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OF WEST AFRICAN
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COMMUNAUTÉ ECONOMIQUE
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ECOWAS GENDER POLICY

EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT
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PREFACE

Under the terms of Article 63 of the Revised ECOWAS Treaty, Member States agree to formulate, harmonise, coordinate and put in place appropriate policies and mechanisms for the improvement of the social, economic and cultural conditions of women.

With this in mind, the said Member States were invited to identify and evaluate the factors limiting the contribution of women to regional development efforts, and to define a framework likely to make it possible to find a solution to these problems and to take account of the concerns and needs of women in the running of society. Consequently, the mandate given to ECOWAS by the Treaty is unequivocal: to formulate policies and develop programmes t o meet the economic, social and cultural needs of women.

The ECOWAS Heads of State and Government, with a view to encouraging the involvement of women in activities relating to regional integration and cooperation, set up a structure known as the West African Women's Association (WAWA). Over time, it became clear that, in its current form, WAAF lacked the capacity to achieve its objectives of greater involvement of women and gender equality. A regional policy on gender issues was needed to help achieve positive results in this area, as well as the overall objectives of the sustainable development paradigm.

A draft policy document, 'Orientations pour la mise en place de Systèmes de Gestion des Questions du Genre', and a Strategic Plan were drawn up by two consultants over a two-year period. These draft documents were validated and enriched at a series of meetings, notably at expert and ministerial level, and at a stakeholder forum (State, private sector, civil society), before being submitted to the Summit of Heads of State and Government of the 15 Member States for approval.

As part of the preparation of this policy, an analysis of the situation in the Member States was carried out in order to identify the major gender disparities in all development sectors, to determine the factors limiting women's contribution to the development process and to measure the extent to which the MDGs, the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action and the NEPAD objectives have been achieved. It was noted that there are major gender disparities in all sectors, and that attention needs to be drawn to these in order to find solutions. Specific tools will be used to accelerate capacity building for gender mainstreaming and the achievement of the MDGs.

equality between men and women in the context of socio-economic development, cooperation and integration in the sub-region. ECOWAS reaffirms its willingness to give priority to the regional approach in order to meet the imperatives of development as defined by NEPAD. Gender mainstreaming is one of the priorities in this respect.

The policy has been drawn up for all 15 Member States, but there is a lack of data on various sectors, including peace and security, the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325, women and ICTs. As a result, the documents drawn up are also intended to stimulate reflection at the level of the focal points working at international level on gender issues, national women's organisations, civil society and the private sector, with a view to updating and enriching them, taking into account the differences between men and women and their specific situations in the sub-region.

These documents have been published on CD-ROM (ECOWAS Publications) and placed on the ECOWAS website for easy access.

ECOWAS, UNIFEM and the Commonwealth Secretariat, through a tripartite mechanism, provided financial support for policy development during the period. The draft documents were prepared on behalf of ECOWAS by two international consultants specialising in gender issues, recruited by UNIFEM and the Commonwealth Secretariat (COM-SEC). In addition, the Human Development Department of the Integration Section of the ECOWAS Secretariat made useful suggestions and comments, provided administrative support, provided the necessary infrastructure and logistics and facilitated the approval of the protocols.

Technical and editorial comments and contributions were made by development partners such as UNIFEM, COM-SEC, the Gender and Development Division of the African Union, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the African Development Bank (ADB), the Ministries for Women in ECOWAS Member States, the World Bank Office in Nigeria, the private sector-banking sector, civil society-women's NGOs in Member States, IFAD, women entrepreneurs, associations fighting gender-based violence, human trafficking, HIV/AIDS, Members of Parliament, ECOWAS specialised institutions: Parliament, Court of Justice, ECOWAS Gender and Development, West African Monetary Institute, West African Health Organisation, as well as UEMOA.
All the departments of the ECOWAS Secretariat participated in the study of the various parts of the documents, in particular those of the Integration Programmes, Political Affairs and Defence (Peace and Security), Harmonisation of Policies, Administration and Finance.

The following ECOWAS officials deserve special mention for their commitment to the project: Dr Ibn Chambas, Dr Remi Aribisala, Dr Man

Mr B. Joof, Mr Mamadou Guèye, Mr Kennedy Barsisa, Mr Frank Offei, Mr Sène, Mrs Henrietta Didigu, Dr Afolabi, Mr Kamara, Mrs Aminata Dibba, Mrs Florence Iheme, Mrs Nelly Taylor, Mrs Mena Souso.

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At the ECA, Mrs Joséphine Ouédraogo, Dr Dorothy Ujiwu, Dr Hilda Tadria and Mr Ouédraogo have contributed, thanks to their vision, to ensuring that ECOWAS adheres to the gender mainstreaming project.

In the Member States, the ministries responsible for the promotion of women, the technical committees on gender issues, the national focal points and women's NGOs provided invaluable support.

Ms Marian, from Ghana's Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs, was instrumental in achieving positive results by chairing the consultative and technical meetings.

Mr Godwin Akpakpan, Secretary, and Mr Iheanyi Ogbuji, Office Assistant, provided invaluable assistance.

The documents relating to the ECOWAS Gender Policy, the Guidelines on Gender Management Systems and the Strategic Plan were drawn up by two consultants: Mrs Jane Kwawu-International Gender Consultant and Dr Sylvia Charles-Economist.

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The development partners deserve special mention for having provided the funding and technical support needed to develop the tools. These partners include: the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), which had the merit of identifying the need for ECOWAS to develop its institutional capacities to take gender issues into account; the United Nations Fund for Women and Development (UNIFEM) and the Commonwealth Secretariat, which provided financial support and identified competent consultants willing to work with ECOWAS executives to achieve the objectives.

We thank the ECOWAS Conference of Ministers in charge of the Advancement of Women and the Technical Commission on Gender for their support, as well as the interest and commitment they showed in studying the documents and making their suggestions and comments with a view to finalising them and submitting them to the ECOWAS Heads of State and Government for adoption.

Finally, we thank all stakeholders and ECOWAS staff for their support.

ECOWAS MANDATE

The Economic Community of West African States was created in May 1975 by a Treaty, revised in 1993, with the aim of establishing a common market between member countries. The provisions of this treaty provide for the progressive elimination of tariff and non-tariff barriers applied to intra-community products, the establishment of a common external tariff, the harmonisation of fiscal and monetary policies, the creation of a single monetary zone and close cooperation in all areas of economic activity. ECOWAS continues to play a leading role in the prevention and resolution of conflicts in the region and has a number of successes to its credit in mediation, conflict resolution and the restoration of peace and security in the sub-region. In the field of integration, considerable progress has been made, particularly in the 8 countries that make up the WAEMU. As ECOWAS works to consolidate its achievements, the issue of integration and the participation of women has taken on a central dimension. The gender perspective has become an important part of the States' reaffirmation of their political will to transform the sub-region into a haven of peace, progress and stability, in pursuit of the objectives of regional integration and cooperation.

The Gender Policy, the Guidelines for the Establishment of Gender Management Systems and the Strategic Plan are the result of a tripartite consultation funded by UNIFEM, the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) between 2002 and 2005.

Message from the Executive Secretary

Gender equality and women's rights are high on the agenda of ECOWAS. ECOWAS Heads of State and Government have duly signed and ratified international protocols and instruments affirming gender equality in efforts to achieve sustainable development. These include instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Platform for Action and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human Rights. The issue of gender equality has also been taken into account in the Millennium Development Goals and the Millennium Declaration, as has the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which is in itself an important objective whose achievement is essential to the implementation of other development activities.

The evaluation of the Beijing Platform for Action on its tenth anniversary showed that progress has been made in taking into account the gender dimension and the promotion of women, but that much remains to be done to achieve gender equality. The commitment of governments is still very strong, but there are still gaps in the application and assessment of gender disparities on the ground. Women are still victims of discrimination, face poverty and are under-represented in political spheres and decision-making bodies; moreover, they are not sufficiently involved in peace management and the peace process. The ECOWAS Secretariat has taken the bold initiative of institutionalising the issue of gender equality and making it a priority activity to be implemented as part of its efforts to promote regional cooperation and integration with a view to establishing an economic union in the sub-region.

The ECOWAS Conference of Heads of State and Government, at its 26[th]Session held in 2003, authorised the Executive Secretariat to draw up a gender policy, a management system and a strategic plan relating to these issues, and to replace the now defunct West African Women's Association (WAWA) with an ECOWAS Gender and Development Centre, to work on capacity building for gender mainstreaming and the achievement of cooperation and integration objectives in the sub-region.

The ECOWAS Gender Policy provides guidelines and a regulatory mechanism focusing on actions to be taken at sub-regional level to implement international and regional instruments relating to gender equality in the context of socio-economic development. As for the ECOWAS Action Plan, it focuses on strengthening the national focal points, which are responsible for introducing concrete institutional reforms and influencing policies based on

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, as well as ensuring that Member States ratify the Protocol to the African Charter on Peoples' Rights, Human Rights and the Rights of Women (Maputo Declaration, 2003). Most African states have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, but do not yet fully implement it in practice.

The unique partnership between the ECA, UNIFEM and the Commonwealth Secretariat has led to the development of a policy document, guidelines for setting up gender management systems and a strategic plan. These tools were submitted in turn to a stakeholders' forum, to meetings of technical committees and to the 29th Summit of Heads of State and Government held in Accra, Ghana, and were approved. This result is certainly to be welcomed, but it is important to ensure that these tools are implemented.

ECOWAS still needs the invaluable help of its partners to consolidate its structures and give them the means to fulfil their mission. These include the ECOWAS Gender and Development Centre, the Gender Division and the Technical Commission on Gender, as well as ECOWAS specialised institutions, national structures and their partners in the private sector and civil society, in order to optimise the results to be obtained through the implementation of these tools.

In addition, ECOWAS is undergoing a phase of transformation and change of direction aimed at making it a more strategic regional organisation responding to regional concerns based on a collective approach and working closely with development agencies and donors in order to produce tangible changes in the living conditions of West African populations. The sub-region is experiencing a difficult socio-economic situation that needs to be changed in order to ensure a better quality of life for the people. An atmosphere of peace and security must also be created, and women must be involved in the peace process, as stipulated in Security Council Resolution 1325. Efforts must also be made to reduce poverty, particularly the feminisation of poverty, through Poverty Reduction Strategy Programmes and initiatives to liberalise agriculture and trade. Violence against women, sexual abuse and human trafficking must be brought to an end. The rates of HIV/AIDS, maternal mortality and morbidity must absolutely fall, and women must be well represented in the process of governance and political bodies. Above all, girls must be enrolled in school to gain qualifications and enter the competitive labour market without discrimination. They must be protected by the law, and all women must have access to legal aid, new technologies, especially ICTs, as well as the means to protect themselves.

and credit facilities for business activities.

ECOWAS is obliged to implement the gender policy, the gender management system and the strategic plan on the basis of the comparative advantage given to it by the position of women at the centre of the regional integration and socio-economic cooperation process.

Dr Ibn Chambas
Executive Secretary

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Justification for a gender policy

A gender policy will enable ECOWAS to accelerate the implementation of its mandate to promote the economic, social and cultural development of the West African region through cooperation and integration. It will help to integrate all social strata, to achieve all these objectives and to consolidate the efforts made in the past in terms of gender equality. It represents a new approach aimed at taking into account the strategic interests of women and men and accelerating the achievement of equity and equality objectives. It also commits Member States to honouring their obligations under the various protocols and conventions signed at international level and to achieving the objectives of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the Millennium Development Goals.

Gender situation in ECOWAS

An analysis of the gender situation in relation to a number of social, cultural, economic and legal indicators reveals disparities in all sectors. Generally speaking, women are at a disadvantage in terms of access to education, legal rights, health, political representation, economic resources and participation in economic programmes and the benefits derived from them. The situation can be summarised as follows:

- A rigid patriarchal system that affects gender relations
- Child marriage, female genital mutilation and widowhood practices that restrict women's human rights
- Gender-based violence and violence associated with armed conflict
- Weak legal frameworks and/or implementation mechanisms with negative gender implications
- Differences between men and women in access to economic resources such as land, credit and advisory services. And these differences give rise to different levels of integration into economic activity
- The primary school enrolment rate for women is still lower than that for men
- High rate of maternal mortality among women aged 15 to 19

- A higher rate of HIV/AIDS infection among women than men, with infected women accounting for 54% to 57% of the infected population.

The analysis identifies certain priority areas on the basis of the correlational links that exist between them in the pursuit of gender equity and equality objectives. For example, education enables individuals to escape the poverty trap, while economic considerations contribute to the decision families make to limit their children's education and steer them towards paid or unpaid work. Similarly, there is a correlation between access to economic resources on the one hand and empowerment and the ability to make decisions on the other. There are also links between education and health, health and economic participation, and education and the law. Priority areas for gender policy will focus on these and other sectors that contribute to the achievement of the NEPAD and Millennium Development Goals.

Vision

A West African society where justice and security prevail and where men and women can take part, decide, control and benefit from all development activities.

Mission

The mission of ECOWAS is to engage the citizens of West Africa in the formulation and implementation of sustainable socio-economic development actions that will lead to the eradication of poverty and the promotion of gender equality, good governance and the conditions necessary for peace through regional cooperation and integration.

Basic principles

The policy sets out a series of principles which emphasise, among other things, the affirmation of political will, the commitment of all to global and regional instruments and to Article 63 of the ECOWAS Treaty, which states that :

- A gender policy be adopted by all ECOWAS institutions and stakeholders with a view to planning their programmes
- Gender evaluation be carried out regularly in ECOWAS Member States and at the level of the Secretariat structures
- Gender Management Systems (GMS) are put in place in Member States and at Secretariat level
- Gender mainstreaming is a prerequisite for gender equality and equity.

- Protocols for partnership, networking, collaboration and coordination are drawn up with a view to cooperation and integration.

Priority areas of gender policy

The Member States and institutions of ECOWAS undertake to:

- Create an enabling environment for gender equality and equity with a view to achieving sustainable development
- Adopt a sub-regional approach in the implementation of international, regional and national actions on gender equality and human rights
- Strengthen the participation and role of women as leaders in politics, governance and decision-making
- Promoting equitable access to quality education and addressing women's social and cultural concerns
- Accelerating economic development and more equitable participation and sharing of the benefits of economic activity
- Create an environment for the legal protection of men and women to ensure gender equality;
- Examine gender perspectives in relation to HIV/AIDS
- Redirect public resources to address issues of gender equality and equity, thereby promoting the development of strong human capital and economic growth.

Policy strategies

ECOWAS strategies are as follows:

- Mainstreaming gender in ECOWAS programmes and policies through the establishment of a Gender Management System (GMS)
- Capacity building
- Positive discrimination
- Establishment of strategic partnerships
- Resource mobilisation
- Technical assistance
- Advocacy
- The use of NITCs at different levels in ECOWAS institutions and Member States.

Institutional Framework

ECOWAS will put in place a Gender Management System consisting of structures, mechanisms and processes to plan, monitor and evaluate the gender mainstreaming process in Member States, the Secretariat and other bodies.

Secretariat and other bodies. The SGG will facilitate gender mainstreaming - a process that places gender issues at the centre of policies, plans and programmes - with the aim of addressing issues of equality and equity.

The SGG's structures will include a Gender Commission, the Secretariat's Gender Management Team, the Gender Division, gender focal points, the ECOWAS Gender Development Centre and national bodies responsible for the advancement of women.

Partnerships

In the area of gender equality and gender mainstreaming, ECOWAS will partner with regional and international organisations to share knowledge, experiences, expertise and resources. ECOWAS will establish partnerships with international organisations such as the United Nations and regional and bilateral organisations. The Secretariat will liaise with civil society organisations such as NGOs, universities, research and training institutes and NEPAD structures.

INTRODUCTION

The ECOWAS gender policy document consists of three chapters. The first sets out the conceptual framework, while the second presents an analysis of the situation in terms of equity and equality within the Community. Both lay the foundations for the strategic framework referred to in chapter three, which, among other things, defines the priority sectors, the institutional framework and the action plan.

It is the ECOWAS reference document for gender equity and equality. The document was examined by the Technical Commission on Gender, meeting in its first session from 16 to 18 February 2004 and approved by the Conference of Ministers in charge of the Advancement of Women which took place in Abuja on 19 February 2004.

CHAPTER I: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

ECOWAS mandate

The ultimate goal of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is the accelerated and sustainable economic development of its member states, leading to the Economic Union of West Africa. Insofar as it aims to foster cooperation and integration in order to improve the living conditions of its populations, it has a mandate to promote the economic, social and cultural development of the West African region (Economic Community of West African States, Revised Treaty, Abuja: ECOWAS Secretariat). Within the overall framework of its mission, the Community has implemented programmes in various sectors, including agriculture, industry, science, technology and energy, trade, customs, taxation, currency and payment procedures, transport, communication and tourism, environment and natural resources, education and health.

At the Extraordinary Summit held in Abuja in April 2001, the Heads of State and Government reaffirmed their determination to make West Africa a haven of peace, progress and stability, in line with their objectives of regional integration and cooperation (ECOWAS Annual Report 201). They have also created a Court of Justice and a Parliament, thereby enhancing the institution's image and credibility as a structure capable of bringing about change. The newly established African Union (AU) and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) have expanded the opportunities for achieving the goals of regional integration, and real change at the socio-economic and political levels in the sub-region. The Secretariat has also undergone an organisational restructuring aimed at improving its culture, business conduct, operational procedures and systems, so as to focus the organisation's activities on results.

In this context of change and strong determination, the Community is being offered the opportunity to institutionalise its commitment to the promotion of gender equity and equality in West Africa.

Measures taken by ECOWAS to promote gender equality

As long ago as 1980, ECOWAS recognised the benefits of regional integration, particularly its impact on the development of national economies, and adopted the Women in Development (WID) approach. The reduction of poverty, the improvement of women "s standard of living, in particular through formal and informal education, as well as the development of the potential for sustainable interventions, are fundamental values at the level of this institution. This is borne out by the following decisions of the Authority and articles of the Treaty:

- in 1983, Decision C/DEC.6/5/83 conferred observer status on the West African Sub-Regional Committee for the Integration of Women in Development. This measure was based on the need to integrate women into the development process;

- in 1987, in recognition of the important role played by the West African Women's Association (WAWA) in the development of member states, Decision A/DEC/3/7/87 gave it the special status of a specialised institution of Ecowas. Based in Dakar, Senegal, it received financial support from the Executive Secretariat and had access to the Heads of State and Government by participating in meetings of the Authority of Heads of State and Government. Over time, it was confronted with a number of political and management problems which limited its effectiveness;

- In 1993, ECOWAS revised its Treaty. In Articles 61 and 63 of the revised document, Member States decide to formulate, harmonise, coordinate and implement appropriate policies and mechanisms to promote the economic, social and cultural conditions of women on the basis of their current situation. Ecowas reaffirms its commitment to the empowerment of women and the promotion of women's organisations to ensure their collective participation in development activities in the region. The Treaty empowers the Institution to formulate policies and develop programmes to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of women. Since 1975, member states have set up national bodies responsible for the advancement of women and, in some cases, gender management mechanisms.

- In 2001, the West African Regional Development Centre of the Economic Commission for Africa, based in Niamey, initiated discussions on the development of a sub-regional gender policy and the integration of women into Community programmes, as part of its collaboration with Ecowas.

programmes. The preliminary work was the result of discussions between the Ecowas Secretariat and experts, including regional, international and bilateral partners/stakeholders, at a meeting held in March 2002.

- In December 2002, as a result of collective action by Ecowas, Unifem and the Commonwealth Secretariat, a draft gender policy prepared by consultants from Unifem and the Commonwealth Secretariat was presented to a meeting of experts. The policy document drawn up at the end of this meeting was submitted to the meeting of Women's Ministers, which adopted it;

- the 26th session of the Authority of Heads of State and Government held in Dakar, Senegal, in January 2003 authorised the creation of a Gender, Children and Youth Division and the transformation of WAWA into the ECOWAS Gender and Development Centre.

Logic of a policy

The gender mainstreaming policy implemented by Ecowas, which is based on initiatives aimed at establishing gender equality, constitutes a new approach which, in addition to addressing the basic needs of men and women, seeks to take charge of their strategic needs and accelerate the achievement of equity and equality objectives. It is also a factor in accelerating the achievement of the ECOWAS integration objectives of peace, security and social and economic development.

 This policy also commits countries to fulfilling their obligations under the various international protocols/agreements, and contributes to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The world conferences reiterated the need to establish gender equality and to empower women, issues of general importance in any action for sustainable development. Above all, they have reaffirmed that when men and women are relatively equal, when they have the same prerogatives in the development of a community and a country, when they enjoy the new opportunities offered by development, when they have rights and access to the resources needed to be productive, and when they share decision-making and authority, their well-being improves. The action plans that have emerged from the various world meetings constitute guiding principles for governments, development agencies, institutions, civil society and donors, in that they make it possible to measure the balance in conditions, benefits and changes in the lives of men, women and children.

The objectives defined by the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the United Nations Conference on Population and Development (UNCPD), 1994, the Platform for Action of Beijing, 1995, the Sum World on the Development Social,

Copenhagen, 1995 and the Millennium Summit, 2000, all have a strong gender dimension. The twelve critical sectors identified and accepted by consensus in Beijing by all UN member countries constitute a framework for gender analysis, while Cedaw is an instrument for combating discrimination against women.

ECOWAS's integration tools include many of these twelve critical sectors. The structure of its administration and its management systems are also based on principles of inclusion and equal opportunities. The gender policy and institutional framework will enable ECOWAS to fine-tune its action and streamline its intervention programmes and systems in order to bring itself up to speed, both at Secretariat level and in the Member States. It will include provisions for the implementation and monitoring of action plans in the sub-region, in particular the gender equality and women's empowerment goals set out in the Dakar Platform for Action/Africa, which are reaffirmed in the recent NEPAD Action Plan.

This policy will be the authoritative voice on issues such as gender discrimination and inequalities in the labour market, income, rights and economic and social well-being.

The Ecowas Secretariat will become more gender sensitive and will be able to provide quality assistance to Member States in mainstreaming women in their national development plans and budgets. The policy will encourage the participation and contribution of all sectors of the population, including women as key partners, in socio-economic development; to a certain extent, it will promote social justice and equity in living standards. It takes into account the vision, guiding principles and strategies of Ecowas, which aim to empower women and promote gender equality. In addition, it defines the modalities of implementation, responsibilities and roles, evaluation and monitoring mechanisms, as well as procedures for greater accountability at the level of the Secretariat and the Member States.

The following situational analysis aims to identify the priority sectors to be included in the strategic framework.

CHAPTER II: SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

Analysis of the institutional situation

The Human Development Department of the Ecowas Secretariat is directly responsible for gender issues. Staffed by a Director, a Head of Division and a Consultant in Social Affairs and Education, it also deals with social sectors such as Education and Health. The Head of Department in charge of Social Affairs, who deals with these issues in addition to his other responsibilities, has some knowledge of them, having taken part in conferences on the subject. This means that the current composition of the staff does not allow gender factors to be given due attention and integrated into ecowas plans and programmes. The Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation (CFTC) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) undertook to assist in the formulation of this policy and in the creation of a Gender Management System and a specialised Division within the Secretariat. The meeting also reviewed a study on the West African Women's Association (WAWA), which had been in a state of lethargy for some time.

This association was created in 1987 as a specialised agency of Ecowas, with a view to "mobilising women in the region through programmes, projects and activities, for their participation in the integration processes" (Final Report, Technical Meeting on the Formulation of a Policy for the Integration of Women, Abuja 25-28 March 2002). Based in Senegal, it aimed to become a regional focal point for the promotion of women's rights and status. However, it seems to have encountered complex problems which led to the suspension of its funding and virtually its abolition. On the basis of Decision A/DEC.16/1/03, AFAO will be transformed into the ECOWAS Centre for Gender Development.

Thematic analysis, Member States

The situation analysis looks at gender in the light of indicators that are generally taken into account in social, cultural, economic, legal and political issues. The data examined is used to identify gaps and disparities. Based on a review of available reports and statistics, the analysis reveals major disparities in virtually all sectors. In general, women are disadvantaged in terms of access to education, rights, health, politics and other forms of representation, access to economic resources, participation and benefits from economic programmes.

Socio-cultural context, Ecowas states

African societies are strongly patriarchal, which seriously affects relations between the sexes. This is reflected in virtually every sphere of activity, including d e c i s i o n - m a k i n g , access to education, health, and access to and control over resources. In these societies, decisions are generally taken by men and women have limited rights. For example, women may have to seek permission from their husbands or community leaders to become involved in politics, and in some cases they are not allowed to own or dispose of property. Traditionally, family/community heads are highly respected and have priority in the allocation of resources (UNICEF Nigeria, 2001).

Some African societies attach great importance to children in marriage, so that any union without children can be dissolved. Moreover, the woman is held responsible for this situation. Another feature of these patriarchal societies is the preference given to boys and the favours they receive. Implicit in this is the belief that boys carry on the family name and traditions through the generations. As a result of these socio-cultural beliefs, girls may be deprived of an education or disinherited. As a result, the traditional perception of a woman's role - to look after the home - is perpetuated, as is the cycle of low income and low professional status that relegates her to second-class status and marginalisation.

Forced and early marriages, the inhumane practice of female genital mutilation, and negative customs associated with widowhood such as confinement, ostracism and disinheritance are other socio-cultural characteristics that paint a picture of the situation of women in West Africa (Okoye, 2001). Certain traditional practices, such as levirate and sororate marriages, initiation and those relating to inheritance, can have serious implications for HIV/AIDS infection. To this must be added customary and religious laws, which negate formal law and constitutional rights.

Legal framework and status

In most African countries, the constitution provides for equal human rights; these countries have also ratified regional and international conventions on gender equality/equity. For example, by 2000, 13 of the 15 Ecowas countries had ratified the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)*, while another had signed it (Genderstats.worldbank.org). However, discriminatory legal frameworks and customary practices are n o t conducive to gender equality. In some cases, laws exist that protect/promote gender equality, but they are rendered ineffective by religious practices, customary laws or administrative practices that lack perspective. The working group on

The working group on women's rights set up at the 6th Conference of the Economic Commission for Africa on Women, held in Addis Ababa in 1999, confirmed that in most African countries, women continue to be discriminated against, despite the existence of progressive constitutional provisions and laws, political strategies, conventions and protocols. This state of affairs is due to the co-existence of two or three legal systems and insufficient political will to implement these mechanisms.

ECOWAS Member States have also drawn the same conclusions. While noting improvements in legislation affecting women since 1995, they nonetheless highlighted a number of constraints on the promotion of gender equality. For example, women are unaware of legal provisions and/or lack the will to seek redress through the law (Burkina Faso), or legislative gaps or inadequacies are noted (Republic of Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria). On the other hand, even if laws exist to protect women, the implementation of these statutes leaves something to be desired (Burkina Faso, Senegal, Mali, Côte d'Ivoire, Republic of Guinea and Republic of Benin). The contradiction between formal statutes and customary or religious laws, or between different codes, is also a factor of inequality (Mali, Republic of Guinea, Republic of Benin, Burkina Faso and Nigeria).

Gender and the economy

This part of the paper focuses on the level of integration of men and women in the economy, and the impact of gender in determining the nature of participation in economic activity and the benefits derived from it. The economic rationale for gender equality and equity is based on the desire to unleash the productive potential of large sections of the population, so as to increase their productivity and enable them to contribute to growth and development. This requires investment in human and physical capital, greater market efficiency, mechanisms to generate growth by expanding employment and income opportunities for women and their families, and the capacity to adopt new technologies and cope with change, intergenerational effects on children's school enrolment, reduction of wastage due to poor infrastructure, greater access to productive resources, more efficient allocation of labour, through the use of income and capital on a gender basis (World Bank, 2002).

An examination of the economic activity and labour force participation rates of both sexes in the ecowas countries shows that women are less integrated than men in economic activity, and tend to operate largely in the informal sector. Table 1 in Annex 2 shows women's economic activity rates, which ranged from 43.9 per cent in Côte d'Ivoire to 80 per cent in Ghana in 2000. In addition, male participation

is higher. The table also suggests that some countries progressed in terms of women's participation in the economy over the period 1990 to 2000, while others regressed (index below 100). Labour force participation rates for both sexes show a concentration in agriculture and services. On the other hand, there are more men than women in industry (Tables 2 and 3, Appendix 2).

The above illustrates the gender distribution in the sectors' activities, in particular the division of labour between men and women. A more useful comparison would be to analyse the gender distribution of all jobs by sector, i.e. the 'gender intensity' of production. The limited data available indicate a concentration of women in agriculture and services, with men making up the bulk of the industrial workforce, while being fairly well represented in agriculture and services (see Appendix 2).

It has been suggested that African women often operate in informal and subsistence farming. The reality in a limited number of ecowas countries seems to support this view. In Niger, 43 percent of the female workforce is engaged in the informal sector, compared to 49 percent in Ghana in 1997 and 51 percent in Gambia in 1992 (Genderstats.worldbank.org). When account is taken of the fact that many service activities are found in the informal sector, the "gender intensity" of production tends to confirm the view that women are mainly integrated into subsistence agriculture and the informal sector.

Gender and cross-border trade

Petty trade is one of the main forms of informal activity in the ecowas countries. It is estimated that women are heavily involved in cross-border trade, as they are the main users (70%) of regional transport (Dejene, 2001). Their contribution to the volume and value of intra-regional trade has not been estimated, mainly because of the informal nature of their operations. By consulting data on the destination of trade and the main export products, it is possible to situate the informal trade sector within overall trade, and to identify gender-specific perspectives.

Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana have the largest trade sectors. Côte d'Ivoire has the highest level of integration in Community trade, with an import rate of 17 per cent and an export rate of 20 per cent, compared with 5.1 per cent and 5.5 per cent for Ghana. Only 1.9 per cent of Nigeria's imports come from the Community, while 7.1 per cent of its exports go to member states (Ecowas Handbook ....). The main categories of export products from Community countries are food products, textiles, vegetable products, minerals, pearls, precious stones, wood and petroleum products. Women are   very active in the basin

trade in *basin* or indigo-dyed fabrics, food products such as *gari* and *atiéké*, dried or smoked fish, palm oil, shea butter, fermented *nere* seeds, local soap, kitchen utensils, particularly enamel or plastic wood, and pharmaceutical products (Dejene 2001). They contribute not only to food security, but also to the promotion of intra-regional trade.

Traders face many difficulties, including an inadequate transport system, countless roadblocks in one Community country for customs and other payments, inadequate financial services (delays of up to a month for certain bank transactions from one country to another), poor security conditions, limited literacy and numeracy skills, and a lack of knowledge of current trade policies (Dejene, 2001). It seems that the decisions taken by Ecowas regarding the elimination of tariffs and numerous restrictions are not being implemented in the countries of the Community.

Gender in agriculture

Here, the main issues revolve around participation rates, access to land and resources/services including credit, extension services, education and technology. It is estimated that African women produce around 75 percent of the continent's food (Eca and World Bank, Gender in Africa). They are also an essential part of the workforce. In the ecowas countries, the majority of women work in agriculture. However, the limited data on the percentage of women and men in the agricultural workforce indicates figures ranging from 44 to 58 percent. These figures are different from those often put forward for the continent, but they are fairly significant in terms of women's involvement in the agricultural sector. However, their participation is limited by a number of obstacles.

Reference has already been made to the legal issues that impact negatively on women's property rights (Legal Framework). There are also gender gaps in education (Gender Issues in Education) and inequalities in the provision of extension services. Access to credit is another limiting factor, and all these obstacles only serve to perpetuate insecurity. Insecure land tenure limits the incentive to invest in land improvements, and does not allow for the pledging that would facilitate access to credit (Commonwealth Secretariat 2001, Eca and World Bank, Gender in Africa).

Gender and poverty

The literature on this subject highlights the increasing feminisation of poverty and the fact that women make up the majority of the world's poor (World Bank, 2002; Ghosh, 2000; Baden, 1997 ;

Kwankwenda et al, 2000). Poverty is determined on the basis of household income, poverty line statistics and lack of access to essential services and resources. Key issues in the poverty debate include the profile of the poor, possible links with macroeconomic reform and the relationship between gender inequalities and poverty. Microeconomic studies point to
"constant inequalities on the basis of assets acquired, which are not conducive to growth and poverty reduction. These gender differences affect supply response, resource allocation within the household, and significantly, labour productivity. They have implications for the flexibility, responsiveness and dynamism of African economies, while limiting growth" (World Bank, 2002). These studies looked at the case of a West African country where the glaring differences in productivity stem from inequalities in the distribution of inputs between fields managed by men and those managed by women (see Appendix 2).

Poverty studies conducted in Ecowas countries treat both sexes equally. However, given women's main occupations (low-paid, low-status and informal work), and the fact that downsizing in the public sector affects them more, the incidence of poverty is higher among them.

Studies on the impact of structural adjustment and macroeconomic programmes on poverty have been inconclusive. However, Latin America and Africa recorded negative growth and an increase in poverty after implementing these programmes. In addition, although both sexes have been affected, women find it more difficult to "return to employment or self-employment, due to lack of education and skills, life-cycle issues, and lack of independent access to capital" (Baden, 1997 p.8). Increasingly, macroeconomic measures are taking account of the concerns of poor countries. It is hoped that the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative will contribute to poverty reduction in some ECOWAS countries, which will be able to use the savings from debt relief to develop social sectors such as education and health, including HIV/AIDS;

Gender and environment

Through its impact on agriculture, fisheries, forestry resources and tourism, the environment contributes to human development. However, human activities can preserve or deplete environmental resources. The Millennium Development Goals must therefore include a provision for integrating the principles of sustainable development and reducing the waste of environmental resources into countries' policies and programmes.

The use and preservation of resources such as wood, water and land are gender issues relating to the environment. In rural Africa, women are the ones who fetch wood and water for domestic activities. In the current division of labour, men are more involved than women in the commercial exploitation of environmental resources. It is important to set up education programmes on preserving the environment and it is also important that policies and programmes provide alternative sources of energy and ensure the availability of drinking water in order to improve women's health and lighten their workload.

Gender in education

There are significant gender disparities in access to primary and secondary education, as reflected in enrolment and literacy rates in ECOWAS countries. Although these disparities were reduced in the 1970s and in recent years, many still remain. However, it should be stressed that, by international standards, educational attainment is low among both men and women.

Although all the Ecowas countries have succeeded in increasing the number of boys and girls at primary level, less than half of them have not yet managed to reduce gender disparities. In some cases, these gaps have worsened, while in others there has been an improvement. Cape Verde stands out for having achieved a remarkable rate of equity in primary school enrolments (Table 4, Annex 2). Moreover, some Community countries have taken measures to reduce these imbalances, including free education and the creation of all-girls institutions.

As far as the internal efficiency of the system is concerned, there do not appear to be any significant gender disparities; in fact, those that have been identified tend to favour girls. For both sexes, the rates of repetition and promotion are more or less the same (Unesco, 2000).

Raw data on secondary school enrolments show generally low achievement for both sexes. However, gender disparities have worsened in most cases. On the other hand, Senegal achieved parity in 1997, while Cape Verde and Guinea reversed the trend (Table 6, Annex 2).

Information on illiteracy shows a marked decline in adult literacy rates in 1970 and 2000. However, gender disparities have increased in most countries, with the exception of Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Cape Verde and Nigeria. As with adults, illiteracy rates among young people (aged 15 to 25) fell over the same periods, while gender disparities increased.

periods, while disparities have become more pronounced in almost half of the ecowas countries (Tables 7 and 8, Annex 2).

A number of socio-cultural and economic factors explain gender disparities in education. Those cited in the Education for All reports as the cause of late entry to primary school can be seen as an obstacle to access to school in general. These include economic difficulties, paid or unpaid work for children, distance from schools and access to transport (Unesco, 2000). However, there are other factors that limit girls' and women's access to educational facilities, including socio-cultural practices such as early marriage, preference for boys and patriarchy.

Gender in health

High levels of malnutrition caused by food deprivation and maternal malnutrition, illness and death from infections due to abortion and female circumcision in an unsterilised environment, and the incidence of sexually transmitted diseases (Eca and World Bank, Gender in Africa) have been identified as factors affecting women's health and nutrition in African countries.

Incidence/prevalence rates for two critical health problems have been documented. Historically, maternal mortality rates in sub-Saharan Africa are above the average for developing countries, and among the highest in the world, at between 600 and 1,500 (per 100,000 live births). Africa accounts for 20 per cent of births worldwide and 40 per cent of child deaths (World Bank, 1994; Eca, 1999 b). In the ecowas countries, the rate of these deaths varies between 201 and 2,100 (Table 9, Annex 2).

The risks inherent in early marriage and the percentage of births attended by health professionals are linked to high infant death ratios. The risks of early pregnancy are high in the ecowas countries. Over time, there have been improvements in the percentages of births attended by health professionals, but also in cases of deterioration (Tables 9 and 10, Appendix 2). The data point to deficiencies in the health system that need to be corrected in order to meet the specific needs of women. In addition, certain socio-cultural and economic factors have a negative impact on gender and women's health.

In terms of infectious diseases, HIV/AIDS is a global concern, particularly in Africa, where the highest prevalence rates are reported. HIV/AIDS is more of a socio-cultural problem than a health issue. The Commonwealth Secretariat (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2002) has placed considerable emphasis on the importance of understanding the socially defined aspects of gender relations that underpin individual behaviour.

behaviour as well as the norms and laws governing the social and institutional context. There is a complex set of realities that make it difficult for women to negotiate with men. Thus, gender equality and the empowerment of women have been highlighted as essential factors in reducing the vulnerability of women and girls to HIV/AIDS (Twenty-sixth Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly, June 2001).

Recent trends indicate that infection rates among women are rising rapidly throughout the world. From 41 in 1997, the percentage of women infected with the virus rose to 47 in 2000. Sub-Saharan Africa is the region most affected. In the Ecowas countries, the prevalence rate is highest among women. Table 11, Appendix 2, which shows the prevalence and infection rates for women, confirms the scale of the problem for both sexes, but especially for women in the Ecowas region. Infection rates among women vary between 53 and 57% of the affected population, confirming their vulnerability.

HIV/AIDS poses serious challenges for policy-makers and planners because of its debilitating effects on individuals and societies. Not only does it disrupt livelihoods and reduce life expectancy, but it also imposes high social and economic costs: loss of human resources, productivity and income; increased expenditure on care; the workload of voluntary carers; the burden of increasing numbers of orphans; and the burden on orphaned girls who may have to care for their siblings. There is no doubt that HIV/AIDS is a threat to the stability of societies and economies, and that it requires a comprehensive and sustainable policy and effective planning and implementation. The latter requires a gender-sensitive approach, given the way in which the disease is evolving in the ecowas countries.

Gender-based violence, conflict resolution and peacebuilding

Gender-based violence is defined as physical, emotional, psychological and sexual abuse, as well as economic deprivation. It stems from unequal power relations between men and women and discriminatory socio-cultural practices, and is perpetuated in the absence of adequate legal frameworks and law enforcement mechanisms (Oguli-Oumo, Molokomme, Gwaba, Mogegeh and Kiwala, 2002).

In several ecowas member states, violence against women is a major concern. The most common forms are domestic violence, genital mutilation, sexual violence (including rape) and torture in the event of conflict. Research, awareness-raising campaigns and legal provisions are all measures that have been identified.

These include the need to bring to light as many cases as possible, the contradictions between customary law and statutory law, the inadequacy of resources to fund activities, the insufficient involvement of men and the state in programmes to combat violence against women, the slowness of legal proceedings, which are costly, the lack of solidarity between women and socio-cultural practices.

The Ecowas Protocol on the Mechanism for Security, Peacekeeping, Conflict Resolution, Management and Prevention addresses issues relating t o security, conflict and peacebuilding. The institution also has a dynamic programme, as demonstrated by its efforts to restore peace in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire. However, it is worrying to note that the groups most affected by armed conflict are the least involved in these areas. Despite this, Sierra Leone should be commended for holding a National Consultation in Freetown in 2001 to highlight the role of women and children in the reconstruction process. Women's representation in key areas of public life is fundamental to peace, democracy and economic recovery (Link In 2002).

Gender in power and decision-making

In most African countries, gender disparities are reflected in representation at political level and in management, administrative and decision-making positions. This is reflected in the low presence of women in key positions in the management of the economy, such as finance, trade and banking (Eca and World Bank, Gender in Africa). Tables 12 and 13 (Annex 2) present data on the political representation of women in the Ecowas countries. The percentage of women parliamentarians varies from 1 in Niger to 12 in Mali and Senegal. This relatively low representation is also noted within governments - from 3 percent in Nigeria to 19 percent in Liberia. Although their presence in political institutions may be considered insufficient, women have been able to make a number of achievements, as can be seen from the data on ministerial posts (Table 13, Annex 2). However, the ecowas countries have not yet achieved the target set by the United Nations of at least 30 percent representation at decision-making levels. The constraints identified relate to inadequate awareness, lack of self-confidence, lack of interest, lack of education and socio-cultural factors limiting women's rights.

Gender, democracy and governance

Governance and democracy are cardinal principles of gender equity and equality. They influence the conditions under which laws are implemented, empowerment, authority and representation, and the distribution of resources.

representation, as well as the distribution of resources. Ecowas has drawn up an *Additional Protocol on Good Governance*, which aims to identify the "root causes of conflict, promote good *governance and promote the rule of law".*
It aims to identify the "root causes of conflict, promote democracy and the rule of law" (Ecowas 2002 Annual Report).

Priority sectors

The situation analysis revealed gender inequalities in the legal framework, participation in the economy, incidence of poverty, access to education, health, representation and decision-making. It has also shown that the various sectors are interlinked and mutually reinforcing. For example, education helps to avoid the poverty trap. At the same time, considerations of opportunity cost (loss of income) lead families to limit their children's education and engage them in paid or unpaid work. Similarly, there is a link b e t w e e n access to economic resources on the one hand, and empowerment and the ability to make decisions on the other. There is also a relationship between education and health, and health and access to economic resources. Education and the law are also linked, with knowledge enabling full enjoyment of rights.

The socio-cultural aspect influences the others. This is where socialisation, gender stereotypes, patriarchy, traditional practices, customary and religious rights are rooted. It is at the heart of society's perception of the relative importance of boys and girls and beliefs about the respective roles of women and men. It is suggested that particular attention be paid to socio-cultural practices in gender mainstreaming policies. The legal framework and its relationship with customary law and traditional practices are also essential in redefining gender in ecowas countries. On the basis of its capacity to empower individuals economically, legally and socially, the education sector is recommended as a priority area for inclusion in policy. Generally speaking, the status of women has implications for the health of their children and other family members in their care, and indirectly affects the productivity of others. However, given its enormous economic and human costs, HIV/AIDS requires sustained policy intervention and urgent attention because of its effects on adults and children.

ECOWAS will focus its efforts on these activities which are in line with the objectives of the New Partnership for Africa's Development and the Millennium Development Goals; activities which can be implemented as part of the regional solutions to be provided.

CHAPTER 3: STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

The strategic framework defines ecowas' vision, mission and guiding principles, and sets out a series of substantive commitments and strategies.

strategies. An institutional framework that defines the structures, roles and responsibilities for implementing the policy is included in the strategy.

Vision

The vision on which the gender policy is based is a just and secure West African society in which men and women have equal opportunities to participate in, decide on, control and benefit from all development activities.

Mission

To create an enabling environment for harmonised, accelerated, fair and gender-sensitive development, with a view to promoting economic integration in West Africa.

Guiding principles

The strategy defines a set of principles that emphasise, among other things, the affirmation of absolute political will, adherence to all global and regional instruments, and to Article 63 of the Ecowas Treaty, which advocates :

- the adoption by all ecowas sectors and stakeholders of a gender policy as a tool for planning their action;

- the systematic evaluation of gender as a basis for gender analysis in all ecowas member states and Secretariat structures:

- the establishment of a gender management system (GMS) within the Member States and the Secretariat;

- gender mainstreaming as a prerequisite for gender equity and equality;

- partnerships, mutual support networks, collaboration and coordination protocols for integration and cooperation;

Core values

The core values of mutual respect, social justice, fairness, equality and security will shape the formulation and implementation of gender policy and the mainstreaming process, based on the belief that change must be linked to the values embraced by society and organisations. Positive change

will not happen if there are no links between gender issues and societal values.

Objective

- To establish a framework for ensuring gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment in ecowas policies, programmes, structures and processes;

- to apply the principles of gender mainstreaming to persistent development issues that affect women and require a holistic and multi-sectoral approach, recognising that gender mainstreaming must take place in the context of other socio-economic issues;

- incorporate the principles contained in the Convention on Discrimination against Women, its Optional Protocol and the Ecowas Treaty and Protocols;

- ensure ratification by all Member States of international and regional conventions on gender equality and the empowerment of women;

- promote equal opportunities in participation in policy formulation, access to markets, finance, technology and technical support so that women are in tune with emerging economic issues;

- create an environment conducive to dialogue between ECOWAS, civil society and the private sector;

- create the institutional framework for the implementation of the gender policy;

- promote equal opportunities and participation of men and women in all aspects of governance, policy formulation, programme development, resource allocation and other decision-making processes;

- sensitise women to play a role in party political activities for elective/nominated positions at local, state/municipal/regional and national levels;

- helping Member States to create an environment conducive to the creation, management and maintenance of viable businesses, including social security, particularly for women operating in the informal sector.

PRIORITY AREAS OF GENDER POLICY

Commitment 1: Political will
Undertake to introduce all appropriate measures to ensure respect for the principles of equality and equity in the treatment of gender issues, with a view to achieving sustainable development in the sub-region.

These measures include

- the adoption and implementation of action plans defined at various meetings held at regional or global level (in particular those of Dakar, Beijing, the Millennium Summit organised by the United Nations, the United Nations Special Session on Women held in 2000), the provisions of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, of the African Union, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the ECOWAS Treaty, the World Summit on Children and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, which will serve as a reference for the actions undertaken to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women in the sub-region;

- the establishment of institutional structures and mechanisms and the allocation of human and financial resources to enable ECOWAS to implement a gender policy;

- sensitisation of Member States on the need to adopt a collective approach and to favour dialogue and consensual solutions in the search for strategies and mechanisms to address the issue of gender equality and women's empowerment;

- the call for Member States to respect their commitments to respect human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law, in particular social, cultural, economic, political and legal rights, which are prerequisites for achieving the objective.

Commitment 2: Respect for regional and international instruments

Commitment to favour the sub-regional approach in the implementation of action strategies defined at international, regional and national level in the field of gender equality and women's rights.

The actions to be undertaken in this context concern in particular :

- reviewing and strengthening the various mechanisms put in place to guarantee women's fundamental rights and to encourage the ratification, implementation and dissemination of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women;

- raising Member States' awareness of the need to increase women's representation in regional and national structures and institutional mechanisms for conflict prevention, management and resolution;

- raising the awareness of those involved in the negotiation and implementation of peace agreements of the need to take account of gender issues, in particular the specific situation of women and young girls, in actions relating to early warning, conflict prevention, management and resolution, and the creation of conditions for a return to peace;

- taking gender issues into account in projects and programmes relating to regional cooperation and integration, in particular those relating to poverty reduction, trade, energy, transport and communications, human development, HIV/AIDS and conflict management and peacekeeping;

- conducting qualitative and quantitative studies on worrying new trends affecting the most vulnerable groups, in particular rape and sexual violence, domestic violence, paedophilia and human trafficking.

Commitment 3: Governance, Representation and Decision-making

Commitment to increase the participation of women and ensure that they play a leading role in governance and decision-making at ECOWAS level.

This will involve :

- putting in place structures and setting measurable objectives with a view to correcting the imbalance in representativeness at decision-making level, ensuring greater access for women and, where necessary, adopting a proactive policy to involve them in decision-making. Ensure that Member States comply with international rules and that at least 30% of decision-making bodies in the public and private sectors are made up of women (ministerial posts, cooperatives, legal and other committees, national delegations to conferences and funding negotiations, budget committees, parliamentary groups and other statutory structures);

- present the results obtained to the competent bodies at national, regional and international level; identify the obstacles encountered and take the necessary corrective measures;

- Work to strengthen the capacity of the ECOWAS Court of Justice and Parliament to launch an awareness-raising campaign on the issue of women's political participation, focusing on leadership skills, political and legal aspects and parliamentary voting procedures, taking into account the new realities of the sub-region;

- commission studies on the key factors, barriers, opportunities and requirements for women's political participation. The findings of these studies will be used to raise awareness among governments of the need to take women's concerns into account in their strategies;

- use the media and other means of awareness-raising to form pressure groups and take action to ensure better representation of women in national assemblies and the ECOWAS Parliament;

- ensure that the new ECOWAS Gender Commission works to promote women's participation in decision-making in the sub-region.

Commitment 4: Socio-cultural issues

Commitment to ensuring equal access to quality education and taking into account the social and cultural concerns of women in the sub-region.

This will involve :

- ensure compliance with national education policies, the ECOWAS Protocol on Education, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and other United Nations instruments. To ensure that the concerns of the girl child are taken into account and to design human rights education programmes aimed at a wide audience;

- Promote education and awareness-raising programmes on the elimination of harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation, early marriage and human trafficking;

- intensify efforts to eliminate violence against women and promote the implementation of internationally recognised measures to combat political, domestic and sexual violence.

Commitment 5: Economic development

Commitment to accelerate economic development, promote a more balanced participation in economic activity and a more equitable sharing of its proceeds.

This will require, among other measures

- the creation of an economic environment conducive to more equitable access to income, resources and social services, and to accelerating the implementation of poverty reduction programmes;

- the definition of a framework for taking account of the gender dimension in national policies, accounts and budgets;

- giving women access to economic entrepreneurship, where they suffer marginalisation because of the multiple roles assigned to them or the non-existence of such services;

- support for women's organisations to enable them to acquire greater negotiating power and to enter new economic sectors;

- building women's capacities to enable them to rise to positions of responsibility in the public and private sectors, particularly in industry and manufacturing, and to participate in the formulation of economic policies;

- establishing a strong partnership with the private sector, financial institutions and others to help women set up structures modelled on the Grameen Banking System in Asia or savings systems such as SUSU in Ghana and Nigeria;

- support for original social and economic activities such as cultural exchanges, fashion design, tourism, healthcare and nutrition, energy and conservation;

- learn about good practice in women's entrepreneurship and disseminate it widely throughout the sub-region, through trade fairs, the Internet, publications, conferences and seminars, exchanges of experience, intergenerational dialogue, internships and women's testimonies;

- create sub-regional information centres on business opportunities and finance commercial enterprises run by women, along the lines of the Africa Women's Development Fund (AWDF).

Commitment 6: Legal aspects

Commitment to create an environment that ensures the equitable protection of men and women in the sub-region, from the drafting o f laws to their application.

This will include :

- reviewing and amending legal, constitutional and regulatory frameworks with a view to promoting women's access to goods and services; enacting legislation, ensuring that it is enforced and punishing violations ;

- involve men closely in efforts to protect women's rights;

- put in place mechanisms to harmonise national legislation with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in order to address the systemic and systematic aspects of discrimination against women and girls. Make resources available to combat persistent inequalities, and take account of women's fundamental concerns, including access to property, sexual and reproductive health rights, inheritance, widowhood, and the rights of people living with HIV/AIDS, all of which are integral to development efforts;

- Ensure the equitable application of laws by complying with conventions ratified by States

- promote cooperation and facilitate the coordination o f actions carried out by human rights organisations, United Nations experts and other international organisations represented in the sub-region;

- raise awareness among women to encourage them to use legal structures to exercise their rights. Legal training programmes and mass strategies could prove useful in this respect.

Commitment 7: Combating HIV/AIDS

Commitment to take gender issues into account in the fight against HIV/AIDS

This will involve :

- help raise awareness of gender-related factors by providing better information on HIV/AIDS, the need for prevention and care services;

- participate in informing men and women about issues relating to sexuality, promote dialogue in this context, seek long-term solutions to the AIDS pandemic, and exchange experience and good practice;

- ensuring that policies relating to sex education in schools, mass education programmes and programmes specially designed for HIV-positive women and children are applied;

work closely with representatives of civil society and NGOs to organise special information sessions on HIV/AIDS in the workplace, mother-to-child transmission, people living with the AIDS virus and AIDS orphans.

- Implement a policy against discrimination against HIV/AIDS carriers;

- Propose legislation against HIV/AIDS carriers who knowingly contaminate their partners, specifying the penalties they incur;

- Call for tougher criminal penalties for rape;

- Stigmatise cultural practices that encourage HIV/AIDS infection, in particular excision, circumcision, polygamy, levirate and even certain traditional medical practices.

Commitment 6: Mobilisation of resources

Commitment to reallocate public resources to policies and projects designed to reduce gender inequality, increase productivity, enable the formation of solid human capital and promote healthy socio-economic growth.

To this end, the following measures should be implemented:

- The ECOWAS Secretariat should undertake to mobilise the funds needed to implement the gender policy;

- in line with the commitments made in Beijing, ECOWAS Member States should allocate an average of 20 percent of official development assistance and 20 percent of national budgets to Ministries in charge of Women's Affairs; they should coordinate and monitor programmes aimed at promoting gender equality, the advancement and empowerment of women;

- efforts will be made to get donors to devote at least 20 per cent of their assistance to actions to promote gender equality;

- mechanisms will be put in place to reduce waste and corruption and to ensure transparency in the management of funds earmarked for actions to promote gender equality;

- international agencies will be called upon to provide technical and financial assistance for the implementation of a gender mainstreaming policy at the ECOWAS Secretariat and in Member States;

- Regional development banks, regional business associations and other regional institutions will be approached for financial support;

- Sub-regional organisations and the United Nations regional economic commissions will assist in mobilising funding for the implementation of a gender policy.

STRATEGY TO BE ADOPTED

The following actions will be undertaken as part of the implementation of a gender policy:

- integration of the gender dimension into ECOWAS policies and programmes, institutional capacity building through the establishment of a Gender Management System (GMS) and the development of a data system;

- building the capacity of the various ECOWAS bodies and assisting Member States in developing indicators to monitor progress on gender equality and facilitate awareness-raising and information campaigns;

- empowering women and girls through proactive initiatives aimed at giving them a more visible role in various fields, including peacekeeping, trade and finance;

- establishing strategic partnerships with regional and continental organisations;

- mobilising resources

- technical assistance and advice;

- advocacy and reporting

INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

ECOWAS will put in place a Gender Management System (GMS), i.e. the structures, mechanisms and procedures to ensure the planning, monitoring and evaluation of the project focused on integrating the gender dimension into its policies and those of its Member States. The aim of these efforts to place the gender dimension at the heart of policies, plans and programmes is to find a satisfactory response to the problem of gender inequality. As this problem is multidimensional, a number of activities will need to be carried out as part of the search for solutions:

- creating and maintaining the political will to reduce gender inequality;

- ensure that ministries and various departments, particularly those responsible for macro-economic development and planning, are made aware of the need to integrate the gender approach into their programmes;

- integrate this approach into sectoral planning cycles, particularly in the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation phases;

- use sex-disaggregated data to analyse the impact of policies and programmes on men and women;

- encourage the creation of links between governments, the private sector, civil society and other stakeholders with a view to coordinating actions.

The GSS is a results-oriented structure based on concrete actions. Some Member States are already implementing the SMS approach. ECOWAS will scale up the project over the next five years. In the case of the Secretariat, the SMS opens up new perspectives as part of the transformation process taking place at the level of the Secretariat.

transformation process taking place within the institution. The methodology adopted enables us to move away from hitherto prevailing practices and introduce a more efficient organisational culture.

SECRETARIAT: STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONS

The Secretariat will have :

- a Gender Commission made up of experts from the Member States. This committee will help formulate policy and monitor and facilitate the implementation of the gender policy, protocols and strategic plan.

- a Gender Division, whose main role will be to ensure that the gender dimension is integrated into the organisation's programmes and to promote gender equality in the sub-region. The Director/Head of Division will be responsible for coordinating the activities and guiding the actions of the Secretariat in its area of competence.
- a Gender Management Unit (GMT), comprising departmental directors and reporting to the Deputy Executive Secretary for Integration Programmes. This unit will be responsible for defining priority areas for action to achieve the objective of mainstreaming the gender dimension in policies.
- Focal Points (FPs) appointed by the Directors, whose work will help to ensure that gender concerns are taken into account in policies, plans and programmes. The Gender Division, the Gender Unit and the focal points will work together to ensure that tangible progress is made towards achieving gender objectives.
- An ECOWAS Gender Development Centre that will work with Member States to implement the gender policy and strategic plan.
- National bodies for the advancement of women which will be the lead agencies at Member State level to promote the mainstreaming of gender issues and gender equality. These bodies will work with ministries of integration, focal points and other institutions within the gender management system. Women's ministries will take the lead in setting up inter-ministerial committees and gender lobbies.

TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING

The creation of a gender management system requires capacity building to facilitate the achievement of the objective. At the Secretariat level, one of the priorities will be to raise awareness among staff of all categories. More in-depth training will be needed for technical and professional services staff to ensure that the gender dimension is integrated into policies, plans and programmes, as well as the allocation of budgetary resources to this project. This will ensure the sustainability of the project. The Secretariat will also endeavour to coordinate capacity-building actions at the level of the bodies reporting to this structure. In addition, the Member States will work to train national bodies responsible for the advancement of women. The various components of the programme concern the assessment of training needs, the design of training programmes, the training of trainers and the provision of teaching materials.

The ECOWAS Centre for Gender Development, in collaboration with the Gender Division and Member States, will develop and implement training programmes to identify additional capacity building needs in ICT, research and advocacy. These programmes will include gender training for women's organisations.

The Member States will take stock of the training sessions organised in order to establish the needs in this area. The situation of certain national bodies responsible for the advancement of women, faced with the frequent problem of staff turnover, tends to show that the organisation often loses the benefit of the training provided. It is therefore important to introduce new policies and programmes, as well as to evaluate the training, retraining and upgrading programmes of these institutions.

COORDINATION FUNCTIONS

The ECOWAS Secretariat will be in constant contact with national women's organisations operating in Member States and will hold working sessions with these structures to discuss gender issues. These national structures will act as focal points in the Member States.

The ECOWAS Gender and Development Centre (formerly the West African Women's Association) will also be a focal point, whose role will be to act as a link between civil society and the public authorities and to lobby for support for policies and programmes. In addition, the Centre will extend its activities to the whole region and will assist the Secretariat in strengthening its database to enable analysis of   gender issues.   a core   of professionals from the sub-region to work together in the field of gender.

professionals from the sub-region to work together to find solutions to the problem of gender inequality in the sub-region.

PARTNERSHIP

As part of its efforts to ensure that the gender dimension is taken into account in programmes, ECOWAS will establish a formal partnership with regional and international bilateral and multinational organisations. ECOWAS will also partner with civil society organisations including international organisations, the private sector, universities and research and training institutes to share knowledge, experiences, skills and resources. Networks of women's organisations - lawyers, journalists, business leaders, medical practitioners, researchers, parliamentarians, etc. - will provide ECOWAS with a wealth of expertise. Alongside these networks, the partnership with the following organisations will enable activities relating to the promotion of women's rights and the inclusion of the gender dimension in programmes to be carried out successfully. These organisations may also be called upon to support the implementation of the policies defined.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The aim of setting up a monitoring and evaluation system is to determine to what extent the objectives have been achieved, possibly on the basis of perceptible changes in behaviour. The aim is also to ensure that resources have been used as efficiently as possible. It will also be necessary to draw up a monitoring and evaluation plan that can be applied to the whole region. In this context, the use of a common tool will make it easier to compare results. Gender-related performance indicators will be incorporated into the system.

CONCLUSION

It is essential to disseminate the ECOWAS gender policy and ensure that it is implemented. With this in mind, the Action Plan attached to this document forms an integral part of the overall policy framework.

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Appendix 1

ACTION PLAN FRAMEWORK 2004 - 2006

STRATEGY	ACTION	INDICATORS	DEADLINE	RESPONSIBILITY	PARTNERS
Integration of Gender issue in the programmes	Application of guidelines of the SGG		**2004 - 2006**		
1. Preparation of tools for gender analysis.		Types of documentation produced	2004 - 2006	ECOWAS Secretariat, CDGC and member states	Commonwealth Secretariat, UNIFEM
2. Raising awareness of gender issues		Number of workshops Number of professionals sensitised Number of States/organisations with policies, programmes and budgets on gender issues			
3. Guidance/training in techniques for taking gender issues into account in policies, plans, programmes and budgets.					
4. Application of gender mainstreaming principles in priority sectors (education, HIV/AIDS and malaria, legal frameworks, economy, peace and conflict resolution, approaches and decision-making)		Improvement in gender issues and reduction of disparities in these sectors	2004 - 2006	ECOWAS Secretariat, WAHO, CDGC, ECOWAS Parliament, ECOWAS Court of Justice, Member States	Commonwealth Secretariat UNIFEM BAD, SADC, UA, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF
5. Gender mainstreaming				Secretariat of the	

in the department's policies and plans (Secretariat)	Percentage of men and women employed in different categories. Types of services available to meet the needs of men and women. Extent to which policies aimed at providing equal opportunities for men and women are implemented. Existence of HIV/AIDS programmes in the department.	2004 - 2006	ECOWAS	
6. Establishment of a Gender Management Team and a Focal Point System for the Secretariat.	Official designation of those responsible	2004		
	Number of EGG meetings.	2004 - 2006	ECOWAS Secretariat	
	Number of focal point meetings.			
	Number of departmental programmes focused on			
7. Activities to facilitate the start-up of the EGDC:			ECOWAS Secretariat and CDGC	

i) Development of short- and long-term action plans ii) Preparation of job profiles and implementation of the approved organisation chart iii) Preparation of Terms of Reference for working groups iv) Development of operational systems		on gender issues. Existence of action plan documents Number of staff recruited and existence of job profiles Existence of manual operational systems.	2005 2004	ECOWAS Secretariat ECOWAS Secretariat and CDGC ECOWAS Secretariat and CDGC	Management Consultants
REINFORCEMENT CAPACITIES AND TRAINING	Provision of Training Resources and Equipment		2004 - 2006		
1. Evaluation of training needs in the ECOWAS region 2. Development of training modules/manuals 3. Creation of a database of training resources 4. Creation of a database of gender experts		Report generated. Existence of an ECOWAS training manual Existence of a database Existence of a database	2004 2005 2005 2005	ECOWAS Secretariat ECOWAS Secretariat	Development partners

in the sub-region and the Diaspora				
5. Provision of equipment and software and appropriate training in this area.	Adequate equipment installed at the CDGC Secretariat and in Member States Existence of capacity to manage equipment	2005	ECOWAS Secretariat	Bilateral and International Agencies
6. Guidance and organisation of staff training courses 7. Gender training courses	Number of courses organised Number of courses actually undertaken	2004 - 2006	ECOWAS Secretariat	Commonwealth Secretariat and International Agencies
8. Establishment/strengthening of systems for data collection, compilation and dissemination	Number of workshops organised Staff trained in techniques	2004 - 2006	ECOWAS Secretariat	Commonwealth Secretariat and International Agencies
Establishment of partnerships for implementation of gender policy	Establishing dialogue and reporting and taking initiatives with partners			
1. Dialogue with partners	Number of meetings and interactive sessions.	2004 - 2006	ECOWAS Secretariat and CDGC	

2. Formalisation of relations with partners		Number of memoranda of understanding			
3. Design initiatives to take account of the gender issue in NEPAD programmes to be NEPAD programmes to be implemented.		Number of NEPAD programmes to be implemented and focusing on the gender issue.			
Mobilisation of resources	Organisation of meetings of Donors, preparation of proposals for funding and negotiations with a view to financing				
1. Organisation of donor meetings		Number of meetings	2005	ECOWAS Secretariat	
2. Preparation of proposals with a view to obtaining funding		Number of types of proposal submitted	2005		
3. Negotiation with private sector and other sources for financial assistance.		Number of financial commitments obtained			
Technical support	Support for the development of national policies,				

setting up data management systems, revising legislation and monitoring compliance with the law.	complied with.			
1. Technical support for the development and harmonisation of national gender policies	Number of countries with harmonised policies	2004 - 2006	ECOWAS Secretariat, CIC (ECOWAS)	Commonwealth Secretariat, UNIFEM and other development partners
2. Technical support for setting up a database and data management systems	Existence of a database and data management systems systems			
3. Coordination with the ECA of efforts to collect and compile data and monitor implementation of the Beijing + 5 Platform	Number of joint efforts			
4. Technical support for the revision and harmonisation of legal texts legislation	More legal frameworks focusing on gender issue	2005	ECOWAS Secretariat	
5. Technical support within the framework of monitoring to ensure that States comply with the perspectives defined in the ECOWAS Protocol on Education and the Millennium Development Goals	Proportion of boys to girls enrolled in primary, secondary and tertiary education	2004 - 2006	ECOWAS Secretariat, CDGC	

		Proportion of educated boys to girls Proportion of seats won by women in national assemblies Extent of diversification of women's economic activities			
Promotion campaigns	Capacity building and networking				
1. Capacity building at the CDGC and in Member States for promotional campaigns 2. Establishment of networks with civil society to promote the cause of gender in the implementation of the Gender Policy.		Existence of a manual to guide promotional campaigns Number of workshops with opinion leaders, law enforcement agencies and other groups Existence of a Bulletin		ECOWAS Secretariat and CDGC	Development Partners