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July 2004

ENGLISH

**UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL**

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

African Centre for Gender and Development (ACGD)

**Workshop on the Operationalisation of the Sub-regional Enterprise
Development Facilities for Women Entrepreneurs (Phase II)**

**13 - 15 July 2004
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

REPORT

594

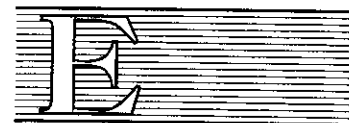
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I. INTRODUCTION

The Workshop on the Operationalization of the Enterprise Development Facility (EDF) for Women Entrepreneurs (Phase II) was held from 13-15 July 2004, at the United Nations Conference Center in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The programme of the workshop is attached as Annex I.

The main objectives of the workshop focused on running the new autonomous structure of the EDF, the launching of the EDF website, adoption of the short term plan of action, and mobilization of partners to implement the short term plan of action as well as to support the autonomous EDF structure.

A total of 16 countries of Eastern and Western Africa were represented, namely, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cote D'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, Togo, and Uganda. Participants to the workshop were drawn from women entrepreneurs associations, national chambers of commerce and industries, financial and technology institutions as well as promoters of grassroots women. From partners side, the Government of Uganda, the National Chambers of Commerce and Industries of Togo, United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Asian Centre for Entrepreneurial Initiative (ASCENT), the Economic and Monetary Union of West Africa (WEMU), the Commonwealth Secretariat, Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WEIGO), African Regional Center for Technology (ARCT) and Sasakawa Global 2000 were represented. The list of participants is attached as Annex II.

II. THE OPENING SESSION

The workshop was officially opened by Mme. Lalla Ben Barka, Deputy Executive Secretary of the ECA. In her opening remarks she highlighted the creation of the new support structure for women entrepreneurs as a concrete action on translating the commitment that was put forward since the Bangkok Forum of 1997. She further made note of the important services that the Enterprise Development Facility would be providing mostly through electronic communication. In this connection, she reiterated the need for effective information and communication exchange as one of the tools for addressing the challenges of

globalization. She then pointed out the provision of business information as the major activity of the EDF with the branch offices in Lome and Kampala, serving as channels or windows in the field. She expressed her gratitude to all the partners who have been supporting the initiative, and thanked the perseverance of the African Center for Gender and Development (ACGD) and the resource team for making it a reality.

Preceding the opening statement of the Deputy Executive Secretary, Mme. Fathoumata Marthe Ehui, a representative of women entrepreneurs who has been involved in the initiative since the Bangkok Forum, thanked ACGD for its determination towards promoting African women entrepreneurs and requested partner organizations to support the autonomous structure of the EDF so that it could effectively provide the envisaged services for enhancing the capacities and capabilities of African women entrepreneurs.

Mme. Josephine Ouedraogo, Director of ACGD, later expressed her appreciation and thanks to the Governments of Togo and Uganda for hosting the two sub-regional offices, and UNDP, EMU, Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF), International Development Research Center (IDRC), Commonwealth Secretariat and WIEGO for their support in setting up the EDF. She also thanked the resource team of ACGD working on the initiative.

III. PROCEEDINGS OF THE WORKSHOP

3.1 Background on the Enterprise Development Facility and Objectives of the Workshop

The background on the Enterprise Development Facility Initiative and the Objectives of the Workshop was presented by Mme. Josephine Ouedraogo. She provided the history of the initiative that dates back to the 1997 Bangkok Forum on the Economic Empowerment of Women that was jointly organized by UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa and the United Nations Economic and Social Council for Asia and the Pacific, UNESCAP. At that Forum the ECA and in particular the African Centre for Gender and Development was requested by African women entrepreneurs to coordinate the implementation of the recommendations of the Forum at the regional level. The major recommendations include strengthening the technological and business capacities of African women entrepreneurs and the development of

strong networks among and between African women entrepreneurs and women entrepreneurs and institutions in Asia.

As per the recommendations of the Forum and in line with the request made by African women entrepreneurs at the Forum, in 1998, the African Centre for Gender and Development in collaboration with UNDP Africa Bureau, organized a study tour for African women entrepreneurs and selected technological institutions engaged in food processing to India and Sri-Lanka. At the end of the study tour, participants came up with a number of recommendations on capacity and capability development as well as on the need to create and strengthen networking. In order to consolidate the recommendations of the study tour participants as well as the relevant recommendations made at various fora, ECA organized a follow-up meeting in Bujumbura, Burundi, in 1999. The follow-up meeting came with clear resolutions for the setting up of sub-regional support mechanisms for women entrepreneurs. Based on that recommendation, a feasibility study was undertaken by ECA in collaboration with the Asian partner, ASCENT. The study identified Uganda and Togo as suitable locations for the sub-regional support mechanisms in Eastern and Western Africa respectively.

Accordingly, the West Africa EDF was launched in year 2001 and the East Africa EDF in 2003. During the launching workshop in Kampala, it was decided to run the EDF as an autonomous structure before the end of 2004.

Mme. Ouedraogo then explained the objectives of the workshop which was partly based on the recommendations of the Kampala workshop that emphasized on the creation of an autonomous entity of the EDF. She further highlighted the other objectives of the workshop related to the website and the adoption of the short term plan of action.

Some participants who were members of the study tour to India and Sri-lanka and those who participated in the follow-up meeting of the study tour intervened by way of congratulating ACGD/ECA for bringing the EDF initiative to such a level and expressed their commitment to go along with the independent autonomous structure. Participants further stressed on the need to be well armed and organized to face the challenges of globalization and compete in world market.

3.2 Presentations by Participants

Representatives of women entrepreneurs' associations made presentations on the general business environment and opportunities in their respective countries, constraints and challenges being faced by women entrepreneurs and their expectations from the EDF.

3.3 Synthesis of Participants' Presentations

The synthesis of the constraints and challenges and expectations from the EDF was presented by Ms. Melkrist Hailu, consultant, ACGD.

Challenges and Constraints

The expressed challenges and constraints were interdependent and interrelated which were the reflections of the socio-cultural factors that face women as business operators and the lack of supportive policy environment and macro-economic framework.

a. In the area of information,

- there is limited access to and inadequate use of available information, i.e production technology, processing and packaging, information on available markets and their requirements,
- there is lack of knowledge and access to modern means of information and communication, and thus limited use of ICTs and e-commerce.

b. In the area of finance,

- women entrepreneurs do not have access to formal banking institutions which require collateral,
- interest rates are high
- women entrepreneurs do not have full information on how to access finance and credit

c. In the area of education and training,

- women entrepreneurs do not have the required educational background to handle businesses like their male counterparts,
- training and education are not tailor made and in most of the cases language is a barrier.

d. In the area of networking,

Although there exist networks of women entrepreneurs, they do not have adequate capacity and are not linked with each other or with other important networks nationally, regionally and globally.

Expectations from the EDF

EDF is expected to,

- a. serve as an information hub, whereby usable information is well analyzed and disseminated to women entrepreneurs through the website. The EDF should have information on appropriate production technology adaptable to local conditions with processes including packaging, information on markets, information on sources of finance, etc. In relation to this, EDF is expected to advertise products of women on its website.
- b. organize and provide training in entrepreneurial and management skills development, like how to start and run businesses, how to prepare bankable project proposals and business plans, how to promote business according to international business ethics, and training on ICTs.
- c. strengthen networking at sub-regional, regional and international levels by organizing events and conferences as a way of linking and exposing African women entrepreneurs to regional and global markets.
- d. provide advisory services in strengthening national associations of women entrepreneurs and also approach governments for the creation and adoption of supportive policy environment for women entrepreneurship development, and
- e. strengthen South – South Cooperation through experience sharing, information exchange and marketing.

3.4 Presentation on the Modality of the New Autonomous Structure

The legal set up of the EDF as a new autonomous structure was presented by Ms. Opportune Santos, Consultant of ACGD.

She highlighted the fact that the proposed legal structure of the EDF has come out as a result of consultations held with stakeholders on the appropriate set up of the EDF. Accordingly, the EDF as an autonomous body is proposed to have one main structure with a central executive office and the two existing branch offices in Lome and Kampala, to attain the objectives of its establishment, namely,

- to create and strengthen national, regional and international networks for exchange of information and partnership among women entrepreneurs and stakeholders working in the area of enterprise development,
- To facilitate women entrepreneurs' access to information related to markets and prices, regional and international trade fairs and exhibitions, legal and judicial requirements for business development, capital markets and access to financial resources, etc.,
- To organize capacity building activities for members of the EDF on various issues such as skill development in ITC, business management, etc.
- To create a learning process/framework for technical apprenticeship and coaching young women who want to establish business enterprises.
- To create a database on women entrepreneurs in Africa and other institutions and structures that provide technical assistance to entrepreneurship development, and
- To organize study tours and exchanges of experiences within and outside Africa.

The Legal framework of the EDF

The institutional structure of the EDF will be set up under the Togo legal framework as a Groupement d'Intérêt Economique, GIE, in Lome. The advantages of this institutional legal set up are,

- The structure can be legally set up without capital requirement,
- It will run as a non profit organization and thus can approach partners and donors for technical and financial support,

- It is flexible without too many formalities,
- It could be applicable continent-wide

Membership to the EDF structure

Membership to the EDF is open to,

- Women entrepreneurs' association or groups,
- Women owned enterprises
- Organizations and institutions providing support to women entrepreneurs, like the chambers of commerce and industries, micro and small businesses development agencies, research and development institutions, and NGOs that work with grassroots women.
- The EDF will also accept associate members who believe in its values and objectives.

A number of questions were raised and requests for clarifications were put forward regarding,

- the distinctive activities of the main and branch offices,
- the constitution of the structure and the legal documents to be signed,
- rights and obligations of members,

Clarifications were then made on the need to differentiate between the legal and technical set up of the structure. As EDF has to run as an autonomous body it has to have a legal existence to carry out its activities. The proposed legal framework which is simple and flexible that would allow the EDF to run as a pan African organization has already been registered. The details on the legal, administrative and financial requirements of the structure would be finalized during the transitional period.

3.5 Presentation on the Roles and Responsibilities of the Executive and Branch Offices of the EDF

Ms. Melkrist Hailu, consultant, ACGD, presented a summarized version of the technical roles and responsibilities of the main and branch offices of the EDF, which in a way responded to some of the controversial issues around the EDF structure.

In order for the EDF to attain the objectives of its establishment, it will function as a multi-disciplinary facilitation center and will serve as,

- Storehouse for the creation, collection, processing and dissemination of business information, in the areas of trade and markets, technologies options and processes, sources of credit and financial services as well as training and advisory services – through the website.
- training and capacity building centre, to provide training to trainers as well as entrepreneurs,
- Focal point for establishing and strengthening networking and linkages among women entrepreneurs at the sub-regional, regional and international levels.

These services of the EDF will be provided through the Central Executive Office and the two sub-regional branch offices

The Central Executive Office will,

- Manage the website of the EDF.
- Collect, process, analyze, package and disseminate business information to members and organizations.
- Market the EDF and represent it at the regional level.
- Take vigorous actions in the mobilization of resources.
- Bring in more members to the EDF
- Organise consultative meetings with partner organisations, and business entities in Africa, Asia, Europe and other continents to provide the opportunity for further information and experience sharing and on the possibilities of joint venture partnership and co-operation.
- Encourage and assist the development and strengthening of local, sub-regional, regional and international networks of women enterprises.
- Be a member of regional and international business networks.
- Develop training programmes based on the expressed needs of women entrepreneurs
- Assist the branch offices in carrying out sub-regional activities
- Carry out the overall co-ordination of the activities of the EDF
- Set up performance standards in consultation with the branch offices.

The Branch Offices will

- Develop outreach activities on the EDF
- Bring in more members to the EDF
- Market the EDF and represent it at the sub-regional level.
- Initiate close working relationship with the national focal points and institutions.
- Create the necessary linkages with sub-regional institutions, regional economic commissions and partner organizations at the sub-regional level.
- Properly manage the permanent exhibition space where products and catalogues of African women will be displayed
- In cooperation with the Executive Office, organize sub-regional training workshops in business management and development, production techniques and technologies, marketing techniques, information and communication technology, etc.
- In collaboration with the Executive Office facilitate the participation of women entrepreneurs of the sub-region to sub-regional, regional and international trade fairs, exhibitions and conferences.
- In cooperation with relevant institutions undertake the necessary actions for the provision of incubation services.
- Mobilize partnership at local and sub-regional levels
- Adopt performance standards agreed upon with the Central Office

3.6 Presentation of the EDF Website

The EDF website was introduced by Ms. Paule Koki, consultant, ACGD. The website was introduced as a space for information sharing, training, promotion, mutual assistance and a space for knowing who is who. A detailed description of the sections of the website were provided, the guiding principles were explained, the strategy for content updating were described, the management aspect of the website was discussed and plans and prospects for the development of the website were highlighted.

Within the structure of the website there are seven main categories that provide relevant and useful information in the areas of enterprise development, networking, business opportunities, directory, events, questions and general information on the EDF. One of the

most important guiding principles that was emphasized was the avoidance of duplication of efforts by way of having partnership with existing sources of relevant information and presenting the information in its usable form. With regards to the economic environment needed for the management of the website, the importance of a location with high percentage of telecommunications and power availability as well as easy access to economic information was highly stressed.

A lively discussion later took place with useful ideas exchanged on issues of updating the website, censorship, criteria for inclusion of information, development of the data base, and maintenance of the dynamic and interactive website.

3.7 Presentation on E-Commerce

Ms. Aida Opoku-Mensah, Team Leader, DISD/ECA made a presentation on African women entrepreneurs and e-commerce. The presentation provided background on the African Information Society Initiative (AISI) which is a vision for ICT development in Africa. The challenges with respect to AISI and gender were identified as limited access to ICTs and lack of readily available information on women in society, culture and economy.

Definition of E-trade & commerce was provided along with examples in tangible and non tangible goods and teleservices. In this regard, it was pointed out that African women play a major role in the trading of tangible goods. The importance of e-trade/commerce to African women entrepreneurs was highlighted as new market, greater economic empowerment, and improved technical skills. Some of the barriers to e-commerce for Africa women entrepreneurs were also highlighted as poor quality of communication services, high and prohibitive costs, and digital illiteracy. Despite the various barriers to e-commerce, it was underscored that there are still ways and means that would enable women to gain foothold in this area of economic activity. Some of the recommended means are m-commerce which involves buying and selling using wireless handheld devices, capacity building for skills base in e-commerce and encouraging women to engage in e-enterprises. Most of all it was highly stressed that women need to be involved in policy processes at national levels to ensure that favorable environment for women's participation in e-commerce is created.

By way of conclusion DISD's commitment to support the EDF was expressed in the provision training programs, strengthening network of women entrepreneurs for ICTs,

adaptation and localization of software for use by women entrepreneurs and development of advocacy skills of women for pursuing gender sensitive ICT policies.

In the discussion that followed, examples of innovative approaches to e-commerce were provided, like the Grameen phone experience, the trading activity by Ghanians via the diaspora, and trading that is taking place through local service providers.

3.8 Presentation of the Short-term Plan of Action of the EDF

Before presenting the short term plan of action of the EDF, Mme. Josephine Ouedraogo, opened a discussion session to reach to a consensus on some of the pending issues with respect to,

- the legal structure of the EDF, ie, one or two EDFs
- the tasks of the two existing offices and the resources needed
- the structure of the executive team
- The steering committee or advisory Board

The legal structure of the EDF – the workshop unanimously adopted the option for one EDF with the Economic Interest Grouping, GIE, legal modality that has been registered in Lome. The agreed structure will have one General Assembly with an Executive Team and two Executive Offices, in Kampala and Lome to carry out the field activities of the EDF. An Advisory Board or Steering Committee will guide and oversee the activities of the EDF. The legal documents on the administrative, financial and procedural matters will be finalized within the transitional phase.

The Structure and the task of the Executive Team – The Executive Team will be composed of the coordinating team and the technical team of the website. The coordinating team will have one director, one program officer and a secretary; and the technical team will have one web manager one web master, and a secretary. The responsibility of the coordinating team includes, the implementation of the work programme of the EDF, mobilization of resources and organization of general assembly and board meetings. The technical team will be responsible for the management and maintenance of the website. The location of the teams will be decided at the end of the transitional phase by the General Assembly, taking into account, among others, the expressed concerns on the need to put the two in one geographical

location, and the high percentage of telecommunications and power availability as well as technical expertise for the management of the website.

The two Executive Branch Offices – Each executive branch office will start off with one program officer and an assistant. The tasks to be carried out by the executive branch offices include, organization of local and sub-regional training workshops, exhibitions and events; management of the EDF information desk; and development of outreach activities of the EDF.

The Steering Committee/Advisory Board – The task of the steering committee will be the provision of guidance to the EDF in line with the vision and objectives of the EDF; approving the work plan of the EDF and mobilization of resources. The members of the steering committee will be partners who have been supporting the EDF initiative financially and technically, selected women entrepreneurs non members of the EDF, and representatives of grassroots women groupings.

The Short Term Plan of Action

The short term plan of action which is to be implemented within the transitional phase, that is, between September 2004 and February 2005 has the following activities,

- Finalize the legal, administrative, technical, financial procedures and formalities, required to effectively run the autonomous EDF,
- Equip the branch offices with the required manpower and office facilities,
- Bring in more members to the autonomous structure,
- Organize EDF's participation to the 7th Regional Conference on Women (Preparation to Beijing +10) which will take place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in October 2004, and to the International Handicraft Exhibition in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, in November 2004.
- Mobilize resources for running the EDF including the two branches,
- Organize and convene the 1st General Assembly of the EDF and the Steering Committee meeting by February 2005.

- Prepare the medium term work programme and budget of the EDF including the two branch offices.
- Management and maintenance of the website
- Mobilization of information

3.9 Partnership

Partners expressed their commitments to support the EDF as follows,

ASCENT

- Design and execute “Multipliers and Accelerators” such as enterprise development training and capacity development programs,
- Technology training, exposure and experimental learning modules
- Developing blue prints and operating frameworks for group enterprises, small and micro enterprises, export cluster development, etc.

UEMOA – will support EDF and will confirm the modalities of the support by August 2004

Alliance Cooperative International - Will ensure the membership of grassroots women cooperatives to the EDF and provide support for the participation of members in training.

WIEGO – will look into possibilities of supporting EDF with training programmes.

ARCT – will look into the possibility of entering a partnership arrangement with EDF to support women entrepreneurs in the area of food processing technologies.

Sasakawa Global 2000 – will be a member of the EDF and will be a link between EDF and the grassroots women entrepreneurs with whom Sasakawa Global 2000 is working.

UNDP – will support the activities of the EDF in line with the request to be submitted by ECA.

Commonwealth Secretariat – will continue to look for possibilities of future collaboration in the areas of training and technical assistance.

3.10 Major Outcomes of the Workshop

3.10.1 The Legal Creation of the EDF

One autonomous structure of the EDF has been created as Groupement d'Internet Economique, GIE, and legally registered in Lome, Togo. EDF will have one General Assembly with an Executive Team and two Executive Offices, in Kampala and Lome to carry out the field activities of the EDF. The activities of the EDF will be guided by the Advisory Board/Steering Committee.

There will be a transitional phase of six months (September 2004 – February 2005) to prepare the necessary groundwork for running the EDF as an independent entity. Within the transitional phase the activities of the EDF will be handled by a resource team coordinated by ACGD/ECA.

3.10.2 The Launching of the EDF website

The EDF website has been launched. The website will be managed and maintained by the technical team of the Executive office. In the short term, ie, in the transitional phase, the website will be hosted by private hosting services in South Africa. For the long term, possibilities will be looked into hosting the EDF website within the NEPAD Secretariat in Johannesburg.

3.10.3 The Adoption of the Short-Term Plan of Action

The short term plan of action to be implemented by the resource team has been adopted. The action plan includes activities that enable the EDF to run as an autonomous body after the transitional phase as well as the management and maintenance of the EDF website.

3.10.4 The Setting up of the Steering Committee/Advisory Board

ACGD/ECA, within the transitional phase, will develop membership criteria to the Steering Committee/ Advisory Board and will come up with the working procedures of the advisory board.

IV. THE CLOSING SESSION

The workshop was officially closed by Mme. Josephine Ouedraogo, Director of ACGD. She expressed her sincere thanks to the representative of the Government of Uganda, Ms. Robinah Sabano, who has always been there to facilitate matters for the setting up and running of the EDF office in Kampala. She also expressed her satisfaction with the proceedings and outcomes of the workshop which were beyond expectations. She congratulated all the participants for reaching at a consensus on the structure of the EDF, and also for their active participation, constructive comments and suggestions on the way forward. She appreciated the willingness and positive attitude expressed by those participants who have attended EDF's workshop for the first time. She thanked partners who have been supporting the EDF initiative and confirmed ECA's commitment to implement the short term plan of action of the transitional phase. She also assured the participants that ECA will soon work on the criteria and procedures on the membership of the steering committee. She then thanked those working behind the screen like members of ACGD and interpreters, who have contributed to the success of the workshop.

A vote of thanks was forwarded by Ms. Kebedech Erdatchew, President of the Ethiopian Women Exporters Forum. In her statement, she expressed her appreciation for the excellent manner by which the chair of the workshop Mme. Josephine Ouedraogo led the workshop. She thanked ACGD/ECA's support for the promotion of women entrepreneurship in Africa and hoped that such support would continue.



**Economic Commission for Africa
African Center for Gender and Development**

*Workshop on the Operationalisation of the sub-regional Enterprise
Development Facilities for Women Entrepreneurs (Phase II)
13 – 15 July 2004
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*

PROGRAMME OF THE WORKSHOP

Tuesday, 13 July 2004

- 9 : 00 – 9 : 30 **Registration of participants**
- 9 : 30 – 10 : 15 **Item 1: Opening of the Workshop**
- Remarks by Ms. Fatoumata Marthe Ehui, representative of women entrepreneurs
 - Opening Statement by Ms. Lalla Ben Barka, Deputy Executive Secretary of ECA
- 10:15 - 10 : 45 **Item 2 : Background of the Project and Objectives of the Workshop**
- Ms. Josephine Ouedraogo, Director ACGD
- 10 : 45 – 11 : 00 *Coffee Break*
- 11: 00 – 13: 00 **Item 3 : Presentations by participants : The business environment and challenges of women entrepreneurs - opportunities, constraints and new expectations from the EDF.**
- 13 : 00 – 14 : 30 *Lunch Break*
- 14 : 30 – 15 : 00 **Item 4 : Synthesis of the outcome of participants' presentations.**
- Ms. Mekrist Hailu, Consultant, ACGD
- 15 : 00 – 16 : 00 **Item 5: Presentation on the modality of the new autonomous structure - the « GIE-RIFED**
- Ms. Opportune Santos, Consultant, ACGD
- 16: 00 – 16:15 *Coffee Break*
- 16 : 15 – 17 : 00 **Item 6 : Presentation on the Technical Roles and Responsibilities of the EDF Executive Office and the two sub-regional offices**
- Ms. Melkrist Hailu, Consultant, ACGD

Wednesday, 14 July 2004

- 9 : 00 – 11 : 00 **Item 7 : Presentation on the EDF Website**
- Ms. Paule Koki, Consultant, ACGD
- 11:00 – 11:15 *Coffee Break*
- 11:15 – 13:00 **Item 8 : Presentation on E:commerce**
- Ms. Aida Opoku Mensah, DISD

13 :00 – 14 : 30

Lunch Break

14:30 – 16 : 00

Item 9 : Presentation and adoption of the Short-term Plan of Action of the EDF

- Ms. Josephine Ouedraogo

16 :00 – 16 :15

Coffee Break

16 : 15 – 17 : 30

Item 10 : Special Session with Partners

Thursday, 15 July 2004

9 : 00 – 11 : 00

Item 11 : Partnership :

- ASCENT
- UEMOA
- Commonwealth Secretariat
- UNDP
- WIEGO
- Government of Uganda
- Chambers of Commerce of Togo

11 : 00 - 11 : 30

Coffee Break

11:30 – 13 : 00

Training Session on the use of Internet and E-mail
(Not mandatory)

11 : 30 – 16 :00

Free (Preparation of the Synthesis Report of the Outcome of the Workshop by the ECA)

16 : 00 – 17 : 00

Item 12: Adoption of the Synthesis report and Closing of the Workshop

List of Participants

A. Representatives of Women Entrepreneurs' Associations

Burkina Faso

1. Mme. Bado Jeanne Agnes
Vice President, Association des femmes chefs d' entreprise
01 BP 3814 Ouagadougou 01, Burkina Faso
Tel: +226 33 22 69/24 39 74/307469
Fax: +226 308417
E-mail: jean_bado@yahoo.fr

Burundi

2. Mme Consolata Ndayishimiye
Vice-Présidente
Association des Femmes d' Affaires du Burundi (AFAB)
P.O. Box 1628
Bujumbura-Burundi
Tel: 00257 242784/249886
Cell phone: 257 (0) 6 17 99
Fax: 00257 249382/217340
E-mail: cabusiness@cbinf.com/ afab@usa-bu.net/consolatandayi@hotmail.com

Cote D'Ivoire

3. Mme. Fatoumata Marthe Ehui
Presidente
Reseau Ivoirien des Femmes Entrepreneurs
RIFEN
BP 1236 Abidjan 28
Cote D'Ivoire
Tel : (225) 22 41 26 22
Fax : (225) 22 41 16 57
Cell phone : (225) 07 00 96 26

Democratic Republic of Congo

4. Mme. Odette Gema Diloya
Presidente
A.S.S.O.F.E (Association des Femmes Entrepreneurs Chefs d' Entreprises)
134 Ave. De l'Enseignement
Commune de Kasa-Vubu, Kinshasa 1,
BP 15130- Kinshasa 1,
Republique Democratique du Congo
Tel: 243(0)813330642/8844887
Fax: +243 8846628
E-mail: mlouise60@hotmail.com/ odiloya@yahoo.fr

Ethiopia

5.

W/ro Brutawit Dawit Abdi
President, Ethiopian Business and Professional Women's Association
P.O.Box 18892
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Tel: 21-9-406311
Fax: 251-1-519702
E-mail: askbru3@yahoo.com

6.

W/ro Kebedetch Erdatchew
President, Ethiopian Exporters' Forum
P.O.Box 18892
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Tel/Fax: 251-1-519702
E-mail: ethwef2000@yahoo.com

7.

W/ro Achamyesh Ashenafi
President, Addis Ababa Women Entrepreneurs Association
P.O.Box 31667
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Tel: 251-1-627055
Fax: 251-1-631383
E-mail: konimix@telecom.net.et

8.

Ms. Hadia M.Gondji
Vice President
Addis Ababa Women Entrepreneurs Association
P.O.Box 31667
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Tel: +251 1 67 17 91-3
Fax : +251 1 67 17 94
e-mail : lite@telecom.net.et
Addis Ababa

9.

Ms. Tsehay Belayneh
Addis Ababa Women Entrepreneurs Association
P.O.Box 31667
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Tel: +251 1 51 77 90
e-mail girma.fini@telecom.net.et
Addis Ababa
Ethiopia

Guinea

10.

Mme DIALLO Salimatou
Présidente de la COFES
Téléphone : (224) 11 57 47 48
B. P :5805
Conakry
E-mail : hawanene2000@yahoo.fr;

Kenya

11.

Ms. Catherine M .Nyamato,

Chairperson,
Kenya Women Entrepreneurs Network (KEWENET),
P.O.Box 51079,
Nairobi, Kenya,
Fax 254-020-215929, Tel: 254-020-251712,
E-mail indexko@swiftkenya.com

Niger

12. Mme SADOU Shakrah
Coordinatrice
RESEAU DE L'ENTREPRENEURIAT FEMININ EN AFRIQUE DE L'OUEST
(REFAO-NIGER)
B.P 10883
Niamey, NIGER
Tel :227 80 51 52
Tel: 227 73 26 41
Fax: 227 73 26 43
E-mail: sadoushakrah@yahoo.fr

Rwanda

13. Ms. Therese BIBONOBONO
Women Entrepreneurs Association of Rwanda
Tel/fax is (250) 51706
Mobile phone (250)08530129
B.P. 1104 OR 6458
Kigali, Rwanda
E-mail : thbibono2000@yahoo.fr

Somaliland

14. Ms. Khadra Mussa Yussuf
Business Woman
Tel : +4162924835

Tanzania

15. Ms. Elizabeth Lois Seme
National Coordinator
Federation of Associations of Women Entrepreneurs of Tanzania (FAWETA)
P.O. Box 11522
Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania
Tel: 255 22 2125348
Fax: 255 22 2125235
Cell phone: 255 744 264545
E-mail: cge@email.com / lizzylois@yahoo.com

Togo

16. Mme Dédé Evelyne TRENOU
APRT (Association Professionnelle des revendeuses de Tissu)
BP 1097 Lomé -Togo
Téléphone (00228) 222 12 61,
Portable 904 23 14
E-mail trenou dede@yahoo.fr

Uganda

17.

Ms. Juliet Nazziwa-Musoke
Uganda Women Entrepreneurs Association Ltd.
Plot 38 Lumumba Ave.
P.O. Box 10002
Kampala, Uganda
Tel : 256 41 343953
Cell phone: 256 077 511760
Fax: 256 31 271451
E-mail: uweal@enterprise.co.ug / nazziwamusoke@hotmail.com

B. Representatives of Institutions and Organizations

Alliance Coopérative Internationale

18.

Mr. Ada Souleymane Kibora
Director
Alliance Coopérative Internationale
01 B.P. 6461
Ouagadougou 01, Burkina Faso
Fax: (226) 50 30 73 29
Tel: (226) 50 307328
e-mail: acibrao@fasonet.bf

Caisse Coopérative d'Epargne et de Crédit Mutuel (CECM)

19.

Mme. Béatrice Bukware,
Présidente
Caisse Coopérative d'Epargne et de Crédit Mutuel (CECM)
Adresse Postale 6665
Bujumbura, Burundi
Phone: (257) 226-862
Fax: (257) 226-862
Email: cecm@cbinf.com / bukware@yahoo.fr

Association for the Support to Women Entrepreneurs (ASAFE)

20.

Ms. Laurely Nguenang
Association for the Support to Women Entrepreneurs (ASAFE)
Blvd. Aéroport – St. Michel
B.P. 5213
Douala, Cameroon
Tel. (237-3) 37 50 22 / 37 55 31
Cell phone: (237) 712 9697
Fax : (237-3) 42 29 70
E-mail : laurely.nguenang@asafe.org / gisele.yitamben@asafe.org, nlaurely@yahoo.fr

Women's World Banking Ghana Savings and Loans Company Ltd. (WWBG)

21.

Ms. Paulina Adjua Dsani,
Executive Director
Women's World Banking Ghana Savings and Loans Company Ltd. (WWBG)
P.O.Box 2989
Accra, Ghana
Phone: (233) 21-243-260 / 21258726/7
Fax: (233) 21-243-261
E-mail: wwbg@africaonline.com.gh

Association d'Entraide des Femmes (ASSEF)

22.

Ms. Janine Agnikpe Senou,
General Director
Association d'Entraide des Femmes (ASSEF)
01 BP 1048
Cotonou, Bénin
Phone: (229) 30-22-51
Fax: (229) 31-35-59
E-mail: assef2001fr@yahoo.fr

Kenya Women Finance Trust (KWFT)

23.

Dr. Jennifer Riria,
Chief Executive Officer
Kenya Women Finance Trust (KWFT)
Muchai Drive, off Ngong Road
Nairobi, Kenya
Phone: (254) 2-712-823
Fax: (254) 2-723-883
E-mail: riria@kwft.org, kwft@kwft.org

African Regional Center for Technology (ARCT)

24.

Mr. Ousmane Kane
Executive Director,
African Regional Centre for Technology
B.P. 2435
Dakar Senegal
Tel : (221)23-7712
Fax: (221)23-7713
E-mail: arct@sentoo.sn

Femmes Developpement Entreprises en Afrique (FDEA)

25.

Mme. Khady DEM, Directrice
du Crédit et de la Micro Entreprise
Femmes Developpement Entreprises
en Afrique (FDEA)
B.P. 3921
Dakar, Senegal
Tel : (221) 825 2058
Fax : (221) 825 4287
e-mail : fdea@sentoo.sn

C. Partners

WEMU (UEMOA)

26.

Mme Nènè E.TRAORE/SISSOKO
Directrice de la Promotion de la Femme
UEMOA, 01 BP 543
Ouagadougou 01
Tél: 00/226 50 31 88 74 à 76, Poste 8849
Fax: 00 226/ 50 31 88 72
Mobile: 00 226/ 78 81 20 37
E-mail: nene.traore@uemoa.int

ASCENT

27.

Ms. Madhura M. Chatrapathy
President
Asian Center for Entrepreneurial Initiatives (ASCENT)
No.111, 11th Main Road. Off 15th Cross
Malleswaram, Bangalore 560055
Tel: (91-80) 2334 6264/ 23318748
Fax: (91-80) 23347076
E-mail ace@blr.vsnl.net.in / ascent.bangalore@vsnl.com / madhuramc@vsnl.net

Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie du Togo

28.

Monsieur John Tata Tamara BOUKARY
Chef Service à la Chambre de
Commerce et d'Industrie du Togo
B.P. 360
Lome, Togo
Tel: (228) 221 70 65 / 221 20 65
Fax: (228) 221 47 30
E-mail: ccit@laposte.net

Ministry of Tourism, Trade and Industry, Uganda

29.

Ms. Robinah Sabano
Assistant Commissioner
Ministry of Tourism, Trade and Industry
P.O. Box 7103, Kampala, Uganda
Tel: 256 41 314221 / 343947
Cell phone : 256 77452847
Fax: 256 41 341247 / 286767
E-mail: sabano3@hotmail.com, uipunido@ucpc.co.ug

WIEGO

30.

Ms. Marilyn Carr
Director
Global Markets Programme (WIEGO)
Institute of Development Studies
University of Sussex
Brighton BN1 9RE, United Kingdom
Tel: 00 44 (0) 1273 678799
Fax: 00 44 (0) 1273 621602
Email: M.carr@ids.ac.uk; marilyncarr55@aol.com

Commonwealth Secretariat

31.

Ms. Sarojini Thakur
Commonwealth Secretariat
Marlborough House, Pall Mall
London, SW1Y 5HX
United Kingdom
Tel: 00 44 (0) 20 7747 6543
Fax: 00 44 (0) 20 7930 1647
E-mail: s.thakur@commonwealth.int

Sasakawa Global 2000

32.

Mrs Beatrice Luzobe
P.O. Box 6987, Kampala, Uganda
Tel: 256 31 261180/41345497
Fax: 256 077 280 838
E-mail: sguganda@starcom.co.ug

UNDP

33.

Ms. Asna Ndiaye
Advisor, Regional Programme for Gender Mainstreaming
UNDP
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Tel: 251-1-536375/76
Fax: 251-1-536378
E-mail: asna.ndiaye@undp.org

DISD/ECA

34.

Ms. Aida Opoku Mensah
Team Leader
Development Information Services Division
ECA
P.O.Box 3301
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Tel: 251-1-443562
E-mail: aopoku-mensah@uneca.org

Secretariat

Ms. Josephine Ouedraogo
Director, African Centre for Gender and Development (ACGD)
P.O.Box 3001
Addis Ababa
Ethiopia
Tel: 251-1-511263/443301
Fax : 251-1-512785/514416
E-mail: jouedraogo@uneca.org

Ms. Paule Koki
Consultant, ACGD
Postnet Suite Room 19,
Private Bag X7, Parkview 2122
Johannesburg, South Africa
Tel/Fax: 27 11 486 3915
Cell phone: 27 83 5361963
E-mail: paulekoki@mweb.co.za / paule_koki@hotmail.com

Ms. Opportune Santos
Consultant, ACGD
B.P. 1996
Lome, Togo
Tel: 228 227 8268
Fax: 228 222 4120
Cell phone: 228 949 5582
E-mail: aksantos@togo-imet.com / osantos@yahoo.fr

Ms. Melkrist Hailu
Consultant, ACGD
P.O.Box 22006
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Tel: 251-1-470187
Fax: 251-1-471501
Cell phone : 251-9-405615
E-Mail: zamba.int@telecom.net.et /mhailu@uneca.org

Ms. Elizabeth Hailu
ACGD

Ms. Askale Geberab
ACGD

Ms. Amelework Mengistu
ACGD

Ms. Marie Jeanne Ki
ACGD

Ms. Salam Hailou
ACGD

Mr. Tadesse Alemu
ACGD

Mr. Ayalew Ejigu
ACGD

