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Côte d'Ivoire

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UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

**MISSION REPORT ON
BRAINSTORMING MEETING ON GENDER TRAINING AND RESEARCH:
STRATEGIES FOR MAINSTREAMING
5 - 9 OCTOBER 1992
ABIDJAN, COTE D'IVOIRE**

20 OCTOBER 1992

1. The Brainstorming meeting on Gender, Training and Research: Strategies for Mainstreaming organized by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) in collaboration with the African Development Bank (ADB) was held in Abidjan at ADB headquarters from 5 to 9 October 1992. The meeting was attended by research and training institutes, non-governmental organizations implementing grass root projects, the Organization of African Unity (OAU), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) (copy of list of participants attached).
2. Prior to holding this meeting and as part of its new initiative to strengthen institutional capacity for mainstreaming gender concerns in African development, UNIFEM had fielded several missions to the region in the late 1991. The objective of these field missions was to assess the potential and constraints of African training and research institutions to undertake effective gender training and research programme. Therefore, the Brainstorming meeting was organized as a follow-up to the field mission findings. The meeting was a preparatory phase of a wider process that will engage both UNIFEM and the ADB in the formulation of a larger-scale comprehensive programme which will aim to: strengthen the institutional capacity of African training and research institutes to mainstream gender concerns in the development process. The ultimate goal is to support the institutionalization of gender training programme that are relevant, sustainable and truly responsive to the region's development needs and priorities.
3. While gender training is becoming widely accepted, as a strategic tool for mainstreaming women's concerns in development, a number of serious constraints undermine its effectiveness as a development tool. In this

view, the brainstorming meeting brought together key training institutes, researchers and trainers involved in various facets of gender training and research in the region with the purpose to:

- i) Examine the premises and assumptions of gender analysis as well as paradigms underpinning gender training;
- ii) Determine the human resource needs of gender training programmes and activities in Africa;
- iii) Review existing training methodologies and materials, the linkage between training and research, and the need for information, documentation technologies; and
- iv) Identify constraints to institutionalizing gender training and research.

4. Based on the above objectives, it was hoped that through discussions and group work, the meeting will come up with conceptual framework for gender training in Africa, consensus on concrete proposals and strategies for addressing the existing constraints and network building among the various research and training institutes for exchange of information, joint activities and ideas on expertise available in the region.

5. The brainstorming meeting was in two phases. Phase one discussed critical issues with regard to institutional capacity-building in gender training and research and preliminary proposals were presented to address identified needs. While phase two examined the establishment of a Follow-up Mechanism for Programme Guidance and Development. Panel discussion sessions were followed by working group discussions.

6. Critical issues discussed with regard to institutional capacity building in gender training and research included the consideration of dominant socio-cultural and economic issues, the influence of global institutional changes, how to operate within existing constraints and networking. There was need to link socio-cultural and economic areas into gender training. For example, most policies that affect women's development activities, particularly in terms of the allocation of resources and access to productive services emanate from institutions with well established agendas where women's roles and contributions are almost "invisible". Therefore gender training and the institutionalization of that training can be a key mechanism for sustained changes in the thinking and the routine practices of an organization.

7. Another conceptual issue considered with regard to capacity building in gender training was the level of gender training that is required and that can effectively be delivered and linked to needs. Training approaches and techniques used in gender training was also considered important in terms of being able to package into products for wider application and that the material used in gender training should as far as possible incorporate or repackage existing materials. Training manuals/modules developed by PAID for example were explained and displayed. Monitoring and evaluation was also discussed as an important mechanism for determining the extent to which gender training has resulted in gender responsive policies, programmes and that Monitoring and Evaluation systems should be developed to reflect the range and scope of gender training activities and processes.

8. Strategies for effective institutional capacity building on gender training and research were also explored during the discussion. They included among others: gender sensitisation; commitment to feminism; (trainers/lecturers should be gender sensitive); human resources needs; information technology and literature to support gender training and research networking/exchange or sharing resources and materials; marketability of gender graduates and sustainability of gender training and research programmes.
9. In summary, it may be concluded that gender training and research have important role to play in focusing and addressing the changing and dynamic nature of gender relations. Gender training for instance by itself is not sufficient to bring about change in the "system". However, it has critical potentials in bringing about change in the thinking, perceptions and practices of gender blind mainstream institutions and organizations. It is also a tool for the empowerment of women at the grass roots. The synergy created by this top-down as well as bottom-up approach will ultimately lead to sustained policies and actions in support of women in development activities.
10. Formation of a Follow-up Mechanism for Programme Guidance and Development

One of the principal objectives of the meeting was to set-up a mechanism to ensure effective follow-up of the various programmes and proposals that emerged from the meeting. The meeting formed a regional advisory group composed of research and training institutes which will serve as

policy and programme "think tank" on gender training and research in the region. In addition, the advisory group will provide substantive guidance to the formulation of the larger multi-component programme in support of institutional capacity-building in gender training and research. It was decided that the advisory group will hold its first meeting in Tunis during the first quarter of 1993.

ECA/UNIFEM consultation

During the meeting in Abidjan, ECA took the opportunity to hold a brief meeting with UNIFEM. The meeting focused on preparations for the regional conference, strengthening national machineries and the proposed establishment of a Federation of African Women Entrepreneurs. During the discussion, it was agreed that ECA and UNIFEM will convene jointly an Expert Group meeting to consider strategies for strengthening national machineries in the region. ECA also briefed UNIFEM on preparatory activities for the regional conference and solicited UNIFEM's support to these preparatory activities as well as to the establishment of the Federation. Specific activities requiring UNIFEM support are yet to be identified at a later stage.

ECA/ADB consultation

ECA sought for an appointment to meet with the ADB WID Unit officer-in-charge at the time. In the meeting with the ADB staff member, the two organizations first briefed each other on the functions and activities carried out by ECA and ADB. Mainstreaming of WID within both ECA and ADB secretariat were discussed and stressed the fact that it was necessary to have policies for gender planning that provide a framework

for gender programming in each of the substantive productive divisions. In discussing about the establishment of a Federation of African Women Entrepreneurs, ADB expressed its interest in the activities associated with the Federation and expressed their willingness to facilitate in arranging appointments for the ECA consultants undertaking the feasibility preparatory studies for the Federation and the Bank for African Women. The ADB WID Unit also requested ECA/ATRCW to provide the Unit with information in respect of preparatory activities for the regional conference. ECA and ADB WID Unit also agreed to establish a continued network for the exchange of information. ECA also informed the ADB WID Unit of the Africa Regional Coordinating Committee for the Integration of Women, ARCC annual meeting which will be held in April 1993 and requested the Unit to send a representative to the meeting.

Follow-up activities after the Abidjan meeting

Following the UNIFEM/ADB meeting in Abidjan, ATRCW has:

- i) Included all names of the research and training institutes, NGOs represented at the meeting in its mailing list;
- ii) Documentations as requested at the meeting have been sent to all concerned research and training institutes;
- iii) A proposal concerning ATRCW/UNIFEM joint Expert Group meeting has been sent to UNIFEM for their comments;
- iv) The Director of Pan-African Institute for Development has informed ATRCW of the Institute's planned visit to Addis Ababa, 9 - 13 November. ATRCW will arrange appointments for the Director to meet with some divisions at ECA.

"BRAINSTORMING MEETING ON GENDER TRAINING AND RESEARCH:
STRATEGIES FOR MAINSTREAMING"

5 - 9 OCTOBER 1992

ABIDJAN, COTE D'IVOIRE

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