United Nations ⊕ Nations Unies

**Division for the Advancement of Women,
Department of Economic and Social Affairs**

In collaboration with

**African Centre for Gender and Social Development,
Economic Commission for Africa**

AN INTRODUCTION TO NGMNET-AFRICA:
AN E-NETWORK OF NATIONAL GENDER MACHINERIES IN AFRICA

JANUARY 2007

1.   BACKGROUND

The Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) collaborated with the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) on a project to build the capacity of national machineries in Africa to effectively use Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) to enhance achievement of the goals of gender equality and empowerment of women throughout the region. In 2004 and 2005, four sub-regional workshops were organized to strengthen skills on information and knowledge management and the use of ICT. A regional meeting was held in Addis Ababa in September 2005 to highlight the lessons learned from the sub-regional workshops and begin development of an e-network (electronic network) for national machineries in Africa.

The e-network serves as an important tool to enhance knowledge management and

š A resource center of information provided by national machineries, such as reports from recent research or projects;

š Highlights of news from national machineries, updated monthly.

Information of relevance to national machineries:

š Regional and global inter-governmental processes, such as the Committee on Women and Development (CWD) and the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW);

š Information on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the African Protocol on the Rights of Women;

š Information on relevant regional organizations, such as the African Union, the African Development Bank, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs).

š Information on innovations and good practices from national machineries in other regions.

Information on the portal should be general information on gender equality issues that national machineries wish to share among themselves and with other stakeholders.

(b)   Possibilities for interactive activities

Discussion lists for national machineries

A discussion list is a convenient electronic method to share information and discuss issues, such as challenges and good practices in particular areas. It is an electronic mailing list that offers the opportunity for members to post information, make suggestions or pose questions to a large number of people at the same time through the use of a group email address. Anyone with an email account can join a discussion list. A member writes an email message to the group, sends it to the discussion list address, and the submission is distributed to all of the other members of the discussion list. Messages are downloaded as an email rather than viewed over a connection to the internet, thereby facilitating participation by those without regular internet connection.

One general discussion list for national machineries has been established, with contributions in French and English, for continuous exchange of information between national machineries. National machineries can use the discussion lists to share information, raise queries with other national machineries and exchange ideas on relevant topics. It can also be used as a tool to mobilize African national machineries around a particular event or theme, such as in preparations for upcoming inter-governmental processes, including the Committee on Women and Development (CWD) and the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). (See Annex 4 for more information on using the discussion lists).

Access to the discussion list is email-based and participants can send and receive messages directly from their existing email accounts. It is also possible to access a web-based version of the discussion list via a link on the information portal. The web-based interface for the discussion list is in English and French. From here, members can view message archives as well as a list of members belonging to the discussion list. They can also edit their own profile and change their password.

These discussion lists will be open only to staff members of the national machineries and relevant staff members of ECA and DAW. Summaries of the main highlights of the discussion lists will be provided by ECA on a regular basis, in English and French, as relevant.

The content of the discussion list should be specific to national machineries and should be on issues of common interest. Suggested topics include sharing project information, sharing successful advocacy tools and strategies, requesting examples of good practices, seeking feedback on draft project proposals and looking for partnerships or experts.

There are established rules and etiquette for participating in discussion lists that should be followed (See Annex 4 for more details).

Thematic e-discussions for wider participation of stakeholders

An e-discussion is an electronic discussion to promote and stimulate debate on a particular topic. It is a tool for a group of people, in any geographic location, to exchange ideas and resources and is particularly useful for advancing understanding of key issues, methodologies and good practices, and identifying common obstacles and challenges. It can bring together a larger and more diverse group of people than most other learning events, and its extended duration permits a level of sustained interaction and reflection on the chosen subject that is often not possible with face-to-face meetings.

E-discussions are guided by a moderator, who provides a week-by-week outline with specific sub-topics and questions for discussion. Each week, participants in the e-discussion receive the questions for that week and can respond with their ideas and thoughts. At the end of an e-discussion a summary is produced that highlights some of the major findings and conclusions of the discussion. An e-discussion operates in the same way as a general discussion list, with messages being sent and received as an email, rather than viewing them over the internet. They can sometimes also be accessed through a web-based discussion forum.

E-discussions for the e-network of national machineries will be held every 4 months (3 per year), for a duration of 6 weeks, on relevant topics identified by national machineries. They will be open to all stakeholders, including national machineries, line ministries, NGOs, donors, academia etc., in order to promote collaboration and cooperation and encourage a vibrant and informed debate. National machineries are responsible for actively publicizing upcoming e-discussions and encouraging relevant stakeholders to take part.

The thematic e-discussions will operate in the same way as the general discussion list and can be accessed through both an existing email account and also through a web-based version via a link on the information portal. There are established rules and etiquette for participating in e-discussions that should be followed (See Annex 5 for more information on participating in e-discussions).

3.   PARTICIPANTS IN THE E-NETWORK OF NATIONAL MACHINERIES

All staff of the national machineries should be encouraged to participate in the e-network, by using the information provided on the portal and sharing information on their work. They can also participate in the general discussion lists for national machineries, as well as in the e-discussions and other interactive activities, for example activities around regional inter-governmental processes.

Other stakeholders, such as line ministries and other national bodies, regional organizations, NGOs, academics and donors, should be informed of and encouraged to use the information portal. They can also be invited to participate in e-discussions and other activities. (They will not be able to participate in the general discussion lists for national machineries.)

4.   MANAGEMENT OF THE E-NETWORK OF NATIONAL MACHINERIES

Within national machineries

An E-network Team should be established in each national machinery to ensure that the e-network is well known and integrated into the work of the national machinery. This team should be comprised of two gender specialists and the ICT specialist working with the national machinery (whether employed directly by the national machinery or loaned from another Ministry). In countries where focal points have also been established in the context of the African Information Initiative, these focal points could also be encouraged to participate in the team.

Members of the E-network Team are expected to encourage broad participation in the e-network by national machinery staff. This could include ensuring that as many staff as possible have access to email and have the capacity to participate in discussion lists and e-discussions. E-network teams are required to submit quarterly reports to their sub-regional coordinators and the Management Group (See Annex 6 for more information on the roles and responsibilities of the E-network Team).

Sub-regional

Two coordinators from national machineries in each ECA sub-region are nominated by e-network members on a 1-year rotational basis to guide the e-network at the sub-regional level. There are 10 coordinators in total, including French, English and Portuguese speakers. The gender focal points from the ECA sub-regional offices play a key role in supporting the sub-regional coordinators and monitoring the operation of the network. Sub-regional coordinators are required to submit quarterly reports to the Management Group (See Annex 7 for list of countries by ECA sub-region, and Annex 8 for roles and responsibilities of sub-regional coordinators).

Regional

The ten sub-regional coordinators from national machineries will form a regional Management Group, which will monitor and guide the overall operation of the network. It will comprise the 10 sub-regional coordinators, representatives from ECA and DAW, and the 5 gender focal points from the ECA sub-regional offices.

The Management Group will hold quarterly electronic discussions on overall management issues through a discussion list with restricted access. Summaries of the quarterly discussions will be posted on the general discussion lists for national machineries so that all staff in national machineries can access this information. (See Annex 9 for more information on the Management Group).

ANNEXES

1. Timeline of e-network activities in 2007

2. Glossary

3. The information portal

4. Using the general discussion lists for national machineries

5. Participating in e-discussions

6. E-network Team in national machineries: roles and responsibilities

7. List of countries by sub-region

8. Sub-regional coordinators roles and responsibilities

9. Management Group

	Dec 2006	**Jan 2007**	**Feb 07**	**Mar 07**	**Apr 07**	**May 07**	**Jun 07**	**Jul 07**	**Aug 07**	**Sep 07**	**Oct 07**	**Nov 07**	**Dec 07**

ANNEX 1.   **TIMELINE OF ACTIVITIES IN 2007**

E-network Team	A team of 2 gender specialists and 1 ICT expert in each national machinery, responsible for integrating the e-network into the work of the national machinery and facilitating and encouraging participation in the e-network by all staff members.
Management Group	Responsible for overseeing the operation of the e-network. It will consist of 10

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ANNEX 3.   THE INFORMATION PORTAL

The information portal is hosted and managed by ECA.

It is publicly available on the internet and all stakeholders can access information on the national machineries through the portal. The general discussion list for national machineries has restricted access.

The ECA web manager updates and adds content to the portal based on contributions from national machineries, sub-regional coordinators, ECA and DAW. Regular contributions and updates from national machineries are essential to maintain relevance and operation of the portal. The 10 sub-regional coordinators and 5 ECA sub-regional gender focal points are expected to regularly encourage E-network Teams to submit updates and resources.

All pages of the portal are printer-friendly to enable repackaging and distribution of the information by national machineries to their constituencies.

governmental processes	links to CSW webpage and links to DAW's e-discussions.
Treaty bodies	Information on CEDAW and its Optional Protocol, incl. links to texts in English, French & Arabic; dates of upcoming sessions; links to African States parties' reports & concluding comments. Information on African Protocol on the Rights of Women.
Activities of the e-network for national machineries	
General discussion list (restricted)	Link to general discussion list (restricted to national machineries only)
E-discussions	Links to each thematic e-discussions, with sign-up option; summaries of past e-discussions *NB: When new e-discussions start, a special link will be highlighted on the homepage.*
Other information	
Contacts	Email addresses to submit resources, comments and technical feedback
ICT explained	Brief notes and guidelines on ICT tools used in the e-network
Funding, resources and training opportunities	A selection of documents on fundraising, resources and training, including good practice examples and links to relevant opportunities

Additional sections may be added to the portal in the future. For example:

- š A section on national machineries from other regions can provide information on innovative activities in other regions.
- š Monthly rotating "Spotlight" section on the work of national machineries in different countries.

ANNEX 4. U

(b) Using your e-mail account

- š   Open your e-mail account
- š   Send message to: nmwafrica@dgroups.org
- š   Or, click on "reply" to a message sent by another member of the list

If you are not receiving any discussion list emails, please check your spam or junk mail folder. If messages are being sent there, please add nmwafrica@dgroups.org to your address book.

Etiquette for posting messages

There are some general rules of etiquette for participating in discussion lists that should be observed, these include:

- š   Use the discussion list only for professional correspondence, not for emails of a personal nature.
- š   Note that when you are replying to a post, hitting the reply button will send your reply to everyone. If you would like to reply only to the author of the message, remember to start a new email with the author's email in the "To:" field.
- š   Keep paragraphs and messages short and to the point, but make sure it has substantive content. Focus on one subject per message.
- š   Always include a relevant title for the message in the "subject" field.
- š   Identify yourself at the bottom of the email message, including your name, position, national machinery name and country: For example:

     Message here

     Joanna Skinner
     Associate Social Affairs Officer
     Division for the Advancement of Women, United Nations

- š   Capitalize words only to highlight an important point or to distinguish a title or heading. Capitalizing whole words that are not titles is generally termed as SHOUTING!
- š   When forwarding other emails – please send only the relevant text and delete anything else. It is also useful to add an introductory sentence to explain why you are forwarding it. Also remember to amend the subject field.
- š   Be professional and careful what you say about others. Email is easily forwarded.
- š   Cite all quotes, references and sources and respect copyright and license agreements.
- š   Acronyms can be used to abbreviate when possible, however messages that are filled with acronyms can be confusing to readers.

Suggested content for discussion lists

Participants in the general discussion list are encouraged to use the discussion lists to:

1) **Share information**. Send updates and information on the activities of your organization, for example, good practices in programming; outcomes of recent research; new developments etc. Other information that can be shared includes upcoming events that may be of interest to other members

2) **Ask questions**. Send a query to the discussion list if, for example, you are looking for examples of good practices on particular programming activities; you are seeking experts in a particular field; or you are looking for information on a particular subject, including available resources as well as opinions of other members. See below for tips on sending a query and an example.

3) **Respond to questions**. Assist other members of the discussion lists by answering their questions if you are able to provide relevant information.

The discussion lists can also be used for facilitated discussions by ECA on upcoming meetings and events, for example, preparations for the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW).

Sending a query

Tips on sending a query

When sending a query, be sure to include the following:

Brief background information
Description of the project
Details on exactly what kind of information is being requested
Contact details

Sample query

The following query was originally posted on a UNDP discussion list

UN-ESCWA and UNDP/SURF in Beirut (Sub-Regional Resource Facility) have designed a pipeline project to prepare a Report on 'More Gender Responsive Monitoring and Reporting in the Arab Region'. The project aims to improve countries' capacities to engender MDG monitoring and reporting, particularly in the preparation and use of gender-sensitive indicators and sex-disaggregated data. The project was conceived as a preliminary step to address data availability and quality issues in the region, especially that of gender-sensitive indicators.

To support a stakeholder-driven process, the project is centered on a Roundtable meeting/discussion among users and producers of statistics from selected central statistical offices, government departments and UN specialized agencies. The roundtable will be a 1-day meeting to share experiences and lessons in engendering MDG monitoring and reporting, particularly from a data compilation and analysis perspective, and discuss options and recommendations for preparing and using gender-sensitive indicators and sex-disaggregated data, taking into consideration challenges in this regard.

The main outcomes of the Roundtable are to be - a) a list of goal-specific gender issues; b) core set/minimum standard of gender-sensitive indicators; and c) recommendations for overcoming data shortages. The outcomes will serve as the basis for the Report on engendering MDG Monitoring and Reporting in the Arab region.

We would be in particular interested in:

a)   To share country/regional experience i.e. examples of advocacy initiatives, capacity building initiatives undertaken by your respective organizations in the area of engendering MDG data collection and analysis;

b)   To provide suggestions on the proposed Project Concept Note (attached). We would, in particular, be interested to learn about experience and tips on organizing similar Roundtable discussions and making them effective.

Regards,

NAME
ORGANIZATION
COUNTRY
CONTACT DETAILS

E-discussions are held to promote and stimulate debate on a chosen topic, such as a particular challenge for national machineries or an upcoming theme of an inter-governmental process. Their extended duration permits a level of sustained interaction and reflection and they can therefore be useful for national machineries to advance their understanding of key issues, methodologies and good practices, and identify common obstacles and challenges. They also bring together a diverse group of stakeholders, including national machineries, line ministries, NGOs and academia etc., in order to promote collaboration and cooperation. National machineries are responsible for actively publicizing upcoming e-discussions and encouraging relevant stakeholders to take part.

E-discussions for the e-network will be held every 4 months (3 per year), for a duration of 6 weeks, on relevant topics identified by national machineries. They will operate via email. In the initial phase (1-2 years) one e-discussion will be led by ECA; one by DAW; and one by national machinery or an invited NGO/academic institution.

The thematic e-discussions will operate in the same way as the general discussion list and can be accessed through both an existing email accounts and also through a web-based version via a link on the information portal.

Participation guidelines

When the e-discussion is announced in advance, detailed instructions on how to sign up will be provided.

Accessing the e-discussions

Access to the thematic e-discussions is email based and participants can send and receive messages directly from their existing email accounts. It is also possible to access a web-based version of the discussion list via a link on the information portal. The web-based interface for the discussion list is in English and French. From here, members can view message archives as well as a list of members belonging to the e-discussion. They can also edit their own profile and change their password.

If you are not receiving any e-discussion emails, please check your spam or junk mail folder. If messages are being sent there, please add the e-discussion email address to your address book.

Etiquette for posting messages

See the information on the general discussion lists for etiquette in posting messages. These guidelines should also be followed for e-discussions.

In particular, note that whereas the general discussion list is restricted only to staff of national machineries in Africa, the e-discussions will be open to all stakeholders, including national machineries, line ministries, NGOs, academia etc.

Suggested content for e-discussion postings

Only information directly related to the e-discussion topic should be sent to the list. Any other information that you wish to share should be sent to the general discussion list for national machineries. If you wish to send a personal message to another e-discussion member, send a separate email to that person's personal email address and not to the e-discussion address.

At the beginning of the e-discussion, a moderator will send a 6-week outline of the e-discussion to the list. The moderator will also send a set of specific sub-topics and questions at the beginning of each week. You can participate in the e-discussion by:

  š Responding to the moderator's weekly questions or to questions from other participants. You can

The effectiveness of the proposed e-network for national machineries in Africa is dependent on the active participation by national machineries themselves. It is therefore suggested that each national machinery nominate an E-network Team, consisting of two gender experts and one ICT expert, who will act as focal points and take lead responsibility for the participation of the national machinery in ongoing e-network activities.

One member of the E-network Team should be the person who attended the regional workshop to establish the e-network, to be held in Addis Ababa, 5-8 December 2006. This person would be expected to share skills and information learned during the workshop with other staff members within the national machinery – especially on using discussion lists and participating in e-discussions.

Responsibilities of the E-network Team include, but are not limited to, the following activities:

- Collect information and news
- Prepare material for dissemination on the information portal and discussion list
- Encourage other staff to join the discussion list
- Publicize the information portal
- Communicate upcoming and past activities of the e-network to other staff and stakeholders
- Disseminate e-discussion summaries and other information to staff and other stakeholders
- Take charge of planning and budgeting for the e-network at the national level
- Train replacements for the team as necessary
- Build list of expertise of national machinery staff, as well as other experts in the country, and share this as needed with the e-network
- When staff leave the national machinery notify ECA to remove them from the discussion list.
- Submitting quarterly reports to the relevant sub-regional coordinators and the Management Group.

Gender sensitivity and a basic knowledge of computers are essential for members of the E-network Team. The E-network Team needs to have easy access to a computer with email and internet connection.

North Africa

Member countries (7): Algeria, Egypt, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Mauritania, Morocco, Sudan and Tunisia.

| ECA sub-regional office:
Rabat, Morocco | Gender focal point: | Ms Semia Guermas De Tapia
Tel.: +(212) 3767 5012
Fax: +(212) 3767 5282
Email: sguermas@uneca.org |

.Central Africa

Member countries (7): Cameroon, Republic of Congo, Gabon, Central African Republic, Equatorial Guinea, Sao Tome and Principe and Chad.

| ECA sub-regional office:
Yaoundé, Cameroon. | Gender Focal Point: | Ms Anne Marie Bakyono
Tel.: +(237) 223 1461
Fax: +(237) 223 3185
Email: abakyono@uneca.org |

Western Africa

Member countries (15): Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo.

| ECA sub-regional office:
Niamey, Niger. | Gender Focal Point: | Ms Fatoumata Sissoko
Tel: +(227) 722 961
Fax: +(227) 722 894
Email: fsissoko@uneca.org |

Eastern Africa

Member countries (13): Burundi, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, United Republic of Tanzania, and Uganda.

| ECA sub-regional office:
Kigali, Rwanda. | Gender Focal Point: | Ms Hadidja Gava
Tel.: +(250) 50 151
Fax: +(250) 86 546
Email: hgava@uneca.org |

Southern Africa

Member countries (11): Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

| ECA sub-regional office:
Lusaka, Zambia. | Gender Focal Point: | Ms Irene Lomoyani
 +(260) 1-228 505
Fax: +(260) 1-236 949 / 234 757
Email: ilomoyani@uneca.org |

<u>Roles and responsibilities:</u>

Two sub-regional coordinators from each ECA sub-region are nominated on a 1-year rotational basis. They take primary responsibility for:

- š Regularly encouraging national E-network Teams in national machineries within their sub-region to submit updates and resources for the information portal.
- š

ANNEX 9. M