had not addressed major systemic or structural issues particularly those of power and abuse of human rights.

The economic objectives in the Beijing platform are human rights issues which are reinforced by universal human rights standards as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, CEDAW, and other widely adhered to international human rights treaties and declarations.

Women's human right to equal opportunity in the economy is enshrined in the most basic international human rights agreements. Included in this human right are far-reaching guarantees such as:

- the human right to equal access to employment, and to equal pay for equal work;
- the human right to full and equal participation in economic decision making and policy formulation at all levels;
- the human right to adequate working conditions, sustainable wages and the right to take part in trade unions;
- the human right to equal access to productive resources including land, credit, and technology;
- the freedom from discrimination in all aspects of work, including in hiring and promotion;
- freedom from sexual harassment in the work place;
- equal access to education and vocational training;

- the proper consideration of women's reproductive rights and sexuality, including job security during and after pregnancy, flexible working conditions and access to childcare;
- participation in shaping decisions and policies affecting one's community, at the local national and international levels;
- adequate standard of living;
- healthy and safe environment;
- freedom from hunger;
- safe drinking water;
- primary health care and medical attention in case of illness;
- freedom from sexual and racial discrimination;
- freedom from violence of all types, inside and outside the home.

Women's human right to equal opportunity in the economy is inextricably linked to other fundamental human rights, rights that are universal, indivisible, interconnected and interdependent including:

- right to equality between men and women to equal partnership in the family and society;
- right to own property;
- protection for the girl-child from economic exploitation and work that may be hazardous to her health, well-being and development.

Human rights standards guaranteeing women's economic rights are clear and unequivocal: UDHR Art.23, ICESCR Art.7, CEDAW Art.11 (1)&(2), and Art. 13 and 14.

They are powerful tools that can be put to use in implementing the Platforms of Action, and to implement the ECA's own goal of sustainable economic development in Africa.

Recommendations

Network

1. To create a critical mass to advocate for changes through regional bodies, for example to strengthen the African Commission on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR) to promote the additional protocol on women to the Charter.
Assist the Commission by lobbying member states to endorse the additional protocol and encourage them to ratify it and to integrate into country laws; the same process for the proposed African Human Rights Court to be instituted as quickly as possible; to lobby member states to elect more women on to the Commission.

Law Reform

2. Advocacy for Budgetary reform to respond and assist women's economic activities.
3. Use what is on the ground, mainstreaming with assistance of UN/UNIFEM partnership/coordination.
4. Training in leadership for decision makers at all levels.
5. Information exchange, dissemination and collection.
6. Database of women on issues, on laws.

7. Legal literacy projects, so where there are changes in the law, information is disseminated to help empower women.
8. Support NGOs to lobby and be involved at the international level, for example support NGO attendance at CSW in 1998 in order to bring African women's perspectives to the optional protocol for :
 - Training on all fronts, how to run an organization, how to be a manager, gender training, awareness bringing and sensitization;
 - Encouraging countries to remove reservation on CEDAW, e.g. Mauritius, on equal pay;
 - Being part of the monitoring process at CEDAW of African States;
 - Establishing district assemblies – decentralization process as part of structural adjustment – in order for women to take opportunity to access final stand and be elected.

Networking as a strategy does not just happen, there is a need to find out what is on the ground.

- (1) Use (in this case both UN focal points/UNIFEM) expertise inside the institution of UN itself and windows out to the outside world;
- (2) Service the network by providing information to inform decision, exchange of information, and analyses;
- (3) Network with groups that are embedded in a functioning network with strong roots into the rural areas;
- (4) Mobilize resources – to strengthen information and research systems.

Following the presentation of the papers, participants were constituted into two simultaneous working groups to brainstorm on networking strategies for the economic empowerment of women in Africa. Group one included those people working in Eastern and Southern Africa and the Great Lakes and group two included people working in West, North and Central Africa. The general rapporteur gave guidelines for the discussions advising participants to conceptualize first the nature of regional strategic alliances for women's economic empowerment in Africa and the actors who should participate in them (Figure 1). From there, the groups were asked to propose such alliances for two purposes: to fulfill the rights of women and increase women's power in decision-making. Rights in order to increase women's capabilities, access to facilities, services, resources and employment and to increase their power to control/manage their lives. And power to provide women access to education/entrepreneurship and access to resources and employment.

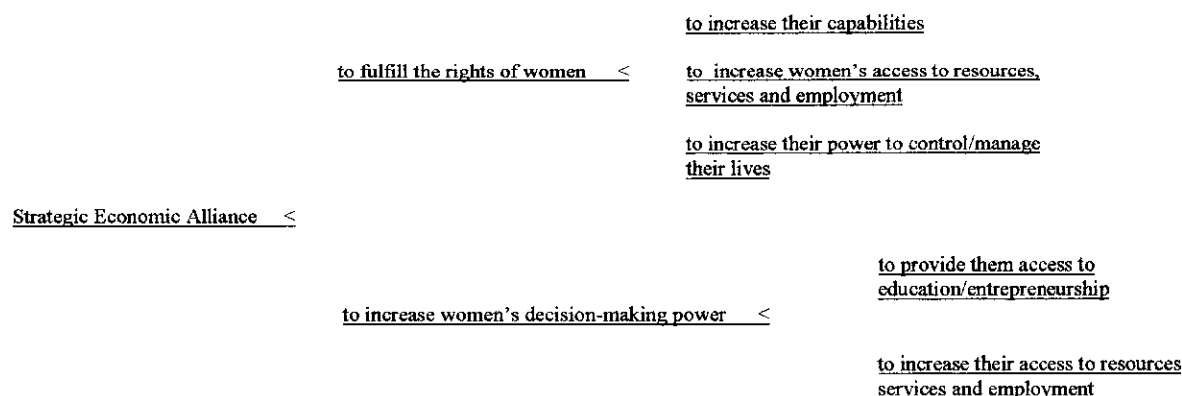


Figure 1

Working Groups on Networking for Economic Empowerment

Group One – Southern and Eastern Africa and the Great Lakes Countries

Group one began their discussions by identifying six critical areas for women in the Southern, Eastern African and Great Lakes sub-region. For each critical area the group outlined strategies and the actors to network.²

The critical areas are:

1. food security,
2. increasing poverty,
3. conflict
4. lack of access to and control of resources including credit,
5. limited participation in decision-making,
6. presence of barriers to movement of labor/goods,
7. lack of an enabling socio-political environment,
8. unequal power relations between men and women in public and private life, and
9. regional integration.

1. Food security strategies:

- a. Replication of successful/effective projects and increased support for women to engage in them.
- b. Conduct research into the whole policy framework on food at national and sub-regional level. Explore broader intra-African cooperation and aid during food crises.

Actors to network:

- a. UN Economic Commission for Africa, Division for Food Security and Sustainable Development
- b. UN Food and Agriculture Organization
- c. UN World Food Programme
- d. Inter-governmental Agency on Drought and Desertification

2. Strategies to stop the increase poverty:

- a. Collectivization of production, for example women's cooperatives
- b. African women must represent their concerns to such fora as the UNDP Poverty Alleviation Action Plans. UNDP, for example, should be urged to invest more in women focussed programs in keeping with their redefinition of poverty.

² The group did not have time to address the presence of barriers to movement of labor/goods and the lack of an enabling socio-political environment. The question of barriers was considered within regional integration framework.

Actors to network:

- a. NGOs working with women parliamentarians
- b. UNIFEM
- c. UNDP
- d. African Center for Women of ECA
- e. OECD (DAG)

3. Strategies to resolve/ameliorate conflict situations

- a. Support for the Federation of Women's Peace Movements
- b. Support for the African Women's Committee for Peace which advises the OAU central organ on peace issues.
- c. Agencies such as UNIFEM, UNHCR should support the documentation of African peace organizations and networks.

Actors to network:

- a. Federation of Women's Peace Movements
- b. African Women's Committee for Peace
- c. UNIFEM, UNHCR, etc.

4. Strategies for access to resources, land, credit, employment:

- a. Priority: A network to create an alliance on land reform to ensure women's ownership of land. This is especially important in view of the on-going land reform programs in countries such as Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. The land rights of refugee/returnee women in areas of conflict.

Actors to network:

- a. Governments
- b. Women's organizations, especially, lawyers associations
- c. UN Centre for Human Settlements
- d. Economic Commission for Africa

5. Strategies for Political Participation and Decision Making:

- a. Networks to create political goodwill for women's political participation, by encouraging governments to adopt affirmative action initiatives.
- b. Support on-going initiatives by NGOs through civic education, training in campaign management.
- c. Conduct research on appointment procedures in the civil service and private sector.
- d. Gender training of senior civil servants, including women.
- e. Capacity building for women beneficiaries of affirmative action initiatives.
- f. Facilitation and formation of caucuses of women politicians; investigate how caucuses function in different national settings.
- g. Investigate the impact of women currently in decision-making positions.

Actors to network:

- a. NGOs
- b. Non-partisan women's caucuses
- c. African Centre for Women
- d. Political Research Institutions

6. Strategies on unequal power relations between men and women in the household, family and other institutions

- a. Networking for the creation of sensitization, advocacy and pressure groups for the formulation, application and enforcement of laws and policies for equality in the household with regard to access to and control of resources, freedom of movement, protection from violence, and strengthening support systems related to child care.
- b. Networking for the quantification and valuation of women's productive activities in the household with a view to enhancing their recognition and increasing their bargaining power with regard to access to credit, resources and employment

Actors to network:

- a. Governments
- b. Women's NGOs
- c. Research institutions

7. Strategies for regional integration:

- a. Investigate sub-regional institutional policy documents and activities to see what entry points may be found to support the economic empowerment of women.
- b. Removal of barriers to the movement of goods, services and people currently hindering intra-Africa trade.
- c. Pressure groups on sub-regional and regional economic policy groupings for the removal of such barriers.

Actors to network:

- a. SADEC
- b. COMESA
- c. East African Cooperation
- d. NGOs, pressure groups, business organizations
- e. OAU/ECA/ADB joint effort

Group Two West, North and Central Africa

Group two considered networking for economic empowerment in the West, North and Central African sub-regions. The group decided to consider a number of key issues closely rather than present a long list with less critical discussions.

1. The group felt that to achieve economic empowerment of women it is necessary to establish strategic alliances with:
 - a. those who provide credit,
 - b. those who provide training, and
 - c. those who provide access to means of production
2. Use existing networks. For example, there is a network in Central Africa which includes governments and the private sector and which was set up for policy consultations.

In considering actors who should collaborate on these two objectives, the group divided the list into national and sub-regional/regional level collaboration. At the national level, the group identified:

- a. National councils for women and development
- b. Entrepreneurial groups such as the Ghana Association of Women Entrepreneurs
- c. Central, commercial, local banks and women's banks where laws permit
- d. Women's groups working on economic issues
- e. Legal, health and other associations
- f. Trade unions
- g. Churches, clerics and other religious groups³
- h. Professional associations
- i. Ministries of agriculture, lands, trade and finance and gender
- j. Media groups may be involved in sensitization campaign, information campaign, rights awareness informationals.
- k. National assemblies
- l. Parliamentarians
- m. Research Centres
- n. Savings groups and associations
- o. Community groups/traditional organizations and support groups.

Group two also identified collaborative relationships at the regional and sub-regional level with:

- a. Regional banking institutions such as the African Development Bank and the Islamic Development Bank
- b. ECOWAS
- c. Regional entrepreneurial groups, eg., African Association of Women Entrepreneurs
- d. Networks of information NGOs.

³ Many members of the group felt that religious groups are often oppressive of women. Some felt that alliances with religious groups will differ from country to country. Others suggested that the heading should be "traditional groups".

The group felt that the economic empowerment of women required assuring the presence of women in decision-making capacities. Strategic alliances among political parties, traditional organizations and NGOs, for instance, in the area of voter registration are important for the democratic process. Networks such as these collaborating for specific purposes such as training, entrepreneurship and human rights have the capacity to increase women's capabilities, their access to credit, resources and control over their affairs.

At the end of the day the groups assembled in a plenary, reported their deliberations and discussed recommendations. The two groups joined to worked once more in plenary on networking among different actors and proposed further recommendations specific to networking. From those two sessions a draft set of recommendations emerged on partnerships and networking regionally for the economic empowerment of women in Africa.

Day Three Wednesday, 18 June 1997

The morning work session was devoted to a closed meeting of ARCC and the African Centre for Women. The plenary session opened with a debrief of the previous days' activities and logistical announcements. In the morning session, the plenary report on economic empowerment in the sub-regions was discussed to be followed in the afternoon by the report on networking among different actors. However, as the plenary worked, it became clear that the two plenary reports could be merged into one set of recommendations. These recommendations constitute the statement of the Expert Group on Gender Networking in Africa as to the definite desirability and feasibility of using networking strategies among a range of social actors to advance the economic empowerment of women in Africa.

The recommendations of the Expert Group have been formulated as action oriented strategies and the possible actors working in partnerships appropriate to the strategy. Taken as a whole the recommendations are constructive markers for types of African strategic networking into the 21st Century. Indeed, as the work of existing networks particularly at the NGO level has shown, a network is a useful method of communication at the very least. At its most useful and successful, a network is a tool for mobilizing and organizing large numbers of people around issues. The Expert Group affirmed the value of working in such partnerships to develop and implement programs for the economic empowerment of African women.

Recommendations of the Expert Group on Gender Networking

Over-arching strategy

- Governments should create an economically and politically enabling environment for women to be respected decision makers and independent economic actors.
- Greater use must be made of existing networks in the sub-regions to spur economic and democratic development and respect for human rights.
- Micro *and* macro-economic level components should be included in all economic policy interventions intended to benefit women and their families.
- Reform and adopt affirmative action/equal opportunity laws nationally and sub-regionally and support gender and human rights training for teachers associations, civil servants, judges, magistrates, the police and security forces.
- The Economic Commission for Africa, through the Africa Centre for Women should communicate with the various actors on the Recommendations of the Expert Group on Gender Networking.

Over-arching actors

- The actors selected by the plenary were many and varied, from among the NGO community, the public and private sectors and the international community. Women's organizations are and will continue to be essential parts of all sub-regional and regional networks. There was particular emphasis by the Expert Group on the need to expand existing work on gender by sub-regional and regional economic and political groupings such as the Economic Commission for Africa, the African Development Bank, Economic Commission of West African States, etc. Internationally, the importance of the various UN agencies as well as of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund to regional networking for economic empowerment was underscored. The Expert Group emphasized the great role that should be played in networking effort by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) particularly but not limited to its capacity as regional coordinator of UN agencies.
- The Expert Group recommended networking with any and all actors experienced in a given strategic area. Among them are:
 1. Women's non-governmental organizations, professional and economic associations, rural women's cooperatives and associations.
 2. National, commercial, regional, international banks and financial institutions.
 3. National governments through all of their ministries and agencies.
 4. United Nations and other international agencies.
 5. National and local governments, parliaments, and machineries for gender.
 6. Sub-regional and regional political and financial institutions such as the Economic Commission for Africa, the Organization of African Unity, the African Development Bank, the Economic Commission of West African States, and the Islamic Bank.
 7. Religious and Traditional Institutions.
 8. Professional Associations such as those of lawyers, journalists, teachers and scholars.
 9. Trade unions and associations.
 10. Gender training institutions.
 11. Audio, print and visual media agencies and associations.

Specific Issues and Strategies for Economic Empowerment of Women

1. Food Security

- Sharing and replication of successful agriculture and food production projects
- Research into the policy framework on food at the national and sub-regional levels and identify countries in which there is food surplus so as to respond to shortages using regional resources
- Public and private sector support for national and local farmers associations

2. Increase and Persistence of Poverty

- Document the increase in poverty and the increasing feminization of poverty
- Seek women's input and influence in the design of poverty alleviation action plans
- Women's groups should draft alternative or complimentary national poverty eradication plans
- Enhance women's entrepreneurship through training and networking
- Improve the quality of life of rural and urban poor women through replication of successful community based economic initiatives and income generating activities

3. Conflict Situations

- Support for women's peace initiatives, including use of women mediators/arbitrators, women's NGOs at the local and national level, regional networks
- Support for civic and human rights education at all social levels
- Document existing peace networks and their impact

4. Access to Land, Water and Basic Services

- Create an alliance on land reform, share national strategies to ensure women's ownership of land
- Review and reform existing discriminatory land ownership policies at the national level; amend regional regulations accordingly
- Promote national, sub-regional and regional initiatives to review and reform water policy as to scarcity, availability and control
- Commission national studies of existing health care systems and real availability to women of affordable and quality health care services

5. Access to Credit

- Pressure national, regional and international banking institutions to engender their institutions in terms of direct lending, projects supported and staff balance at all professional levels.
- Investigate, document/evaluate, share information on successful micro-credit schemes
- Expand on local and traditional women's credit/savings scheme
- Provide training for community leaders on credit and accountability
- Review and establish enabling regulatory frameworks for micro-credit schemes
- Devise modalities to create a women's rotating credit fund through pooling women's contributions to national provident funds and other employment benefit schemes

APPENDICES

Appendix I	Introductory Speech of Josephine Ouédraogo, Chief, ACW
Appendix II	Programme of Expert Group Meeting on Gender Networking
Appendix III	Participant List
Appendix IV	i. West Africa Expert Paper
	ii. North Africa Expert Paper
	iii. Eastern Africa Expert Paper
	iv. Central Africa Expert Paper
	v. Great Lakes Countries Expert Paper
	vi. Southern Africa Expert Paper

9. Unequal power relations between men and women in the household, community and other spheres

- Establish and strengthen advocacy and pressure groups to educate community leaders, elected officials, and civic organizers as to the contributions of women constituents
- Lobby for the adoption of laws and policies which provide for equality, access to and control of resources, of production, reproduction and decision-making
- The household is the basic unit of society, production and consumption. Women's contribution at that micro-level must be made visible and valuable.
- Quantification, valuation and recognition of women's household activity and inclusion of this activity in mainstream definitions of economic activity
- Introduce gender and women's human rights in school and community education curricula

Finally, the Expert Group on Gender Networking made a recommendation specific to the African Centre for Women to explore convening a regional consultation specifically on training and networking among key sub-regional and regional training organizations/institutions and existing regional networks.

Closing Remarks

In his closing remarks, the Dr. K.Y. Amoako, Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa reiterated the ECA's commitment to gender parity, equality and the economic empowerment of women throughout Africa. Dr. Amoako concluded his remarks saying that the 40th anniversary of the ECA in 1998 is not a celebration of what the institution has achieved on gender, rather it is a marker of what the ECA has yet to achieve. He assured participants that their recommendations would be studied and acted upon, that their deliberations would guide the actions of the ECA as it moves into the 21st century.

Madame Josephine Ouédraogo, chief of the African Center for Women summarized the final recommendations to the assembled participants. Mme. Ouédraogo noted:

This was an important meeting. It has given all of us a great deal to think about and work toward.

Ouédraogo High Impact Closing Remarks Here
(Need not be the one delivered in June)

6. Access to Training and Information

- Strengthen research, communication and information management systems
- Support trainings in legal education/literacy, civic education, gender training and organizational Development
- Increase women's access to and expertise in computer technology and information systems
- Gender training among strategic groups such as senior civil servants, judges, policy, parliamentarians, etc.
- Disseminate key policy documents and plans to African women's national and regional NGOs

7. Political Participation

- Advocate for the practice of good governance and emplacement of democratization initiatives
- Identify mechanisms for influencing national and sub-regional budgets
- Encourage governments to adopt affirmative action in favor of women at all levels and in all sectors
- Facilitate programs and activities to engender macro-economic policy and local and national budgets; engage in public debates on aspects of economic policy, food security and defense.
- Support on-going initiatives by NGOs such as training women candidates for public office at local, district and national levels; training women in elected office for greater effectiveness; facilitate exchanges between parliamentarians and local women politicians
- Undertake research on appointment procedures in the civil service and private sector, to ensure transparency and to advocate for the appointment of more women to decision-making positions
- Facilitate the formation of caucuses and share national caucusing experience
- Evaluate impact of nomination and affirmative action efforts for gender parity in the public and private sectors
- Pressure and support for the implementation of international and regional conventions relative to women

8. Regional Cooperation

- Regional cooperation to remedy lack of an enabling environment for economic empowerment of women at national and sub-regional levels.
- Review the policy documents and activities of sub-regional institutions to find an entry point for questions of economic empowerment of women
- Lobby sub-regional and regional institutions for the removal of trade tariffs and other regulatory barriers limiting women's equal access to sub-regional markets
- Encourage governments to maintain conducive climates for private sector investments
- Use focal points to identify markets and products needed for inter-regional trade

Appendix I

Introductory Speech of Josephine Ouédraogo, Chief, African Centre for Women

EXPERT GROUP MEETING ON GENDER NETWORKING
16-18 June 1997

INTRODUCTORY NOTE BY J. OUEDRAOGO

Ladies and gentlemen.

Dear guests,

ECA, as the Executive Secretary said, means to be a builder of networks and an institution which supports networks for the development of Africa.

With regard to gender inequality, ECA is committed today, more than ever before, to the struggle against poverty, particularly poverty peculiar to women. Poverty is caused by inequitable distribution of resources as well as by limited access to education, credit, land and a voice in decision-making. Within ECA, there is a body primarily responsible for translating into concrete action the institution's commitment to improving the economic situation of African women. This body is the African Centre for Women which has just been strengthened by the Executive Secretary. The Centre's team, in reiterating its commitment to working to improve the status and conditions of living of African women and the development of Africa, has convened this meeting with the aim of entering into partnership with you and stimulation cooperation among all decision-makers and operators in the region.

Let us begin by asking ourselves some questions which we consider crucial:

- What is a network?
- What does networking mean? and why the need for networking?
- **What** is the status of the existing networks on the African continent, particularly those specializing in women's affairs?
- Do African networks operate horizontally?
Were they initiated in Africa by African institutions in an inter-African perspective? Or were they initiated by institutions of the North, driven by a need to carry out their activities on the continent relying on the support of African organizations?
- What are the characteristics of the networks in Africa? What are their aims, activities, strengths and weaknesses?

A network is first and foremost a means, an instrument of communication among actors with similar projects and objectives. In its active sense, a network is a process of mutual support

- moral and often institutional support. Furthermore, as we have seen from the numerous functional networks on our vast continent, networking is indeed a response to the need for information, for complementarity of skills and for some concrete form of solidarity.

I can say that we have been building a house for some time now. But the picture of our work shows the foundation at that corner, the walls at the other corner, over there a part of the roof constructed others lying on the ground, here and there are the doors and windows scattered. We are all contributing to building each component of the house, but the parts are not together and so the house is not standing because there is lack of communication and understanding between the workers to enable them to fit the materials together bit by bit in accordance with the building plan.

From our point of view, at the African Centre for Women, the missing link between the workers, which we all are, is shared vision, constant cooperation, concerted effort among all decision-makers, public and private sector operators and actors at the national, subregional and regional levels; there is a lack of constant cohesion and communication among the actors on the plan and style of the house we intend to build, on the additional tasks which each and every one must accomplish in the building of the house and on the comfort reserved for every one in the house once it has been completed - that is - the development of our continent.

By **taking action** and through **systematic networking** we will succeed in instilling in all the decision-makers the necessary strength and solidarity to enable them to accomplish this undertaking.

How then can this Meeting assist us in this venture?

What do we expect from this meeting?

First of all, we want to share with you our understanding of networking.

Secondly, we want to share with you the mission which ECA has embarked upon, a mission which the African Centre for Women must help to fulfil. ECA's mission is to serve Africa, that is, to assist in the economic and social development of the continent. This aim cannot be achieved if the economic role and the social and policy position of African women are not taken account of and enhanced as part of development plans and programmes, drawing on the national and subregional policies.

The Centre's first mission is therefore to work within ECA and with member States for the economic empowerment of women with the dual aim of changing their living conditions and stimulating the continent's economic development.

To achieve this objective, we have selected the following strategic areas:

- ▶ Working to integrate women in decision-making mechanisms; in other words, giving women responsibility to enable them to influence economic and social policies and strategies;
- ▶ Working to open up women's access to resources, that is, enabling them to enjoy their civic and human rights which guarantees them access to land, means of production and funds in order to increase their productivity.
- ▶ Working to facilitate women's access to all such opportunities as education, training and entrepreneurship which increase their personal capabilities.

These objectives are not new, nor are they exceptional: They indeed derive from all the strategic considerations already made and formulated through numerous programmes set up by institutions striving to assist in the enhancement of women and the development of the continent.

Within the African women's movement, there are networks which have proved effective while others have been less successful. At the threshold of the 21st century it is important that we draw on our experiences in this field and build on them to develop more effective systems of cooperation.

For us in ECA, the need for networking is clear.

For those of us participating in this meeting:

- . We know the situation of women and the problems which hinder their development;
- . We know the importance of women's contribution to the lives and survival of 350 million people in the African continent;
- . We are aware of the immense technical, scientific and institutional capabilities in the continent;
- . We have governments, NGOs, associations, private enterprises and funding sources;
- . We have international laws and conventions which are favourable to women's rights;
- . We have at our disposal in our libraries and drawers the most relevant analyses, general policies and most effective strategies for changing the status and situation of women on the continent.

There is almost nothing more to be invented, for much has for long been done, and in good sense: we can say that we have the "raw material"... that all the materials are available... We can say that the workers are organized in teams and are working night and day (these are NGOs, **governments**, Associations, development agencies...)

The building plan is clear, and there are blueprints (Platforms for action - subregional and regional, among others)

But the house is yet to stand!

Why?

Why is it impossible to say today that poverty is disappearing from our continent?

Why can it not be said today that the level of health and education of the people, particularly women, is becoming satisfactory throughout the continent?

Why the continued blatant disparities between men and women in the distribution of resources, sharing of responsibilities, access to education, health care, and others?

What is missing to **translate** our visions, commitment, firm beliefs and **concrete actions** into results permanently changing the situation of women?

ECA, through the African Centre for women, is, just like all the bodies which you represent, one of the many actors on the long list of those wishing to work towards building a better future for our continent's women. And we know that in order to be effective and for the collective undertaking to have a sense, your action and ours must fit the one into the other just as do scaffolding materials, parts and equipment of a building taking shape.

This is why the third and final goal, which is the goal of this meeting, is to define with you useful and indispensable networks.

This means defining ways of making the actions carried out by all the actors fit into and complement one another at the subregional and regional levels.

We should expect, by the end of the three days of work, to have successfully defined together the legal and political leverage indispensable for the acknowledgement and enhancement of the role and position of women in the economic development of Africa.

Thank you.