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**Report of the SRDC-WA
On the Implementation of Gender Related
Activities in 2001-2002**

REPORT OF THE SRDC-WA ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF GENDER-RELATED ACTIVITIES IN 2001-2002

I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee on Women and Development (CWD) of Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) with information on the overall performance of the Sub-regional Development Centre for West Africa (SRDC-WA) on gender issues during the 2001-2002 period. This performance is reviewed in relation to the programmes of the Centre in 2001-2002 as approved by the UN General Assembly, and in the context of the Centre's mandate.

It will be recalled that the mandate of the SRDC's derives from the 1998-2001 Medium-term plan adopted by the Conference of Ministers responsible for economic and social development and planning and arises from the need to strengthen ECA's presence at the sub-regional level. Within this framework, the SRDC West Africa is expected to promote gender issues to support regional cooperation and integration as part of its sub-regional activities for development.

II. ACTIVITIES IMPLEMENTED

A. Substantive servicing of intergovernmental Expert Meeting (ICE)

During the period, the SRDC WA serviced two ICE meetings at which two progress reports on gender mainstreaming were presented.

The first report was on "The Need For Promoting Sub-regional Integration Through Regional and Global Gender Mainstreaming Initiatives". This report was intended to identify areas for policy interventions that have global and regional dimensions on gender mainstreaming that could foster integration of gender into national plans of action. It recognized the implementation of Beijing platforms for action (BPA) as one of international instruments that the governments in the sub-region have committed themselves to undertake.

During the deliberation on the report, the Committee members agreed on the importance of mainstreaming gender issues in sub-regional integration processes, and the need for establishing mechanisms that would interface the commitments made at the international level with national policies and programmes in order to promote empowerment and the advancement of women. The Committee also recognized BPA as a benchmark for assessing the performance of member States in mainstreaming gender issues in social and economic programmes.

The meeting further agreed that one of the challenges facing the sub-region as regards gender and women's issues is how to empower women to move into higher social-

economic status. It observed that various programmes and mechanisms were already in place for gender mainstreaming but they would be more effective if an integrated and multifaceted approach were adopted in their implementation. In this context the meeting called for strategies for formulating gender policies that would enforce integrated and multifaceted approach in their national plans of action.

In the light of the above, the second report presented to the ICE meeting was titled "Mainstreaming Gender Concerns in Development Policies and Programmes: Gender Mainstreaming Policies and Strategies". The Report focused on policy formulation and strategies for gender mainstreaming and relevant tools for achieving gender equality. It also aimed at encouraging policy makers, planners, and the sub-regional economic communities acquire concrete strategies and prerequisites for formulating gender-mainstreaming policies. The report exposed the ICE members to the conceptual framework of gender mainstreaming with respect to the definitions of gender and gender equality.

The committee discussed at length the relevant factors for the formulation and harmonization of gender-mainstreaming policies and the need for establishing networking and information exchange in order to disseminate useful lessons and innovative ideas on gender mainstreaming initiatives throughout the sub-region.

The committee recommended that:

- (i) Each member state should adopt national gender mainstreaming policies and strategies. Time should be allocated for all stakeholders in the member states to come together to plan, discuss and adopt mainstreaming gender policies and strategies.
- (ii) ECA/SRDC should contribute to these efforts by organizing training workshops and seminars on the issues.
- (iii) Planners and implementers (technocrats) who are supposed to be resources for mainstreaming gender should be sensitized on gender mainstreaming concepts and theories, which requires organizing training workshops. Governments should also collaborate with the SRDC-WA in conducting sub-regional training for the technocrats (planners, decision-makers and financing and budgetary managers) on procedures for mainstreaming gender into their development policies.
- (iv) ECOWAS should establish machinery for gender mainstreaming and provide it with adequate financial and human resources. It should have clear policy guidelines to ensure successful programme implementation.
- (v) Each country should conduct studies on preferential treatment of women and men or other vulnerable groups in development programmes, identify areas

lacking in gender equality policies, and initiate appropriate policies for mainstreaming gender in order to correct anomalies.

It is important to note that some of the above recommendations have been implemented or are in the process of being implemented.

For example:

- (i) The Centre has produced guidelines on Gender Mainstreaming Networking and Information Exchange. They have been reviewed by individuals and by an Expert Group meeting, and are in the process of being published and disseminated.
- (ii) The Centre has developed a project document to mobilize funds for implementing one of the important recommendations of the Expert Group Meeting, that is, the establishment of a Gender Mainstreaming Clearing House in the sub-region. The Clearing House will be a source for up-to-date indicators and technical reliable gender disaggregated data for effective planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating of gender mainstreaming activities. It will also create linkages with gender institutions, organizations, researchers, programme planners and programme implementers.
- (iii) The Centre is conducting a study on the status of gender mainstreaming perspectives in the national policies and programmes in the sub-region. A questionnaire has been produced and distributed and the report will be ready in December.
- (iv) The Centre has collaborated with UN Agencies and ACGD in conducting gender mainstreaming training on policy development in some countries in the sub-region.
- (v) The Centre has consistently assisted and supported ECOWAS in gender mainstreaming capacity building for designing and implementing gender mainstreaming policies and programmes in its Secretariat and in Member States. The Centre is also supporting ECOWAS in revitalizing the West African Women Association (WAWA), which is going through crises at present. WAWA is a specialized agency of ECOWAS and it is mandated to oversee the advancement of women in the sub-region.

B. Activities Related to International Cooperation and Inter-Agency Coordination and Liaison

The SRDC –WA has been involved in a number of activities aimed at strengthening gender mainstreaming in social activities and economic cooperation and integration in the sub-region. The activities listed below have been implemented:

- (i) The Centre was backed up by ACGD in organizing a technical workshop on development of gender mainstreaming policy for ECOWAS. The meeting did not only succeed in producing the guidelines for developing gender-mainstreaming policy for ECOWAS but also forged links between ECOWAS and gender advocacy partners. These partners include Commonwealth Secretariat, ILO and UNIFEM. This group has accepted to provide gender specialists to develop gender mainstreaming policies and strategies for ECOWAS, which will be ready for submission to ECOWAS policy organs, for adoption, in December 2002. The experts from the Commonwealth Secretariat and UNIFEM are to work with ECOWAS until a Gender Department is established in its secretariat.
- (ii) There was a joint ACGD /SRDC-WA/UNFPA training workshop in Niamey and Zinder (Niger) on gender mainstreaming for policy makers and senior staff in government ministries.
- (iii) SRDC WA with other UN System gender focal points assisted the Niger Ministry of Women's Affairs in planning and recruiting a consultant for identifying gender-mainstreaming indicators.
- (iv) The Centre participated in the training of gender focal points in English speaking countries from West and North African SRDCs (Nigeria and Sudan) in gender mainstreaming monitoring and evaluation, in relation to the implementation of the Beijing Platforms for action.
- (v) It also participated in the ACGD Ad-Hoc expert group meeting on mainstreaming gender perspectives into national budgeting and accounting, in Yaounde, Cameroon;
- (vi) The SRDC WA offers continuous technical assistance to ECOWAS on gender mainstreaming development in its Secretariat.

D. Field Project

The Centre is playing an important role in the development of peace programme in the Mano River Basin Countries. The overall purpose of this initiative is to support the government of Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone to undertake joint economic and development projects targeted at consolidating peace and stability in the three countries. The projects address the sub-regional dimension of post-conflict restructuring, concentrating, initially, on revitalization of the Mano-River Union Secretariat, economic management training, networking among civil society organizations, and establishment of joint security structures. Three projects proposals on gender issues are being developed

for integration into the revitalization process, namely, training of trainers in income generating economic activities for women affected by war, economic empowerment of women, and engendering the peace process. Plans for implementation of these projects are on course.

E. The Biennium 2002-2003 and the Way Forward

The performance evaluation report prepared by the Office of Programme Resource Management in the ECA showed that the Centre's implementation rate for 2000-2001 biennium was satisfactory. A self-evaluation report also concluded that work is carried out in accordance with the new ECA strategy based on excellence, efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and partnership for sub-regional integration.

The Centre is moving slowly away from only studies, reports and document production to more operational activities that can contribute directly to the socio-economic development in the member states. Accordingly, the Centre is committed to providing more technical support and to work more closely with IGOs and specialized technical institutions in the sub-region as well as the member states through implementation of its programme of work for the period 2002-2003. In this regard, five activities will receive particular attention. First, gender concerns will continue to be mainstreamed into all the substantive activities of the Centre. Second, promoting gender mainstreaming perspectives into the national policies in various sectors in support of sub-regional integration. Third, oversee the concrete integration of gender issues in the MANO River Union project. Fourth, collaborate with ACGD in its drive for monitoring and evaluation of Platforms for Action in the sub-region and integration of gender dimensions in national budgeting and accounts. Fifth, the Centre will follow up on the project on the Gender Mainstreaming Network and Information Exchange Clearing House vigorously.