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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

Eastern Africa Subregional Development Center (EA/SRDC)

**Fifth meeting of the Intergovernmental
Committee of Experts**

12-14 May 1998
Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)

26-28 May 1998

**REPORT OF THE HIGH-LEVEL SEMINAR ON
WOMEN'S ADVANCEMENT AND ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
EMPOWERMENT IN THE EASTERN AFRICA SUBREGION,
FOCUSING ON THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO**

PART ONE

OPENING OF THE SESSION

I. ORGANIZATION OF WORK

1. A seminar on women's advancement and economic empowerment within the context of democratization was held in Kinshasa (Democratic Republic of the Congo), at Bondeko Centre in the Limette District from Tuesday 21 to Thursday 23 October 1997.

2. The seminar was held under the auspices of the Government of Public Salvation and was organized jointly by the Ministry of Planning and National Development and the Ministry of Public Health, Social and Family Affairs in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) women's project and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). The preparatory work was carried out by the coordinating committee consisting of:

(a) Professor Shomba Kinyamba, Special Adviser on relations with international agencies in the Ministry of Planning and National Development - National Coordinator;

(b) Ms. Mputela Mbongolo, Director of the socio-economic development unit at the Department of Family Affairs - deputy coordinator;

(c) Mr. Katusisako David, Director, Department of Planning - Rapporteur.

II. OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE SEMINAR (agenda item 1)

3. The seminar was officially opened by Hon. Ubabi Babi, Minister of Planning and National Development; also in attendance were Hon. Jean-Baptiste Sonji, Minister of Public Health Social and Family Affairs, the UNDP Resident Representative, the Director of the Eastern Africa Subregional Development Centre, and representatives of diplomatic missions. Several speeches were made on this occasion, relating to the relevance of the seminar for women's advancement and economic empowerment.

4. Introducing the seminar programme, Professor Shomba Kinyamba, the National Coordinator, introduced the various delegations and craved the indulgence of the esteemed participants in respect of any shortcomings they might have noticed in the organization and progress of the seminar.

5. After welcoming the distinguished guests, the representative of the Directorate of Family Affairs emphasized that as the social function of women was already understood, the seminar would essentially be concerned with determining the necessary strategies for women's advancement in the economic arena.

6. Mr. Diallo, UNDP Resident Representative, dwelt on the role played by women in the socio-economic conditions that the Democratic Republic of the Congo had been experiencing in recent years, where women proved to be very enterprising in utilizing available opportunities in various sectors of the economy such as agriculture, livestock

farming and commerce. To strengthen this innovative capacity, women should be appropriately motivated and provided with the necessary amenities.

7. The Director of the Eastern Africa Subregional Development Centre, Mr. Peki Kana Kwala, underscored the changes that were taking place in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which constituted a dynamic basis which could be a foundation for capacity building to promote development efforts. He urged that particular attention should now be given to women, who constituted an important element in the national population and whose contribution to development was an indispensable asset though not dominant. He pointed out that women's affairs featured prominently in the reform programme that ECA had embarked upon; the focus was on three main areas, namely: the quest for self-sufficiency, individual rights and participation in decision-making.

8. The Minister for Planning and National Development expressed satisfaction at the holding of the seminar which tied in with the priorities of the Government of National Salvation, in which gender issues were given due prominence - a departure from old-style feminism, which far from engendering the kind of healthy competition which was what the Congo needed, could lead to sterile opposition, owing to misapprehension of the principles of women's liberation.

9. It was his wish that the seminar would provide an opportunity for an objective assessment of the opportunities available to women in the economic arena. The Minister then declared the seminar officially open.

III. REPRESENTATION

10. Thirty-six delegates, including twenty-eight from Kinshasa and nine from the provinces, participated in the seminar.

11. In addition, UNDP and the Eastern Africa Development Centre (UNECA), were represented.

IV. COMPOSITION OF THE BUREAU (agenda item 2)

12. To manage the three-day seminar, a bureau was appointed, consisting of:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| - Professor Shomba Kinyamba | - Chairman |
| - Ms. Mputela Mbongolo | - Vice-Chairperson |
| - Ms. Lotela Dimandja | - Moderator |
| - Ms. Pustshu Kalima | - Rapporteur |
| - Mr. Katusisako David | - Deputy Rapporteur |

IV. DISCUSSION AND ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND OF THE PROGRAMME OF WORK (agenda item 3)

13. The draft programme of work, as designed by the Preparatory Committee, was unanimously adopted, as follows:

Tuesday, 21 October 1997

Afternoon

Presentation of terms of reference and of the following studies:

- Equité et pouvoir économique des femmes dans un processus Démocratique. Cas de la République Démocratique du Congo.

(The advancement and economic empowerment of women in the context of democratization with particular reference to the Democratic Republic of the Congo).

- La Problématique de l'intégration de la femme Congolaise dans le processus de développement de la République Démocratique du Congo.

(The challenge of integration of Congolese women in national development).

Wednesday 22 October 1997

Morning:

- Les activités économiques génératrices de revenus (Income-earning occupations)
- Modalités de renforcement du pouvoir économique de la femme (Strategies for strengthening the economic empowerment of women)
- Les stratégies pour établir un partenariat durable entre les bailleurs de fonds et les femmes d'affaires congolaises; (Approaches towards sustainable partnerships between funding agencies and Congolese business women).

Afternoon:

Committee sessions.

Thursday 23 October 1997

Morning:

- Committee sessions continue;
- Adoption of committee reports in plenary;
- Discussion and adoption of seminar report.

Afternoon:

- Closing ceremony;
- Remarks by participants;
- Remarks by UNDP representative;
- Remarks by ECA representative;
- Closing remarks by the Minister of Public
Health, Social and Family Affairs;
- Refreshments.

PART II: PRESENTATION OF THE WORKING DOCUMENT AND OTHER PAPERS (agenda item 4)

I. WORKING DOCUMENT: Doc. ECA/EASRDC/SEM/01 (Agenda item 4)

THE ADVANCEMENT AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN THE CONTEXT OF DEMOCRATIZATION, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

14. By way of introduction, the Eastern Africa Subregional Development Centre (EASRDC) secretariat presented the working document.

15. Regarding the overall socio-economic conditions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the document reported that the transport and communications network was a mere fraction of its capacity at independence. River transport was only 10 per cent of what it had been during the 1950s. The ports were no longer maintained; in the major rivers as well as tributaries, dredging was a thing of the past, and there were neither buoys nor lights. The public telecommunications infrastructure was in bad shape; though the production and distribution of high-voltage electricity had increased, it was very expensive, overvalued from the standpoint of existing energy needs, and only 50 per cent of capacity was in use. Health services had also deteriorated. Whereas in many countries in sub-Saharan Africa, up to 50 per cent of recurrent expenditure on health was covered by the State, the government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo under the second Republic financed less than 5 per cent of public health expenditure.

16. Since the early 1990s, child malnutrition has doubled throughout the country, and particularly in the capital. Many families have a square meal only once in two days. Vaccination rates have fallen and hygienic standards in the urban areas are so poor that certain diseases, such as cholera, are resurfacing in the urban areas.

17. As regards the advancement of women, various regulatory and administrative mechanisms have been put in place in the area of gender equality, and women have demonstrated that they have potential and can perform as well as men in all areas of national life. Although a great deal remains to be done, it may be stated that there are in Congo today (a) traditional women whose way of life has hardly changed, particularly in the rural areas; (b) those, particularly in the urban setting, who wish to change their way of life but are tied down by old ways; and (c) women who have been completely liberated from retrograde traditions, and vociferously articulate their rights.

18. On equality and economic empowerment of women in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the paper underscores the growing awareness on the part of women as to their role in economic development and in the difficult socio-economic conditions prevailing in the country. This awareness would gradually find expression in a greater participation of women in business enterprises as sources of income. Already, women are active as small-scale restaurateurs, in the clothing and beauty industries, charcoal burning, confectionery, baking and even carpentry. Over 80 per cent of income-earning enterprises and activities in which women are involved are still in the informal sector. Interestingly, hardly five women were active members of the national entrepreneurs' association and international business

organizations. Lack of access to credit facilities is among the obstacles to the advancement of women in business.

19. Finally, the paper dwelt on development strategies, the scope of partnerships in their implementation, and on ten requisites for NGO leadership in that area.

II. FIRST PRESENTATION: Doc. ECA/EASRDC/SEM/2 (agenda item 5)

THE CHALLENGE OF INTEGRATION OF CONGOLESE WOMEN IN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

20. This paper, presented by Professor Shomba, dwelt on four points, namely: (a) Discussion on the concept of integration; (b) Congolese women in the traditional setting, the disintegration of women during the second republic; and (c) Policy orientations for women's integration in development.

21. On the concept of integration, the speakers said that integration, which was normally associated with concepts such as adaptation, accommodation, adjustment, and social cohesion, could be defined as a process whereby an individual internalizes the cultural norms prevailing in a given society or group. By extension it may include the entirety of the elements of a social system. Integration ties in with social norms, because customs exhibit characteristics that reflect the interests of the individual as well as those of the group, in a context where mechanisms of social control are put in place to guarantee integration between norms and behaviour. Functional integration is actualized in accordance with the level of interdependence or solidarity of the group members, as is evident in division of labour within such a system, as emphasized earlier.

22. It seems that functional integration has not been fully achieved, owing to the diversity of religious taboos, and limitations of the politico-legal regime; these factors have engendered a measure of vertical disparateness between men and women.

23. Regarding the situation of women in the traditional setting, the speaker said that women were engaged in a wide range of activities, including ploughing, sowing, weeding, transporting foodstuffs, carrying water, preparing and carrying firewood, going to market, brewing beer, looking after children, and maintaining the home. She was a planning agent, managing the household for the purposes of utilization of foodstuffs from the granary, and a productive agent in sectors such as agriculture, fishing, livestock rearing, and crafts; in a word, a pillar of family and community life. The contribution of women in the traditional setting was therefore multisectoral. They were an important part in the social fabric, by dint of the responsibilities they carried within the masculine/feminine division-of-labour dispensation, which had a religious and social underpinning.

24. On the policy orientations for women's integration in development in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the speaker stressed that the emancipation of women must be holistic and sustainable, extending to the more subtle forms of injustice and discrimination in the socio-cultural arena, because these too, hampered women's advancement, and jeopardized gender parity and economic empowerment. Women of all ages must expand their skills and develop their aptitudes and capacities as well as the necessary moral values to enable them

to fully participate, on an equal footing with men, in socio-economic and political development.

25. The speaker identified the following imperatives in relation to the challenge of women's integration in development in the Democratic Republic of the Congo:

(a) Rehabilitation of the educational infrastructure and improvement of the quality of education;

(b) Abolition of anachronistic customs and traditions, which tend to stifle the progress of women and, by extension, Congolese society;

(c) Actualization of the objective of equality before the law and in the spectrum of productive processes; and

(d) Elimination of gender-specific superiority and/or inferiority complexes.

III. SECOND PRESENTATION: Doc. ECA/EASRDC/SEM/03 (agenda item 6)

Women's participation in income generating activities

26. This paper was presented by Ms. Mputela Bongolo, Professor of Economics. She stressed that the Congolese economy had deteriorated considerably, and consequently, living conditions of the vast majority of the Congolese people had suffered; most families - both rural and urban - had found themselves unable to meet the direct and indirect costs of normal family life. In that scenario, women realized the key role they had to play, and so they took to income earning activities. She informed the participants that the Association des femmes entrepreneurs (Association of Women Entrepreneurs), ASSOFE, regarded any income-earning activity as a business enterprise. If women were leaders, individually or collectively, of business enterprises, they must have a clear understanding of the concept of income, in order to be able to choose from among the various income-earning opportunities available to them. "Income is what a natural or legal person earns by virtue of activities or goods belonging to that person, and the entirety of goods and monies that a legal person receives periodically, whatever its origin or consideration, is also income, but income also includes diverse categories of remuneration paid out to various factors participating in the production process", she said.

27. Family income attributable to women's efforts is becoming increasingly important for the well-being, and even the survival, of households. It is therefore pertinent to understand the economic objectives relating to that segment of family income in order to assess the degree of success achieved in attaining them. Regarding women's participation in income-earning activities, the participants learnt that women worked throughout the year in the fields, turning out very important produce such as cassava (which has various uses), maize, rice, groundnuts and vegetables. Apart from crops, women were also engaged in small-scale poultry farming at the level of the household, as well as in more extensive livestock rearing. In regions where large-scale fish production was not a male domain, women were also involved in small-scale fish breeding. The development of soap-making skills is an area in which many NGOs involved in women's affairs have shown a good deal of interest in both

the rural and urban settings. In addition, women's associations in the Congo are now engaged in confectionery, as well as in syrup, wine and butter production using locally available fruits such as marconja, papaya, pineapples, orange, lemon and plums, as well as groundnuts.

28. Women are also doing well in the pork meat trade; locally available raw materials (meat and other ingredients) and minimal equipment are used, with rudimentary technology. The bakery and pastry trades are a promising sector for women, particularly in the urban areas, owing to the availability of wheat flour. One also comes across women cabinetmakers and carpenters in the country. They make furniture on order, with simple technology. Some of the women make medicinal products from herbs. Most of them, however, earn a living as small traders dealing in foodstuffs, in marketplaces and around their homes.

Among the income-earning activities, of course, must also be mentioned the restaurants run by women serving a mostly low-income clientele, in various localities.

29. She also pointed out that women encountered more difficulties in the economic arena than men. She mentioned psycho-social, legal, institutional, administrative, technological and economic obstacles.

30. She made a number of recommendations, including:

- (a) Strengthening the education system and technical training in all sectors;
- (b) Strengthening skills-building through refresher courses, training seminars and study tours;
- (c) Increasing women's access to the resource base; and
- (d) Enhancing women's participation in decision-making roles in all sectors of the national economy.

IV. THIRD PRESENTATION: Doc. ECA/EASRDC/SEM/04 (agenda item 7)

Modalities for the Economic Empowerment of Women

31. By way of introduction, the speaker, Ms. Sya Kifula, Policy Adviser, Family Division (Ministry of Public of Health, Social and Family Affairs), addressed the question, What is the importance of women's empowerment?

32. On the definition of key aspects of the topic (viz. modalities, strengthening, economic empowerment), the speaker said that while on the one hand, modalities meant strategy or approach towards concretizing or consolidating something with a view to attaining a certain objective, empowerment meant empowerment of citizens actively involved in the pursuit of their own progress, so that the elements of such activities are channelled towards a single objective. These elements were part of life, continually acting either in furtherance of or in opposition to change. She posed the question as to how women's empowerment could be achieved in a world where their contribution was gradually coming to the fore. In her view,

empowerment means more than the capacity to produce: it also means, in particular, the capacity to (a) Effectively own the means of production; (b) Control, freely dispose of, and enjoy the income deriving from those means; (c) Have access to markets and to the spectrum of resources that are apt to contribute to women's advancement and to the promotion of women's activities; and (d) Participate in the production process, including information networks which catalyse the creation of income, savings, credit and investment, and which engender a sense of security.

33. The speaker said that considerations such as economic rights, familiarization with governmental institutions responsible for managing the economy, market structures, savings, negotiating skills, governmental structures and the decision-making processes which adversely affected economic activities, were overlooked by most Congolese women.

34. To address these obstacles, she proposed the strengthening of entrepreneurial skills, which would necessitate policy orientations in which training and education would be given due attention, as well as the following strategic orientations: (a) Rehabilitation of women by means of various mechanisms designed to restore women's dignity, freedom, self-assurance, physical and emotional integrity and a sense of integrity in the context of decision-making; (b) Training and education, or the creation of awareness through adequate education and training; (c) Encouraging self-sufficiency on the part of women, in action and choices, and endeavouring to combat resistance from the bureaucratic and traditional establishments, which are patriarchal; and (d) Capacity building of women; women's empowerment would consist in: improving living conditions, access to the resource base, conscientization to eliminate gender disparities and facilitate mobilization and monitoring; (e) Partnerships among agencies; (f) Support services for economic activities; (g) Forward-looking approach; and (h) Promotion services for financial institutions.

V. FOURTH PRESENTATION: Doc. ECA/EASRDC/SEM/05 (Agenda item 8)

Strategies for establishing sustainable partnerships between funding agencies and Congolese women in business

35. Mr. Katusisako dwelt on the challenge of women's advancement and economic empowerment. He highlighted the issues connected with understanding the concepts of strategy, partnership with funding agencies, women in business and entrepreneurs as well as an analysis of the multisectoral constraints which hampered efforts to promote the status of women.

36. Regarding economic constraints, the speaker pointed out that as a result of various recessionary phases which the Democratic Republic of the Congo had experienced, a number of income-generating activities had sprung up, such as small-scale trading, crafts, agriculture and small-scale food industries. Research had shown that women earned most of the household incomes. The proportion was particularly high in the rural areas.

37. Other studies indicate that the dynamism of women had enabled households all over the world to overcome grinding poverty and preserve social tranquility. The speaker pointed out that in their day-to-day activities, women were constantly faced with various handicaps, including environmental handicaps as well as those related to the status of woman.

Among the environmental handicaps are: cultural constraints, legal incapacity and socio-economic handicaps. He noted that the handicaps related to the status of woman included: (a) Inadequacy of management capabilities, usually arising from inadequate education; (b) Conflicting roles that women were expected to fulfil; and (c) Lack of technical expertise and inadequacy of support structures to improve management capabilities and facilitate access to credit facilities.

38. Regarding the development of partnerships to promote women's economic empowerment, the speaker proposed a number of strategic steps for women entrepreneurs, funding agencies, government, as well as bilateral and multilateral development-assistance agencies. He suggested that women entrepreneurs should be: (a) Given training and/or refresher courses to equip them with technical expertise and the latest management skills; (b) Assisted in acquiring the necessary skills to enable them to draw up and finalize investment projects for presentation to financial institutions to facilitate the mobilization of funds; (c) Encouraged to open bank accounts. In addition, he urged donors, and in particular, specialized banks, to: (i) adopt credit and savings approaches oriented towards the advancement of women; (ii) introduce special lending mechanisms for women entrepreneurs; (iii) simplify banking regulations, by for instance lowering deposit thresholds and introducing more flexible conditions for opening bank accounts; and (iv) encouraging women's participation in management and equity of institutions that provide financial services and lending facilities. He pointed out that the actualization of these strategies would necessitate the adoption by the government of a monetary policy, a trade policy, and monetary reform measures.

39. Reacting to the contributions presented, the participants underscored a number of constraints that hampered efforts to promote the status and economic empowerment of women in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. These included cultural constraints, legal incapacity, socio-economic obstacles, lack of technical and management expertise, and lack of capacity to obtain assistance from donors as well as bilateral and multilateral agencies involved in development assistance. To address these constraints, the participants underscored the desirability of seeking ways and means of supporting gender solidarity through networking.

40. Three committees were set up to look into the imperatives of the advancement and economic empowerment of women and suggest solutions. The committees are concerned, respectively, with:

- (a) Women and income-earning activities;
- (b) Modalities of promoting the economic empowerment of Congolese women; and
- (c) Strategies of establishing sustainable partnerships with donors.

1. WOMEN AND INCOME-EARNING ACTIVITIES (First Committee)

41. Regarding income-earning activities, the first committee identified poultry farming and livestock rearing, including the keeping of goats, as priority areas. The committee identified the following finished products, in order of priority:

(a) Finished products

(i) Foodstuffs:

Manufacture of chikwangu;
 Salt fish;
 Juice and syrup made from locally-available fruits;
 Ginger powder from raw ginger (syxette: yoghurt);
 Pork meats (blood sausage, pigs head)
 Jam
 Biscuits, sweets, butter, stewed fruits, orange honey
 Cassava croquette
 Raw salads
 Soya milk/peanut milk
 Wines, etc.

(ii) Products other than foodstuffs

- Soap manufacturing
- "Oriental" slippers;
- Tapestry and basket-weaving (incl.handbags)
- African dyestuffs; dyeing;
- Dishes and bottle stoppers;
- Wax;
- Hair pomade;
- Cosmetics;
- Pottery;
- Basketry;
- Sewing crafts (dolls, bags, patchwork)

(b) Services

(i) Commerce:

- Hospitality industry;
- Sale of various articles and commodities;
- Services (beauty salons, confectionery, travel agencies, customs agencies, transportation, etc.)

(ii) Currency business

(money-changing and exchange agencies)

- Money-changing;
- Sale of currency and other foreign-exchange transactions.

42. The first committee also considered the obstacles that women encountered in their income-earning endeavours. The committee members noted that women encountered a number of difficulties in their efforts to ensure the well-being of the households and contribute to the country's socio-economic development.

(a) Social and cultural obstacles

- Owing to lack of information on quality and packaging of products such as complexion cream, butter, jam, etc., some of the locally manufactured products are under-appreciated;
- The extended family is another significant factor in women's socio-economic endeavours;
- Inferiority complex on the part of husbands with low incomes;
- Lack of solidarity in information sharing;
- Lack of interest in training seminars;
- Unwillingness to adopt new techniques.

(b) Legal handicaps

- Lack of knowledge on regulations governing the manufacture of local products;
- Non-implementation of legislation relating to small and medium-scale enterprises;
- Lack of knowledge/information regarding the regulatory regime governing sole traders;
- Women did not have access to real property.

(c) Institutional bottlenecks

- Lack of coordination amongst various associations and NGOs concerned with women in business;
- Lack of knowledge/information concerning the available mechanisms at communal, regional and national levels for entrepreneurship promotion.

(d) Administrative handicaps

- Absence of organizational and management structures for financial accounting, administrative services, documentation, etc.;
- Cumbersome procedures for initiation of enterprises.

(e) Technical handicaps

- Lack of modern and appropriate technical equipment;
- Lack of training in the use of new techniques.

43. In response to the bleak picture presented by the first committee, the following recommendations were made:

- (a) Give prominence to local products over imported goods;
- (b) Strengthen and support existing viable networks;
- (c) Create awareness of, and confidence with, modern techniques among women;
- (d) Review the land law with a view to providing women with access to real property;
- (e) Strengthen the economic thrust of UNDP's women-and- development project in order to facilitate follow-up of the seminar and elaborate a plan of action on women's economic empowerment;
- (f) Eliminate gender-specific superiority and inferiority complexes through sensitization, confidence-building and training;
- (g) Improve the quality of local products in order to win the confidence of consumers and encourage people to use these products;
- (h) Organize regular training sessions for the manufacture and presentation of local products;
- (i) Combat dependency of active members of households and urge government to create employment;
- (j) Create and encourage mechanisms for exchanges of experiences between women and partner-agencies;
- (k) Promote women's innovative capacities through training;
- (l) Create awareness among women regarding the existing coordinating mechanisms, including at the grassroots;
- (m) Acquaint NGOs with quality and other standards in product manufacturing and marketing;
- (n) Create awareness among women on legislation connected with their activities;
- (o) Provide women with training on the management of sole traders and larger businesses;

- (p) Facilitate access to credit and improve the conditions attached to the granting of credit;
- (q) Strengthen existing credit mechanisms (Likelemba, Tantine, etc.);
- (r) Develop women's creativity; and
- (s) Rehabilitate access roads into agricultural areas.

2. MODALITIES FOR PROMOTING WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT IN THE CONGO (second committee)

44. The second committee (on modalities for promoting women's economic empowerment in the Democratic Republic of the Congo) identified the constraints that hinder women's economic empowerment. The members of the committee then considered the modalities of addressing those constraints before proposing concrete actions to promote women's economic empowerment.

45. The constraints, modalities and actions are set out below:

(a) Cultural constraints

Constraints	Modalities	Concrete actions
1. Lack of forward-looking approach (at individual and community levels)	1. Strengthen networking at national and international levels among NGOs involved in gender issues for the exchange of information and experiences in order to achieve a more forward-looking gender activism.	1. The common cause of women must be foremost in the minds of all women to facilitate the implementation of the actions initiated.
2. Lack of knowledge, which hinders the integration of women into society (education, information and training).	2. Intensify training, information dissemination, sensitization, confidence-building and mobilization to promote women's advancement.	2. Encourage male involvement in the gender issues that touch on the well-being of the household, by providing material and moral support to women.
3. Traditions that hinder the advancement of women.	3. Establish mechanisms for the flow of information	3. Introduce open fora and organise leisure activities to enable women to express themselves in a relaxed atmosphere so that they can contribute to national development on the basis of their own individuality.
4. Absence of clear and forthright information regarding women's aspirations.	4. Enhance women's self-esteem as well as their standing in the eyes of society.	4. Provide formal, informal and permanent training mechanisms: - <u>Formal</u> : through education and public instruction; - <u>Informal</u> : through radio and television programmes; - <u>Permanent</u> : by establishing or increasing training centres at the grassroots level with a view to eradicating illiteracy by the year 2000.
5. Absence of appropriate channels of information.	5. Engage male understanding and involvement through gender lobbying.	5. Disseminate information regarding legislation; for instance, article 448 of the labour code has been revised, so that the consent of the spouse is no longer required, except where an enterprise would adversely affect household chores; women are not aware of the revision.
6. Lack of interest, on the part of women, in existing channels of information.	6. Educate men and women in the meaning and sharing of responsibility in the household as well as in the workplace, taking into account the multifaceted roles played by women.	6. Information campaign, and establishment of a documentation centre on women's affairs. - Select and maintain works on subjects of interest to women.
7. Lack of self-esteem, and a plethora of stereotypes.	7. Encourage women to take an interest in channels of information.	
8. Inferiority complex, cultivated by women themselves.		

(b) Socio-economic constraints

Constraints	Modalities	Concrete actions
1. Lack of access to credit for women	1. Establish funds to facilitate women's access to credit schemes, which always necessitate some contribution by the beneficiary	1. Possibly, each participant could, symbolically, put down at least one dollar towards building up a fund to be placed in FOPEC with a view to rendering it operational
2. Lack of equipment/tools to accede to economic empowerment	2. Encourage and assist women's access to markets at the national and global levels	2. Assist women in the quantitative and qualitative promotion of their enterprises through exchanges of information and experiences with women entrepreneurs of other countries in order to enhance their competitiveness
3. Lack of equipment/tools to analyse their situation	3. Familiarize women with the mechanisms of governmental institutions which have an impact on the economy	3. Facilitate the procurement of the requisite documentation, by establishing special schemes across the country
4. Lack of appropriate financial institutions to enhance women's advancement on the economic front	4. Establish and facilitate lobbying and networking mechanisms	4. Organize regular sensitization and training campaigns on management to strengthen women's economic power
5. Lobbying/networking incapacity on the part of women	5. Introduce more relaxed conditions of access to credit by reducing the rates of interest	5. Organize appropriate literacy campaigns
6. Lack of access to the means of production	6. Place adequate means of production at the disposal of women to enable them to realize their potential	6. Organize target groups of women entrepreneurs as catalysts of entrepreneurial growth
7. Under-appreciation of women in the financial arena	7. Liberate property rights to promote property-owning by women	
8. Inadequacy of business culture		
9. Low purchasing power, which hinders women's economic empowerment		
10. Inadequacy of property rights		
11. Lack of information regarding the movement of goods and services		
12. Lack of knowledge regarding appropriate technologies.		

(c) Political and legal constraints

Constraints	Modalities	Concrete actions
1. Lack of follow-up and political will	1. Women's participation in decision-making at all levels and in all sectors	1. Encourage women to be able to shoulder responsibility and take risks
2. Lack of knowledge as to the rights of women	2. Legal education should be invigorated	2. Raise the level of representation of women in government and in the diplomatic service (30 per cent would be an ideal target as a minimum)
3. Inadequate legislative framework and lack of remedial mechanisms	3. Political will should be actualized	3. Carry out legal consultancies
4. Mistreatment of women	4. Study the capacities of existing NGOs and their ability to satisfy specific needs	4. Strengthen NGO-government and NGO funding agencies partnerships by convening an NGO-government round table
5. Most women are inclined to liberate themselves as individuals	5. Install a sound administrative-legal framework	5. Seek to acquire a thorough knowledge of women's needs
6. Legal incapacity of married women and under-representation of women in decision-making bodies	6. Thorough dissemination of the rights of women	6. Security of women and their property, having been so sensitized
7. The family code is not yet entirely cleared of discriminatory aspects	7. Government should ensure security and political stability	7. Sensitization and confidence-building
8. The rights of women are flouted at separation or decease of either spouse		8. Sensitize government on the issue of political stability and security, through advocacy
9. Insecurity and political instability		

3. STRATEGIES FOR ESTABLISHING SUSTAINABLE PARTNERSHIPS WITH FUNDING AGENCIES (Third committee)

46. The third committee formulated three sets of recommendations based on the consideration that establishing sustainable partnerships necessitates a collaborative approach on the part of women in business, NGOs, government and funding agencies as well as bilateral and multilateral development-assistance agencies.

47. The recommendations are categorized as follows:

(a) Women in business and NGOs

- (i) Technical training and refresher courses for women, in all sectors;
- (ii) Initiate and train women in the formulation of projects for presentation to lending agencies;
- (iii) Educate women on the advantages of maintaining a bank account, and encourage them to do so, rather than hoarding money;
- (iv) Establish a development bank/lending institution for women;
- (v) Look into the possibilities of external partnerships to serve as a guarantee mechanism for credit facilities extended to women, and establish networking for women seeking such facilities;
- (vi) Consolidate the structural milieu in which women in business operate;
- (vii) Support study projects, preparation of documentation, and involvement of libraries.

(b) Government

- (i) Introduce training courses on commerce and business management into the school curricula;
- (ii) Ensure monetary stability;
- (iii) Streamline the macroeconomic structures;
- (iv) Establish a flexible trade regulation policy framework that is accessible to economic operators;
- (v) Establish development funds tailored to the needs of women;
- (vi) Institute a coordinating and follow-up mechanism for the actions of funding agencies and NGOs to avoid dispersal of funds;

- (vii) Establish more flexible conditions for the provision and repayment of credit;
 - (viii) Introduce mechanisms for channelling and encouraging savings and for identifying appropriate credit facilities for women in business; and
 - (ix) Establish mechanisms through which women entrepreneurs and NGOs can participate in economic-policy formulation.
- (c) Funding agencies and development-assistance agencies (bilateral and multilateral)
- (i) Relax the modalities of extending credit facilities to women;
 - (ii) Carry out and facilitate research to assess the contribution of women to national economic development; and
 - (iii) So far as possible, utilize local capacities in the implementation of development programmes.
- (d) Other recommendations (miscellaneous)

NGOs and other participants at the seminar were urged to consider the following recommendations:

- (i) Institution of a mobilizing mechanism for the purposes of soliciting funding for women's economic empowerment in all areas where they are active;
- (ii) Rehabilitation of educational institutions and improvement of the quality of education, giving particular attention to the needs of women and girls, who are somewhat sidelined in the award of scholarships, and in particular, for the purposes of technical disciplines. A strong appeal was made in that regard, to funding agencies, particularly UNDP and UNICEF;
- (iii) Promotion of gender-sensitivity through the inclusion of gender issues in the education of both boys and girls at all levels, particularly in the school curricula and across a broad spectrum of activities.

VI. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS (agenda item 9)

48. The following conclusions and recommendations emerged from the exchange of views and discussion of the programme. The conclusions and recommendations relate to development strategies that have been identified, and their implications, as well as to actions that have been decided upon, and then role of the State, funding agencies and NGOs in the cause of women's economic empowerment.

49. The conclusions and recommendations are as follows:

6.1. Development strategies (issues)

- (a) Adequate understanding of gender issues in development, at all levels;
- (b) Creation of women's groups at the grassroots, with which NGOs can work;
- (c) Involvement of the community, at the grassroots level, in the evaluation and eradication of poverty, to achieve women's economic empowerment;
- (d) Action-oriented, forward-looking, focused objectives.

6.2 What the strategy entails

50. The implications of the strategy for women's economic empowerment, as a whole, particularly for funding agencies, government and NGOs, are as follows:

(a) Funding agencies

Imperatives would include:

- (i) Review and evaluation of the existing policies pertaining to lending and other funding channels (in collaboration with government and NGOs), and in particular, the modalities and conditions of such assistance as well as the effectiveness of NGO participation in development activities and programmes;
- (ii) A well-established planning structure designed to gradually abolish the system of projects/programmes of activity and lay more emphasis on NGOs; and
- (iii) Ensuring that the management structure is transparent and above-board.

(b) Government

Government should, for its part:

- (i) Encourage participative approaches to development at all levels;
- (ii) Periodically evaluate the level of implementation of national development policies, and in particular, evaluate the contribution of NGOs and funding agencies as development partners; and
- (iii) Ensure that the management structure is transparent and above-board.

(c) NGOs

NGOs should:

- (i) As a matter of policy, encourage participative attitudes, approaches and strategies;

- (ii) Adopt networking and involve other partners in development;
- (iii) Having so envisaged at the outset in their respective programmes of work, gradually withdraw from the scene, while progressively preparing local communities to take over from them and assume the running of project activities;
- (iv) Ensure sound management approaches, on the basis of transparency; and
- (v) Strengthen the development of local capacities.

6.3. Required attributes of NGOs

- (a) Clear-cut objectives;
- (b) Responsive to the community's needs;
- (c) Competence, commitment and a democratic approach required of leaders, staff and other members;
- (d) Participative organizational structure;
- (e) Transparency and sound management;
- (f) Sensitive to gender-related problems in development;
- (g) Technical and organizational ability;
- (h) Possess an internal follow-up and evaluation mechanism which should be participative;
- (i) Mobilize local resources; and
- (j) Strictly adhere to the code of conduct established by and for NGOs.

6.4. Proposed actions for funding agencies, government and NGOs

- (a) Funding agencies:
 - (i) Define, jointly with government and NGOs, the criteria of selection as well as policy frameworks and orientation ahead of commencement of collaborative actions with NGOs;
 - (ii) Support government strategies of collaboration with NGOs, with a view to affording a greater say for women in socio-economic development;
 - (iii) Adopt a participative approach in decision-making as regards the identification and implementation of projects, particularly by involving partners, including rural-based communities;

- (iv) Adopt, at the outset, a timetable of gradual withdrawal in the operational plan of the project;
- (v) Ensure the prompt availability of inputs and establishment of an operational participative system of follow-up and evaluation, with the project management body;
- (vi) Ensure that programmes of work and annual budgets are elaborated with the participation of all partners, including the beneficiaries; and
- (vii) Establish partnerships with effective NGOs that have an interest in women's advancement.

(b) Government:

- (i) Evaluate and redefine gender-specific strategies in development, with a view to promoting women's empowerment, within the overall national-development strategy;
- (ii) Supply adequate resources at the local level (i.e. district and grassroots levels);
- (iii) Support the development of institutional capacities for community-based groups and NGOs working with those groups, through capacity-building at community level, the creation of awareness, and by affording access to resources;
- (iv) Eradicate poverty and ensure food security at the level of the household, sustainable sources of income, as well as access to social services, financial resources, technological progress and markets. Ensure the reduction of the pressure of day-to-day chores borne by women, and overall improvement of the capacities of low-income communities to participate fully in development;
- (v) Adopt a participative approach at all stages of development programmes and projects, particularly by involving NGOs as well as the target communities;
- (vi) Support all measures designed to promote the sustainability of programmes, in parallel with the gradual withdrawal of external assistance, strengthening of service delivery and capacity-building at the community level;
- (vii) Facilitate access to credit for women.

(c) NGOs:

- (i) Institute/maintain an internal evaluation mechanism;
- (ii) Involve target communities in all phases of programmes, viz. identification, management, implementation, follow-up and evaluation as well as in other decision-making aspects, particularly the drawing up of budgets;
- (iii) Be accessible to the target communities;

- (iv) Adopt indicators that can measure and help to attain the highest standards and performance;
- (v) Establish mechanisms of cooperation and coordination that adequately spread out human and other resources and disseminate information to communities down to the grassroots;
- (vi) Establish rules and procedures that guarantee competent leadership as well as transparency and accountability;
- (vii) Ensure that they (i.e. the NGOs) as well as the target communities can become catalysts of transformations that are apt to bring about improvements in the socio-economic situation of women; and
- (viii) Draw up over-arching plans designed to strengthen their own organizational capacities as well as those of the target communities.

VII. CLOSURE OF THE MEETING (agenda item 10)

51. Before the closure of the seminar proceedings, certificates of participation were given to the experts, organizations and participants.

52. After speeches by the Director of EASRDC, the UNDP Resident Representative and a vote of thanks on behalf of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Minister of Public Health, Social and Family Affairs officially closed the proceedings of the high-level seminar on women's advancement and economic empowerment in the Eastern Africa subregion, focusing on the Democratic Republic of the Congo.