

**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**

**AIDE-MEMOIRE**

**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:

- a) 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;
- b) Develop strategies on the use of ICTs for advocacy, information sharing, and production of information for achieving the goal of gender equality;
- c) Strengthen capacity of national machineries to influence the national ICT and WSIS policy formulation and implementation;
- d) 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.
- e) 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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