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

In collaboration with
Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination

&

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

**Workshop on “Strengthening the capacity of national
machineries through the effective use of ICT”**

Beirut, Lebanon
27 June – 1 July 2005

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1. Background

The Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) in collaboration with the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination (OESC) of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) organised a workshop for representatives of national machineries for the advancement of women in the West Asia region.

The workshop in Beirut followed, and benefited from the experiences and lessons learned in, five similar workshops organized by DAW for national machineries in Africa.¹ The workshop took place in Beirut, Lebanon, from 27 June to 1 July 2005. Senior representatives of national machineries in the following countries participated: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Syrian Arab Republic, United Arab Emirates and Yemen. Selected ICT policy makers were also invited as resource persons.

This workshop aimed to bring together gender specialists from national machineries and information specialists supporting national machineries, to identify both information needs and information sources at national, sub-regional, regional, and international levels. It aimed to assist national machineries to develop a strategy to effectively use ICT to advocate for effective gender equality policies and act as catalysts for systematic gender mainstreaming in all policies and programmes. It also provided practical training to support networking and partnerships among national machineries, through creating an e-based network (listserv) of national machineries. Participants had the opportunity to share experiences, exchange good practices, identify gaps and challenges, and develop a common strategy on the use of ICT for advocacy, information sharing, and production of information for achieving the goal of gender equality.

One important element of the workshop was to develop strategies for national machineries to influence the development and implementation of national ICT policies and ensure increased opportunities for their effective use. A further important objective was to provide information on and opportunity to discuss, the global conference on the World Summit on the Information Society, the second phase of which was to be held in Tunis in November 2005.

Policy framework

The Beijing Platform for Action emphasized that national machineries for the advancement of women have been established in almost every Member State to, *inter alia*, design, promote the implementation of, execute, monitor, evaluate, advocate and mobilize support for policies that promote the advancement of women. National machineries are diverse in form and uneven in their effectiveness (para 196). The national

¹ The first workshop was held from 19 to 23 April 2004 in Windhoek, Namibia; the second workshop was held from 24 to 28 May 2004 in Dakar, Senegal; the third workshop was held from 10 to 14 January 2005 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and the fourth workshop was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 23 to 27 May 2005.

machinery for the advancement of women is the central policy-coordinating unit inside governments. Its main task is to support government-wide mainstreaming of a gender-equality perspective in all policy areas (Para 201).

The Commission on the Status of Women, at its forty-seventh session, considered the role of ICT in relation to gender equality. The panel discussion on “Participation in and access of women to the media, and information and communication technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women”, held during this session of the Commission, emphasized the role of ICT and the media as tools for development and as central to the empowerment of women. Media and ICT were increasingly used to share knowledge, enhance participation of all members of society, increase networking, give voice to marginalized groups, organize political action, empower people, fight poverty and enhance economic development. In addition to access, the issues of women’s information needs and available content were addressed in the panel. Participants called for research on women’s information needs and the production of local content in local languages.

In its agreed conclusions, adopted at this same session, the Commission noted that “the media and ICTs offer tools for enhancing women’s full access to the benefits of information and new technologies and can become central tools for women’s empowerment and the promotion of gender equality” (Para 2). One of the actions to be taken was to “strengthen the capacity of national machineries for the advancement of women, including through the allocation of adequate and appropriate resources and the provision of technical expertise, to take a lead advocacy role with respect to media and ICTs and gender equality, and support their involvement in national, regional and international processes related to media and ICTs issues, and enhance coordination among ministries responsible for ICTs, national machineries for the advancement of women, the private sector and gender advocacy NGOs within countries” (Para 4(x)).

The importance of mainstreaming gender perspectives in ICT was highlighted in the outcome of the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society adopted on 12 December 2003 in Geneva. The Declaration of Principles emphasized that the development of ICT provided enormous opportunities for women, who should form an integral part of, and be key actors in, the information society. Member States expressed their commitment to ensuring that the information society enabled women’s empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society and in all decision-making processes.

Objectives

The workshop was part of a larger project that has the overall objective to build institutional capacity for promoting gender equality and strengthen the capacity of national machineries to take full advantage of information and communication technologies (ICT) through networking, information sharing and knowledge management that will enhance their effectiveness in national policy-making and planning processes for gender equality.

The specific objectives of the workshop were to:

- (a) Enhance the capacity of national machineries to maximize the use and benefit of information sharing, knowledge management and good practices through more effective use of ICT;
- (b) Develop strategies on the use of ICT for advocacy, information sharing, and production of information for achieving the goal of gender equality;
- (c) Strengthen capacity of national machineries to influence the formulation and implementation of national ICT policies as well as international policy processes such as the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS);
- (d) Develop an e-based network (listserv) of national machineries from participating countries to strengthen cooperation and information sharing through regular information dissemination on women's and gender issues, including via electronic media and the internet.
- (e) Raise awareness among representatives from national machineries in the use of ICT to enhance cooperation, knowledge management and information sharing.

Expected outputs

Representatives from national machineries from 14 countries:

- have been trained in the substantive and institutional aspects of use of ICT;
- have been trained in the technical aspects of use of ICT;
- have identified strategies for institutional capacity-building in use of ICT;
- have increased capacity to influence national ICT policies and processes from a gender perspective; and
- have created an e-based network (listserv) for participants to share experiences and good practices on a continuous basis.

Venue and participants

The five-day event took place at the Economic Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) in Beirut, Lebanon. Participants were comprised of:

- Three representatives from each national machinery: two gender experts and one information specialist;
- Four ICT policy-makers as resource persons ;
- Representatives from ESWCA;
- Two staff members from the Division for the Advancement of Women;
- Four consultants/facilitators/trainers; and

Documentation

The documentation of the workshop comprised relevant background papers, including United Nations documents, as well as training material designed specifically for this workshop. Participants were invited to provide relevant information in advance on the basis of a short questionnaire.

2. Proceedings of the workshop

2.1 The mandates and roles of national machineries

Participants noted the commitment to gender equality enshrined in their national constitutions and ratification or adoption of international instruments, such as the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. A number of reservations with regard to citizenship, inheritance, marriage and family relations in some countries were noted. Social development ministries and women's affairs commissions were the entities with principal responsibility for gender equality and the advancement of women. National machineries and national commissions for women have been established in most participant countries.

Participants reviewed the mandates and roles of national machineries. An analytical framework, the "Web of Institutionalisation",² was used to facilitate this process, in particular in relation to gender mainstreaming (See Box 2 and Annex 5).

Box 2: National machineries

The Beijing Platform for Action sets out the role of national machineries in gender mainstreaming as follows: "A national machinery for the advancement of women is the central policy coordinating unit inside the government. Its main task is to support government-wide mainstreaming of a gender-equality perspective in all policy areas." (para. 201). One critical area of the Platform deals specifically with institutional mechanisms that should be put in place to ensure the implementation of the eleven substantive areas.

"National machineries for gender equality". DAW Expert Group Meeting held in Santiago, Chile, 31 August - 4 September 1998.

Gender mainstreaming

Participants noted that despite commitments made in the Beijing Platform for Action and the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and other human rights instruments, there is a lack of political will which has impeded progress in incorporating gender perspectives into policies and programmes. National machineries continue to work on projects but are not given an active role in policy development. In particular, the role of national machineries in promoting gender equality is not taken into account in poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs). It is critical that all relevant actors provide input to the PRSPs to ensure that government and donor budgets are gender-sensitive. One of the main gaps in the PRSPs is the lack of attention to existing gender disparities and the fact that women and men are affected differently by situations of poverty (see Box 1). It is important to identify gender inequalities and to develop means to

² Based on Caren Levy (1996) "The process of Institutionalising Gender in Policy and Planning: The Web of Institutionalisation", Development Planning Unit University College London Working Paper Series, Working Paper No 74.

address them in strategies to eradicate poverty. National machineries can play an important role in integrating gender perspectives into the PRSPs.

Box 1: Attention to gender in poverty reduction strategy papers³	
<u>Poverty reduction strategy papers</u>	<u>Attention to gender issues</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation 	Most papers do not take women/gender issues into account.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diagnosis 	There is no analysis of the gender dimension of poverty.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programmes 	Only a few papers mention integrating gender perspectives into the implementation plan.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow-up 	Integration of women/gender concerns is very weak or completely absent.

Participants noted that Governments had agreed to implement the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which are important to achieving gender equality and the promotion of human rights. Some governments have strengthened the MDGs in the national context. National machineries could play a vital role in promoting and integrating gender perspectives into the strategies associated with the implementation of the MDGs.

It was noted that gender experts in national machineries have the main responsibilities for promoting, supporting and following up on gender equality. The need to take a holistic approach to integrating gender perspectives into policies and programmes was emphasized. The importance of working within and across all sectors was pointed out. It was felt that the work should be based on studies and research which should be widely distributed through ICT, including radio, TV and print media. ICT should be used as a persuasive mechanism to influence Government policies and programmes.

2.2 Gender and ICT: Background and challenges

Participants discussed various definitions and relevant approaches to the promotion of gender equality and advancement of women. Participants conducted an analysis on the relationship between gender and ICT, in which the need to take gender perspectives into consideration when developing national policies and programmes on ICT was highlighted. The use of ICT within national machineries was also discussed as a way to improve efficiency in achievement of goals and objectives.

³ Adapted from the World Bank (2001). "Gender in PRSPs: A Stocktaking", Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Network, Gender and Development Group.

The participants examined the current situation and identified challenges faced by their countries in using ICT, such as:

- **Cost**
- **Capacities and competences** (illiteracy; lack of awareness on using a computer and its benefits; absence of scientific and technological education, especially for marginalized groups)
- **Content** (prevalence of English language; irrelevance to women needs; information type and quality)
- **Information** (lack of sex-disaggregated data on disparities in ICT; lack of precise indicators to monitor progress)
- **Gender awareness** (lack of understanding on the concepts of gender and gender equality; lack of official awareness on gender mainstreaming and its importance)
- **Social problems** (education, health, poverty and conflict; relationship between culture and the participation of women in ICT)

Participants also discussed strategies for increasing women's participation in ICT for the public sector, private sector and civil society (see Box 3).

Box 3: Strategies for increasing women's participation in ICT

Public sector:

- Legal and organizational activities for gender equality and ICT, including access, costs, training, cultural diversity and content etc.
- National budget allocations that support resources for gender equality and ICT.

Private sector:

- Supporting and strengthening female entrepreneurs in the ICT field.
- Ongoing training programmes for women entrepreneurs on new ICT.
- Providing financial resources to support creative ICT projects and content production.
- Strengthening women's participation and representation in business and other organizations dealing with ICT.
- Increasing quotas to support gender equality in ICT.
- Mobilizing resources for gender mainstreaming projects.

Civil society:

- Raising awareness on the benefits and effects of ICT for gender equality.
- Collecting sex-disaggregated data on gender equality and ICT which can be used in advocacy activities.

Good practices and examples on gender equality and ICT

Representatives from the national machinery in Palestine gave a presentation on their strategies and experiences of using ICT. They noted that the national machinery is responsible for collecting and disseminating data and information about gender equality. The national machinery gathers data from government ministries and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), universities and higher education institutes, women's associations, research and academic centres and statistics institutes. For data dissemination the national machinery uses a variety of ICT tools including e-mail, the internet, newspapers, magazines, radio and TV. The Palestinian national machinery is striving to reach remote areas and has established a documentation and information programme, implemented in partnership with the Italian Cooperation Organization. This programme, "Tawasol" ("Communication"), consists of establishing small documentation and information centres open to all women and men with the objective of promoting the exchange of information. It also provides training and assistance to women victims of violence. The national machinery secured the continuity of the project by locating its offices in existing municipality buildings.

To highlight the status of women's access and use of ICT in the region, the Women's Center in ESCWA presented a field study under preparation, which collects data on women and ICT from ESCWA member countries. The study focuses on women's participation in ICT as workers, students and civil servants, but does not address some important issues, such as how ICT are used for the promotion of gender equality. The lack of data in this area is a serious impediment. The study did however make some important findings, including the lack of understanding on ICT as a means to enhance gender equality. The study also found that in the Gulf countries female students are concentrated in the humanities and the number of girls pursuing scientific graduate studies remains low. However, in Egypt and Jordan, a large proportion of girls choose scientific disciplines.

2.3 Incorporating gender perspectives into national ICT strategies

Participants met in working groups to conduct an analysis of Lebanon's ICT plan and the extent to which gender dimensions are incorporated. Participants noted that the plan was gender-blind. Gender perspectives on access to ICT, and political, social and economic resources for ICT were not included. Participants also noted that the strategy did not take into consideration language challenges for women and men who do not speak English. Furthermore, participants noted that the strategy targeted institutions, such as schools, villages and libraries, but did not disaggregate in terms of people. The strategy also focuses on new ICT, while ignoring alternative and traditional methods. Participants suggested that it is necessary to learn how to use ICT effectively and there should be greater public awareness about gender and ICT at the decision-making level. Participants also suggested that there should be ICT centres throughout Lebanon in order to reach all people.

Participants conducted an analysis of the national ICT strategies in their countries, with particular attention to social integration, and developed proposals to improve gender sensitivity of such strategies.

Jordan noted that there is no gender-based approach in their ICT strategy. They found that the lack of sex-disaggregated data is problematic. Extending ICT to rural areas is also a challenge. Proposals to increase gender-sensitivity included:

- Offering equal opportunities in learning and training on ICT through the use of quotas in universities to ensure equal enrolment of women;
- Improving sex-disaggregated data collection in demographic surveys conducted by the Department of Statistics to ascertain women's access to and use of ICT;
- Setting up procedures to improve access to ICT for rural women, including requesting government support for existing NGO-run internet centres for girls in rural areas, including the provision of financial resources, equipment and free internet service. It was also noted that the Government should provide computers to girls' schools in remote areas.

Kuwait noted that several ICT processes have already begun, including e-governance, electronic filing, and kindergarten lessons in computers and English. The ICDL (International Computer Driving License) has also been adopted. Participants recommended that the national ICT strategy, which was awaiting approval by Parliament, should include:

- Partnerships between private and public sectors and civil society to improve gender equality in implementation of the ICT strategy;
- Political commitment, financial support and human resources for implementation, with particular attention to incorporating gender perspectives;
- All communication media, such as radio, television etc., utilized to maximize the number of women as well as men, and different social groups, reached.

Representatives from the **Syrian Arab Republic** were not aware of their national ICT strategy. However, they noted that the strategy should include:

- Utilizing development goals as a base;
- Expanding the service network;
- Increasing partnerships between public and private sectors as well as civil society;
- Improving opportunities for equal access of women and men;
- Enhancing participation by the poor, including women.

The national machinery proposed to:

- Conduct a study to analyze the national ICT strategy from a gender perspective;
- Hold a national meeting on “the role of ICT in promoting gender equality in general and equality of opportunities in particular”;
- Develop a website and a database.

Palestine noted that the national ICT strategy was adopted in June 2005. However, its attention to gender issues is weak. Representatives from the national machinery proposed that the strategy should include:

- Facilitating women's access to information and knowledge, including via fast and safe internet use by all social groups, particularly women;
- Training female workers, giving them the ability to plan, manage, activate and use ICT.

Representatives from the national machinery in **Iraq** proposed to:

- Raise awareness of the term and concept of gender equality among decision-makers and officials;
- Initiate collaboration with ICT policy-makers;
- Designate a gender focal point in all ministries to supervise the established policies and to work on gender mainstreaming and promote training in ICT.

Representatives from the national machinery in **Lebanon** proposed to:

- Establish a special commission (financed from the government budget) to raise awareness of gender issues in all sectors of government, in particular the Telecommunications Ministry and the Ministry of Administrative Development, for example, by organizing training courses. Focal points in all ministries will be reactivated and encouraged to coordinate and draft a workplan;
- Promote the integration of gender perspectives into the national ICT strategy and suggest proposals and solutions;
- Reactivate the cooperation between the documentation centre in the National Commission for the Lebanese Women Affairs and the central survey administration in order to conduct surveys about gender equality and collect relevant information.

In **Libya**, the main objective of the national ICT strategy is to build human resources, including by training ICT officials and trainers, as well as to assist isolated and rural regions. The national machinery proposed to:

- Raise awareness on the importance of ICT for all social groups, particularly women, children and those with special needs;
- Use Arabic, in addition to foreign languages, on websites to ensure access for all social groups, including women and girls;
- Encourage ample provision of internet centres in schools and institutes;
- Promote partnership between the private and public sectors;
- Establish a national women and ICT centre to conduct research, training courses and consultations and contribute to policies and programmes in gender equality and the advancement of women.

Representatives from the national machinery in **Yemen** proposed to:

- Raise awareness of gender and ICT, including by organizing training workshops;
- Train specialized experts to assist information communication;
- Communicate with those in leadership and decision-making positions in all Government ministries on the gender perspectives of ICT;
- Draft a strategy to target schools, particularly where computer courses are part of the curriculum but computers are not available;

- Encourage women's full participation in this strategy.

Representatives from the national machinery in **Oman** were not aware of a national ICT policy. However, they proposed to:

- Promote ICT and raise awareness among all social groups, including women and girls;
- Monitor indicators in ICT usage by women and girls;
- Train officials working in ICT on gender equality and ICT;
- Disseminate information and make it easily accessible to women.

In **Egypt** the national ICT strategy aims to narrow the digital gap. However, gender perspectives are not taken into consideration. Representatives noted that:

- Women face *de facto* discrimination and segmentation in the ICT labour market, for example, women are not employed in networking, but instead are concentrated in programming. Training for women on accessing the labour market in this area is necessary;
- The Government's free computers for households project is successful but does not take the needs of women and girls into consideration in operation. The project must meet the needs of women and girls in order to increase interest.

In the **United Arab Emirates**, the national machinery noted that it is necessary for the Government to:

- Open communication channels and become familiar with the goals, strategies and implementation machineries;
- Include the concept of equal opportunities for women as well as men in the national plan for ICT (although gender equality is not a well-understood concept).

Representatives from **Qatar** proposed to: establish a working group or special commission, composed of the Higher Council for Women Affairs and experts in ICT, to study the goals of national ICT strategies; define target groups and evaluate their needs; and, analyze national ICT strategies to ensure a gender perspective is taken into consideration.

Representatives from the national machinery in **Bahrain** noted that they knew little about the national ICT policy. They resolved to work on:

- Familiarizing themselves with the national ICT policy and conduct an analysis from a gender perspective;
- Setting up a national working group on gender equality and ICT;
- Reaching agreement with relevant stakeholders to formulate strategies, define weak and strong points and propose necessary adjustments;
- Defining target groups, identifying their needs in accessing ICT, and reducing costs of ICT resources for these target groups;
- Promoting the inclusion of a gender perspective in ICT strategies and related surveys and training;
- Forming a joint commission between the Higher Council for Women and other Government ministries to continue implementing and evaluating ICT policies.

In **Algeria** a policy exists that aims to introduce ICT at all levels. However, gender equality is not taken into account and the policy lacks appropriate evaluation and follow-up. The national machinery proposed to:

- Organize courses and awareness-raising campaigns in gender mainstreaming for decision-makers, in order to encourage their involvement;
- Establish focal points in all sectors, such as health, education, labour, rural development, small and medium enterprises and traditional industry, in cooperation with representatives from the civil society;
- Set up a new gender-sensitive strategy on ICT that concentrates on the individual.

2.4 Technical training

Several practical ICT training sessions were incorporated into the workshop to offer participants the opportunity to get acquainted with ICT language and tools:

E-communication: Participants received training in tools to support communication and information-sharing. Training included: creating e-mail accounts; receiving e-mails; sending, replying and forwarding e-mails; using attachments; contact lists; and creating distribution lists, as well as an introduction to instant messaging.

Internet and websites: Participants were introduced to different methods of searching the internet, including the use of keywords and Boolean logic. Participants also visited a number of websites from participating national machineries and conducted an evaluation of usability and content (www.jncw.jo (Jordan); www.scw.gov.bh (Bahrain); www.ncwegypt.com (Egypt); www.mosd.gov.om (Oman)). Training was also given in the process of creating a website, including choosing a domain name; defining the target audience; defining general objectives; website design; and website content, including the collection, categorization and analysis of information. Marketing strategies and keeping websites up-to-date were also discussed.

3. Country strategies to promote the relationship between gender equality and ICT

During the workshop, participants worked in groups to develop strategies and plans on how national machineries can address the issue of women's marginalization through the effective use of ICT. As part of this exercise, participants identified the following problems and challenges:

- Legal gaps;
- Low participation of women in the labour market;
- Low percentage of women university professors;
- Low percentage of women in decision-making processes;
- Negative images and stereotypical roles of women in society;
- High levels of illiteracy;
- Early marriage;
- Women's inability to move freely due to security situations;
- Fundamentalist religious groups;
- Preference for men in powerful positions compared to women;
- Difficulty of changing men's mentality about gender equality;
- The triple role of women's responsibilities;
- Lack of women as political candidates; and
- Difficulty in implementing the family law.
- Increases in violence against women, including honour crimes, as well as efforts to conceal it, and an absence of shelters for abused women.

ESCWA reported that during the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS), held in Geneva in 2003, it was difficult to get information and indicators to accurately access and measure access to ICT based on variables such as rural/urban areas, between regions, and by sex. In addition, financial challenges and the diversity of national languages are major impediments to women's advancement and empowerment.

Participants then provided presentations on country-specific projects and analyzed how national machineries can make effective use of ICT to enhance implementation of these projects.

Palestine: Abused Women Forum

- The Palestinian project "Abused women forum" aims to reduce abuse of women and girls and the number of female deaths due to violence. The project targets decision-makers and the general community, in particular women. Government institutions and NGOs assist with the implementation of the project. Activities include training of trainers (men and women); information-sharing for abused women through communication centres in all districts and governorates; awareness-raising workshops on abuse of women; and rehabilitation of abused women. It was reported that the project has an evaluation and follow-up component, including monthly meetings of the Forum and the production and distribution of an annual report.

- Whenever possible the project uses a range of ICT, such as the internet; newspapers; periodicals; televisions advertisements; radio advertisements and briefing notes addressed to the Parliament, the Cabinet and the President. Computer presentations are also used to raise awareness.

Kuwait: Community Partnership

- The objective of the project is to raise awareness of the importance of active participation of women in society in order to achieve sustainable development. The entire society is targeted, with a special focus on youth. Implementing bodies include the public and private sectors and civil society, including women's associations and humanitarian organizations.
- The project will use a range of ICT including websites, radio, TV, telephone hotline, print media, CD-ROM and the internet.

Libya: National Strategy for the Advancement of Women

- The objective of the project is to encourage women to actively participate in the work of basic popular conferences. The project targets all women as well as the social affairs secretaries of popular commissions.
- The project focuses on capacity-building, awareness-raising on ICT and establishing training centres to eradicate computer illiteracy.

United Arab Emirates: Women in Policy

- The Women in Policy project aims to strengthen women's role in politics and decision-making and raise political awareness among women.
- The project uses a range of ICT including print media, TV, radio and email. The national machinery proposes to utilize the internet by creating a special section for Women in Policy on its website; establish dialogue forums; prepare mailing-lists and organize training workshops.

Jordan: Interim Civil Register Law

- This project is aimed at generating the support of deputies and senators for the civil register law. One of the main constraints has been the rejection of the law by the two chambers.
- Women's organizations were instrumental in conducting training courses for women on how to use ICT tools to support this initiative. Television advertisements and short television programmes focusing on articles in the law, such as attention to the adverse effects of early marriage, were used, as were live radio programmes with interactive question and answer sessions.

Bahrain: High Council for Women's Empowerment

- The objective of the project is the political empowerment of women. The main actors in the project were civil society, youth, High Council and Parliament members and former women candidates. It was noted that there is no follow-up and evaluation mechanism in the project.
- ICT is used in the programme to conduct interactive communication with various target groups, send invitations by fax and telephone, and publish information in local media and on the website. There were proposals for the use of the internet by women candidates to promote their electoral programme; learn about political participation from other women candidates; and communicate with the electorate, the National Commission and representatives of international organizations.

Oman: Social Security Law

- The objective of the Social Security Law Project of the Ministry of Social Development is to publish the clauses of the social security law in different media in order to raise awareness among all members of society. The Social Security Law aims to provide financial support to families with limited income and special needs. Follow-up and evaluation should include collection of data and a comparison of beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries.
- Participants noted that, in coordination with all stakeholders, awareness programs should be drafted to define the Social Security Law and the target group and how to benefit from this law through the use of ICT, including radio, television, newspapers, publications and other information networks.

Lebanon: Follow-up of CEDAW

- The objective of the project is to raise awareness about the Convention and highlight sensitive issues, in particular those related to Lebanon's reservations to the Convention. The targeted group includes Lebanese women, civil associations and in particular women's associations, legal academic committees, lawyers and members of the judicial system. Project activities included organizing a workshop on the integration of the Convention's content into university curricula and awareness-raising among university law faculties, lawyers and members of the judicial system; as well as organizing a CEDAW forum for civil society, in particular women's associations.
- After discussing the two reports concerning Lebanon at the 33rd session of the Meeting of States Parties in New York, the National Committee for Lebanese Women pledged to print and distribute simplified paper and electronic publications related to the Convention and stress the need for implementation in the Lebanese judicial system. The national machinery proposed to use ICT through organizing a press conference and publicity campaign about the project, including the publication of press reports on the website, as well as distribution through other Government sites, UNIFEM and other media, including television.

Egypt: Using modern ICT to eradicate rural women's illiteracy

- The objective of the project is to establish mechanisms to reduce illiteracy among women in Egypt, targeting women 15-40 years old. A number of partners are involved in the process, including UNDP, the Italian Cooperation for Sustainable Development, ICT clubs, social research centres and the National Council for Women. Indicators suggest that the project has been successful in increasing literacy among women, and in the first 6-11 months of the project, 85 percent of persons passed the literacy examination.
- Outputs have included a pilot project for 80 women in training on modern ICT. A number of activities are planned for the future, such as setting up a database of the women graduates of the programmes, as well as linking the database to the national statistics on illiterate women; and integrating some key gender issues into the content. It was hoped that a women society portal, similar to www.kenanaonline.com, would be set up in the future as well as e-learning programmes with a focus on reading and writing, ICT, basic education and vocational training.

Syrian Arab Republic: Violence against women

- The objective of the work of the Syrian Committee for Women Affairs is to raise awareness about violence against women. The issue of violence against women is of great concern but there are no mechanisms to monitor the problem, including the collection of data. The project targets all community members, (men and women), decision-makers, United Nations agencies, NGOs and the media. The project is also involved in drafting family-specific laws and proposing awareness-raising policies. In particular, a proposal to amend the law on honour crimes was made. A number of partners are involved in the project such as the media, statisticians, lawyers and legal researchers.
- ICT is used in a follow-up evaluation mechanism built into the project, which includes questionnaires, telephone voting and the collection and analysis of data for submission to decision-makers.

Qatar: Civil register legislation

- Qatar reported that the Higher Council for Family Affairs is currently considering the civil register legislation. Targeted groups include judges and women and men in society.
- The use of ICT is highlighted, in particular to avoid it becoming a factor that further exasperates gender inequality.

4. Workshop conclusions

The workshop highlighted a number of general conclusions, including:

- Constitutions emphasize the concept of equality between men and women but there is a gap in implementation and application.
- National machineries need to use a multi-sectoral approach that would include industry, education, health, environment, agriculture and other sectors.
- The activities of national machineries should include all other ministries rather than taking on the sole responsibility for planning and implementation.
- National machineries should play a catalytic role and machineries should actively participate in all Government activities to ensure that these incorporate gender perspectives.

The following points were identified as key to enhancing the effective use of ICT in the promotion of gender equality:

- Using ICT to increase outreach to, and understanding of the needs women in special groups such as rural migrant women in the labour market, women in the informal sector and female school dropouts.
- Addressing the needs of uneducated women in accessing and using ICT.
- Motivating women through ICT to participate in decision-making at all levels.
- Stressing the role of ICT as a means to exchange information between national machineries.
- Enhancing the relationship between civil society and national machineries through ICT.
- Increasing communication and exchange at the regional and international levels between different stakeholders.
- Integrating gender perspectives into ICT policies and strategies so as not to exclude women.

In particular, a number of key points at the political level were stressed:

- Political will and commitment is needed.
- The gap between policy and implementation has to be specifically addressed, including in relation to ICT.
- Financial resources for ICT for women should be increased.

Annexes

1. Aide mémoire
2. List of participants
3. Programme of work
4. Questionnaire
5. Web of institutionalization

ANNEX 1 – AIDE MEMOIRE

**Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)
Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW)
Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)
Center for Women (ECW)
Capacity Building for Promoting Gender Equality in Africa and
West Asia Countries**

Workshop on
Strengthening the capacity of national machineries through the effective use of ICTs

Beirut, Lebanon
27 June – 1 July 2005

I. Introduction

The Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) and the Economic Commission for Western Asia are co-organizing with the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), Center for Women (ECW) a workshop for representatives from national machineries for the advancement of women. The workshop will identify common strategies for institutional capacity-building for promoting gender equality through the effective use of information and communications technologies (ICTs), and develop an e-based network of national machineries. The five-day meeting for senior representatives of national machineries will include training for expert representatives and information managers/specialists from national machineries on the use of ICTs for knowledge management and information sharing. Select ICT policy makers are also invited.

The workshop will take place in Beirut, Lebanon, from 27 June to 1 July 2005. The following countries will be invited to participate: Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syrian Arab Republic, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

The workshop in Beirut is the fifth in the series of five workshops which the Division for the Advancement of Women is organizing for national machineries in Africa and West Asia. The first workshop was held from 19 to 23 April 2004 in Windhoek, Namibia; the second workshop was held from 24 to 28 May 2004 in Dakar, Senegal; the third workshop was held from 10 to 14 January 2005 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and the fourth workshop will be held in Addis, Ababa from 23 to 27 May 2005.

II. Background

The project has the overall objective to build institutional capacity for promoting gender equality in Africa and West Asia. The workshop aims at strengthening the capacity of national machineries of participating countries to take full advantage of new

information and communications technologies to strengthen networking, information sharing and knowledge management that will enhance their effectiveness in national policy-making and planning processes for gender equality.

The Beijing Platform for Action emphasized that national machineries for the advancement of women have been established in almost every Member State to, *inter alia*, design, promote the implementation of, execute, monitor, evaluate, advocate and mobilize support for policies that promote the advancement of women. National machineries are diverse in form and uneven in their effectiveness (para 196). The National machinery for the advancement of women is the central policy-coordinating unit inside governments. Its main task is to support government-wide mainstreaming of a gender-equality perspective in all policy areas (para 201).

The Commission on the Status of Women, at its forty-seventh session, considered the role of ICTs in relation to gender equality. The panel discussion on “Participation in and access of women to the media, and information and communication technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women”, held during this session of the Commission, emphasized the role of ICTs and the media as tools for development and as central to the empowerment of women. Media and ICTs were increasingly used to share knowledge, enhance participation of all members of society, increase networking, give voice to marginalized groups, organize political action, empower people, fight poverty and enhance economic development. In addition to access, the issues of women’s information needs and available content were addressed in the panel. Participants called for research on women’s information needs and the production of local content in local language.

In its Agreed Conclusions, adopted at this same session, the Commission on the Status of Women noted that “the media and ICTs offer tools for enhancing women’s full access to the benefits of information and new technologies and can become central tools for women’s empowerment and the promotion of gender equality” (para 2). One of the actions to be taken was to “strengthen the capacity of national machineries for the advancement of women, including through the allocation of adequate and appropriate resources and the provision of technical expertise, to take a lead advocacy role with respect to media and ICTs and gender equality, and support their involvement in national, regional and international processes related to media and ICTs issues, and enhance coordination among ministries responsible for ICTs, national machineries for the advancement of women, the private sector and gender advocacy NGOs within countries” (para 4(x)).

The series of five workshops will strengthen the capacity of national machineries in participating countries to take full advantage of new information and communications technologies to establish and/or strengthen the types of networking, information sharing and knowledge management that will enhance their effectiveness in national policy-making and planning processes for gender equality. The creation of an e-based network of national machineries will enhance the effectiveness of national machineries within each country. It will serve as a tool to strengthen the capacity of national machineries to implement their mandates, for example, by supporting their work as advocates and

catalysts for gender mainstreaming, as well as support the design and use of an adequate information infrastructure for the achievement of gender equality. It will also enhance networking and sharing of information and good practice examples regionally and sub-regionally. The development of a website prototype for national machineries for the advancement of women will expand opportunities for networking and information sharing on common priorities.

The project will draw on the expertise of resource persons and national ICT policy makers.

III. Workshop on strengthening the capacity of national machineries through the effective use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs).

A. Objectives of the workshop

The workshop aims to strengthen the institutional capacity of national machineries to effectively use ICTs to advocate for successful gender equality policies and act as catalysts for systematic gender mainstreaming in all policies and programmes, nationally and regionally. It will also provide practical training to information managers and/or documentalists of national machineries to support networking and partnerships among national machineries, through effective development and maintenance of information bases, websites and related information infrastructure.

The workshop will:

- (f) Enhance the capacity of national machineries to maximize the use and benefit of information, knowledge and good practices through more effective use of ICTs to promote gender equality;
- (g) Develop strategies on the use of ICTs for advocacy, information sharing, and production of information for achieving the goal of gender equality;
- (h) Strengthen capacity of national machineries to influence the national ICT and WSIS policy formulation and implementation;
- (i) Develop an e-based network of national machineries from participating countries to strengthen cooperation and information sharing through regular information dissemination on women's and gender issues, including via electronic media and the internet.
- (j) Raise awareness among representatives from national machineries, especially information managers, in the use of ICTs to enhance cooperation, knowledge management and information sharing.

B. Expected outputs

The workshop will produce the following outputs:

- Strategies for institutional capacity-building in use of ICTs will have been identified.
- Representatives from national machineries from fourteen countries will have been trained in the substantive and institutional aspects of use of ICTs;

- Representatives from fourteen countries will have been trained in the technical aspects of use of ICTs;
- The prototype of a website for national machineries will have been designed;
- A framework for an e-based network of national machineries will have been developed;
- National machineries will be able to influence national ICT policies and processes from a gender perspective.

It is anticipated that, based on the experience gained during the workshop, participants will use the e-based network on a continuous basis, to share experiences and exercise leadership for promoting gender equality.

C. Venue and participants

The five-day event will take place at the Economic Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) in Beirut, Lebanon.

The number of participants will be approximately forty-eight. They will include:

- Three representatives from each country: two expert representatives from the national machinery and one information specialist working with the national machineries;
- Four ICT policy makers;
- Two to three staff members from Division for the Advancement of Women;
- Five consultants/facilitators/trainers;
- One to two resource persons;
- Representatives from regional/sub-regional institutions; and
- Representatives from the ESWCA

D. Organizational and administrative matters

The workshop will be co-organized by the Division for the Advancement of Women and ESCWA. The meeting of 28 representatives of national machineries, 14 information specialists and 4 ICT policy makers will be held for 5 days. On the final day, the results of the discussions in the meeting, strategies for developing action plans for incorporating gender perspectives into ICT policies, utilizing ICT effectively in their work, will be presented in plenary.

Participants in the five-day meeting will convene in plenary as well as in working groups. Brief country presentations on current institutional set-ups, knowledge management networking and use of ICTs will be made in plenary. This will be followed by interactive dialogue, facilitated by the consultants/resource persons, to identify priorities and develop a common strategy for improved knowledge management and advocacy using ICT and a framework for an e-based network.

Participants in the training will include one information specialist from each of the participating national machineries. The focus of the training will be on the use of ICTs for networking, knowledge management and information sharing, as well as training in website design and maintenance. Participants will discuss the development websites for national machineries.

E. Documentation

The documentation of the workshop will comprise relevant background papers, including United Nations documents, as well as training material designed specifically for this workshop. Participants will be invited to provide relevant information in advance on the basis of a short questionnaire, and to make brief presentations on national experiences in the plenary.

F. Budget

The Division for the Advancement of Women will make available funds required to cover all expenses regarding the organization of the workshop for all other participants. This will include the costs of travel and daily subsistence allowance (DSA) for all invited participants, as well as for consultants and resource persons.

G. Passports and Visas

Participants will be expected to make necessary arrangements with regard to passports, visa and health certificates for travel. An information note will be sent out to participants to assist them with travel arrangements. All relevant correspondence should be addressed to:

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Beirut, Lebanon, 27 June – 1 July 2005

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ANNEX 3 – PROGRAMME OF WORK

STRENGTHENING THE CAPACITY OF NATIONAL MACHINERIES THROUGH THE EFFECTIVE USE OF ICT

Beirut, Lebanon 27 June – 1 July 2005

Programme

Monday 27

- 9.00 Registration
- 9:30 Opening Ceremony
- 10:15 Introduction to the workshop
- Presentation by Facilitators
 - Presentation by participants and their expectations
 - Objectives and working methods of workshop
 - Logistics and housekeeping
- 11.15 *Break*
- 11.45 Introduction to key concepts of the workshop
- 12.14 Presentation 1: Role of National Mechanisms in the promotion of gender equality (power point presentation) and introduction to institutional web (4 spheres)
- 13.15 *Lunch*
- 14.15 Working Group 1: Identification of issues and gender inequalities in participants' countries
- 15.15 *Review*
- 16.00 End of session

Tuesday 28

- 9.00 Presentation 3: Gender and ICT: Problems and stakeholders?
- 10.00 Working Group 2: Using ICT to collect, analyse and manage information on gender issues
- 10.45 *Break*
- 11.00 How national machineries use ICT: Presentations by 3 countries
- 13.00 *Lunch*
- 14.15 Working Group 2: (Practical): Demonstration of ICT tools (email, list serves, internet, etc.)
- 16.00 End of session

Wednesday 29

- 9.00 Presentation 3: “Women and ICT in ESCWA region”
10.00 Working Group 3: Gender critique of national ICT policy
11.00 *Break*
11.15 *Review*
Group work 4: Integration of gender into national ICT policies (per country)
13.15 *Lunch*
14.15 *Review*
15.15 Working Group 5: (practical): Introduction to research and consulting websites
16.30 End of session

Thursday 30

- 9.00 Presentation 4: Gender perspectives in international initiatives
10.30 *Break*
10.45 Group work 6: Integration of ICT into programmes of national machineries (per country)
12.15 *Review*
13.15 *Lunch*
14.15 Working Group 7: (practical): Development of a plan and/or prototype of internet site for national machineries
16.30 End of session

Friday 1

- 9.00 Presentation 5: Integrating gender into the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS)
10.00 Review of Working Group 7 (practical)
11.00 *Break*
11.15 Summary of workshop and discussion
12.15 Discussion on modalities of follow-up: network and/or portal for national machineries for gender, discussion lists
12.30 Evaluation
13.00 End of Session

ANNEX 4 – QUESTIONNAIRE

Workshop on “Strengthening the Capacity of National Machineries through the Effective Use of ICTs”

**Beirut, Lebanon
23 June to 1 July 2005**

Dear Participants,

In a few weeks, you will be participating in a meeting-cum-training workshop, which is organized by the Division for the Advancement of Women of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in Beirut Lebanon. The overall objective of the meeting-cum-training workshop is to strengthen the institutional capacity of national machineries, through the use of information and communications technologies (ICTs), for the work of national machineries including advocating for successful gender equality policies, and act as catalysts for systematic gender mainstreaming in all policies and programmes at national level.

*To assist us in preparing for this meeting, we would like to request you to take some time and fill in this questionnaire. Kindly return the completed questionnaire **before 17 June 2005** to the following addresses: t_mina@mtds.com , copied to cvouhe@wanadoo.fr , taylor@un.org and oderar@un.org*

You can write your answer directly in the text of the questionnaire. Take as much space as you need. You can use a ‘short hand’ style, use bullet points etc. Save your document as “name of country.doc” (eg. ethiopia.doc) before sending it back to us.

The information you will provide will be used during the workshop and kept as a reference document by the UNDAW.

Kindly **bring a printed copy** of the completed questionnaire with you to the meeting.

On behalf of the facilitation team, I wish to thank you in advance for the information and look forward to working with you in Beirut!

Mina Tafnout, Lead consultant

Please read this before completing the questionnaire

ICTs are technologies and tools that people use to share, distribute, gather information, and to communicate with one another, one on one, or in groups, through the use of computers and interconnected computer networks. They are media that utilise both telecommunication and computer technologies to transmit information.

Information and communication are integral to human society. In many cultures today, information retrieval and presentation – the recording of wisdom and history – is still done with the use of speech, drama, painting, song or dance. The use of writing changed this enormously, and the invention of the printing press allowed communication on a massive scale, through newspapers and magazines. More recent technological innovations increased further the reach and speed of communication, culminating, for now, with digital technology.

These new ICTs can be grouped into three categories:

- Information technology using computers, which have become indispensable in modern societies to process data and save time and effort
- Telecommunications technologies including telephones (with fax) and the broadcasting of radio and television, often through satellites
- Networking technologies, of which the best known is the internet, but which has extended to mobile phone technology, Voice Over IP telephony (VOIP), satellite communications, and other forms of communication that are still in their infancy.

These new technologies have become central to contemporary societies. Whether you are talking on the phone, sending an email, going to the bank, using a library, listening to sports coverage on the radio, watching the news on TV, working in an office or in the field, going to the doctor, driving a car or catching a plane, you are using ICTs.

NAME OF THE PERSON (OR PERSONS) COMPLETING THE QUESTIONNAIRE:

ORGANISATION AND POSITION(S):

COUNTRY:

Introduction

A/ What are the main objectives and activities of the national machinery for gender in your country

B/ What are the main bodies (governmental and non-governmental) that make up the national machinery in your country

1. HOW NATIONAL MACHINERIES COLLECT AND MANAGE INFORMATION?

1.1. Does the national machinery for gender have a communication strategy? Please explain

1.2. What information does the machinery **collect** on a regular basis on gender issues and mainstreaming in your country? e.g. reports, statistics, journals etc

1.3. What tools and mechanisms are used collect this information at different levels?

1.4. What are the key problems for information collection?

1.5. How does the national machinery **package** (eg. leaflets in local languages, annual statistical report to the national assembly) and **disseminate** (eg. through

local organisations, radios, theatre) the information it wants to share with different target groups?

1.6. What problems does the national machinery face to reach target groups with relevant information?

1.7. Does the national machinery use the internet to collect and disseminate information?

- If the answer is “yes”, please briefly explain how these ICT are used and with what level of satisfaction and efficiency
- If the answer is “no”, explain why these ICT are not used

1.8 What kind of gender information would the national machinery need to have access to on the internet and via e-networks and what kind of information would it like to disseminate to others via internet, e-network?

1.9 Do you personally search the World Wide Web (WWW) regularly for information, news and events relating to your work?

1.10 Do you find useful information when you search the WWW?

1.11 Do you have some favourite/useful web sites that you use? Please share these.

2. GENDER DIFFERENCES AND INEQUALITIES IN ACCESS TO AND CONTROL OF ICT

Remember that there are many kinds of ICTs –read definitions on the first page of the questionnaire. So please try to be as specific as possible in your answers.

2.1 To your knowledge, are there differences and inequalities in the way that women and men (girls and boys) have access to, use and control ICT in your country:

- At household level
- In schools and in further education
- In the labour market
- In civil society organisations

2.1 Are there organisations (public, private or NGO) that use innovative ICT to promote gender equality ?

2.2 Do you know if there are studies, reports etc. that provide information on ICT and gender (or women/girls) in your country? Could you give us the titles of these documents and bring some examples with you to Beirut?

3 ICT POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES

3.1 Does your government have a national ICT policy? If the answer is ‘yes’, can you explain to what extent this policy integrates gender?

3.2 Is your national machinery involved in the development or implementation of this policy? If ‘yes’, please explain how, if ‘no’, please explain ‘why’?

3.3 Does the national machinery support women/gender and ICT projects? If yes, please explain

3.4 Are you aware of, or involved in the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) process?

4. ICT CAPACITY IN THE NATIONAL MACHINERY

ICT experts will probably need to be involved to answer these questions

4.1 Technical Infrastructure Questions

4.1.1 Do you have your own computer at work?

4.1.2 How many computers are in your office and who uses them?

4.1.3 How would you rate the efficiency of your computer?

4.1.4 Does your computer have a CD-ROM drive?

4.1.5 Do you have access to the Internet?

4.1.6 Do you have a dial-up connection or are you permanently connected to the Internet?

4.1.7 Who is your Internet Service Provider?

4.1.8 Do you experience crashes/unexpected interruptions to the service?

4.1.9 Do you have a reliable electricity connection?

4.1.10 Do you have a person able to assist you with technical troubleshooting?

4.1.11 How long does it take for this person to respond to your technical queries?

4.2 Technical know how questions

- 4.2.1 Do all members of your institution have email addresses?
- 4.2.2 Do you communicate with other national machineries and/or with your constituencies electronically?
- 4.2.3 What software do you use/have loaded onto your computer? I.e. Microsoft Office, email packages etc.

4.3 Websites

- 4.3.1 Does your institution have a website? If so, please provide your URL.
- 4.3.2 Who built it?
- 4.3.3 Who maintains it?
- 4.3.4 How regularly is it updated? I.e. daily, weekly, monthly, on an ad hoc basis.

4.4 Mailing lists/Listerves and networking

- 4.4.1 Do you belong to any email mailing lists/listerves? If Yes, which ones?
- 4.4.2 Are you part of a network/(s) relating to your work, both electronic and non-electronic? If yes, with whom and how do you communicate?
- 4.5.1 How would you rate your institution networking? i.e. Do other organisations know what your national machinery does and do you know what other organisations do on gender?

ANNEX 5 – WEB OF INSTITUTIONALIZATION



