

Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) at A Glance

Agency mission, mandate and history

ECA was established in April 1958 with a general mandate to support the economic and social development of its member States, foster regional integration, and promote international cooperation for Africa's development in order to address the challenge of poverty reduction. This mandate is carried out through a combination of advocacy and policy analysis to generate knowledge; convening stakeholders to facilitate experience sharing and consensus building; and providing technical assistance to support national capacity-building.

Since its establishment, and in line with its mandate, the Commission has focused on several core analytical and research activities in which it has a unique technical capacity and comparative advantage. Principally, these include providing support to its member States to strengthen capacity in the key areas of economic and social policy design and implementation for poverty reduction; promoting gender equality and advancement of women; governance and public administration; trade and regional integration; agriculture and sustainable development; statistics; and promoting science and technology, including ICTs for development.

Overview of major areas of technical cooperation (with examples)

Analytical and research activities in the above areas are complemented by technical assistance services, which are rendered to member States upon demand, to strengthen their capacity in addressing clearly defined policy and technical challenges in priority areas of development. Such assistance takes the form of regional advisory services; training workshops and seminars; fellowships; and field projects, and reflect the multidisciplinary expertise and comparative advantage of ECA. The Commission's technical assistance is currently focused on providing high quality advisory and other capacity-building services to its member States in support of their efforts to achieve the internationally-agreed development goals, including the MDGs and the objectives of NEPAD. The specific areas of focus are highlighted below:

1. Meeting the MDGs

The objective of ECA's technical cooperation activities in this area is to strengthen the capacity of its member States in the design and implementation of effective pro-poor policies and strategies for meeting the MDGs, with particular emphasis on supporting member States in the design and implementation of MDG-based PRSs. *(For example, advisory services were rendered to Ethiopia, Ghana, Liberia, Mozambique in the preparation of their national PRSs and MDG reports).*

2. Enhancing integrated water resources management for sustainable development

The objective in this area is to enhance the capacity of member States in developing and managing water resources efficiently, productively and sustainably within the framework of the MDGs, NEPAD and the Plan of Implementation of the WSSD. The main focus is on advisory services to assist member States, river basin organizations (RBOs) and regional economic communities (RECs) in developing and implementing integrated river basin and watershed management strategies for irrigation and agriculture,

including promoting transboundary cooperation in the use and management of shared water resources; and field projects oriented to capacity building and sharing of best practices in effective water resources management. *(For example, ECA published and disseminated the first edition of the African Water Development Report (AWDR), to support the effective implementation and monitoring of the water-related commitments and targets of the MDGs and NEPAD; and provided technical assistance to the Lake Chad Basin Commission in the preparation of a master plan for the environmentally sustainable management of the Lake Chad Basin).*

3. *Governance and public administration*

Assistance in this area aims at strengthening the national capacity in public policy development and public sector reforms to build a capable state and create an enabling environment for private sector-led growth and development. The focus is on providing assistance to member States in improving institutional effectiveness, political governance, improving public financial management and accountability, and strengthening economic and corporate governance systems in support of the implementation of the APRM and NEPAD.

4. *Strengthening Africa's capacity in information and communication technology (ICT) for development*

The Commission's technical and advisory services in this area is aimed at strengthening the capacity member States and RECs in the formulation and implementation of national, subregional and regional policies and strategies for promoting the use of information and communication technologies for development, with particular focus on applications on key development sectors such as e-government, e-health, e-commerce, e-learning and e-agriculture. Capacity building support is also provided in harmonizing national and subregional policy and regulatory frameworks. *(For example, advisory services were provided to Comoros, the Gambia, Mali and Malawi in strengthening their capacity to mainstream their national ICTs plan and policies into PRSs. At the regional level, assistance was provided to 1 COMESA, EAC, AMU, ECOWAS and CEMAC in the formulation and implementation of regional information and communication plans and strategies, including capacity building for harmonizing national policies and regulatory frameworks).*

5. *Promoting trade and building capacities of member States on trade issues and WTO negotiations*

The main service lines in this area include the provision of advisory services, training workshops and seminars to strengthen the capacity of national policymakers and trade negotiators to help them understand the emerging issues of relevance to Africa in the context of the WTO Agreements and other trade-related multilateral initiatives, such as the ACP/EU Cotonou Agreement. Direct support is also provided to the WTO Geneva Africa Group on WTO negotiations and the Doha work programme; and assistance is provided to member States and subregional groupings in promoting intraregional trade and regional integration. *(For example, ECA recently organized a seminar for the African Group in Geneva, which led to the adoption of a regional common position on Sensitive Products and Special Products in the context of the Doha work programme).*

6. Integrating gender concerns in development

Technical assistance in this area is focused on promoting implementation of the regional and global Platforms for Action on gender equality. In this regard, emphasis is given to providing capacity building support to member States for gender mainstreaming in national policies, programmes and structures; capacity and networking support for women's economic empowerment; and assistance in enhancing women's legal and human rights. Assistance is also provided to enhance the capacity of member States in the implementation, monitoring and reporting of progress on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol. *(For example, ECA organized a series of national and regional training workshops to enhance skills for gender mainstreaming and the use of monitoring tools and instruments for measuring progress in the implementation of the Platforms for Action. ECA also responded to requests from South Africa, Namibia and Seychelles in the development and operationalization of their national gender training manuals).*

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Agency-specific UN reform update

As part of the ECA repositioning and the ongoing reforms within the UN, ECA is reorienting its technical assistance strategy to improve its overall effectiveness in meeting the new realities in Africa, particularly in support of the MDGs and NEPAD. In this regard, ECA will leverage its expertise and comparative advantage in a few core areas in line with the MDGs and the priorities of NEPAD. These will include assistance in designing policies and strategies for poverty reduction; addressing climate change, sustainable energy and bio-fuels; aid for trade; assistance in addressing the development dimensions of post conflict peace-building, including assistance in rebuilding and strengthening institutions of good governance; and statistics, including providing assistance in the 2010 Round of population and housing censuses.

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Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) at A Glance

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Since its establishment, and in line with its mandate, the Commission has focused on several core analytical and research activities in which it has a unique technical capacity and comparative advantage. Principally, these include providing support to its member States to strengthen capacity in the key areas of economic and social policy design and implementation for poverty reduction; promoting gender equality and advancement of women; governance and public administration; trade and regional integration; agriculture and sustainable development; statistics; and promoting science and technology, including ICTs for development.

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4. Strengthening Africa's capacity in information and communication technology (ICT) for development

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ECA assistance in this area is focused on providing upstream policy advisory services aimed at enhancing the capacity of member States and RECs in the implementation of NEPAD priorities within a subregional and regional context. Assistance is specifically geared towards strengthening the institutional, policy and data-management capacity of the RECs for project development, resource mobilization and monitoring the implementation of NEPAD subregional level. Assistance is also provided to support UN system coordination of NEPAD at the regional and subregional level.

Agency-specific UN reform update

As part of the ECA repositioning and the ongoing reforms within the UN, ECA is reorienting its technical assistance strategy to improve its overall effectiveness in meeting the new realities in Africa, particularly in support of the MDGs and NEPAD. In this regard, ECA will leverage its expertise and comparative advantage in a few core areas in line with the MDGs and the priorities of NEPAD. These will include assistance in designing policies and strategies for poverty reduction; addressing climate change, sustainable energy and bio-fuels; aid for trade; assistance in addressing the development dimensions of post conflict peace-building, including assistance in rebuilding and strengthening institutions of good governance; and statistics, including providing assistance in the 2010 Round of population and housing censuses.

While some of these areas of work are not new, ECA's work will be re-focused and sharpened; existing delivery capacities strengthened; and assistance targeted and focused on areas where ECA can achieve better results and impact. The delivery strategy will also be anchored on the strengthened partnership with key partners, including the AU, AfDB, UNDP and other UN organizations working in the region.

Organizational set-up

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Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) at A Glance

Agency mission, mandate and history

ECA was established in April 1958 with a general mandate to support the economic and social development of its member States, foster regional integration, and promote international cooperation for Africa's development in order to address the challenge of poverty reduction. This mandate is carried out through a combination of advocacy and policy analysis to generate knowledge; convening stakeholders to facilitate experience sharing and consensus building; and providing technical assistance to support national capacity-building.

Since its establishment, and in line with its mandate, the Commission has focused on several core analytical and research activities in which it has a unique technical capacity and comparative advantage. Principally, these include providing support to its member States to strengthen capacity in the key areas of economic and social policy design and implementation for poverty reduction; promoting gender equality and advancement of women; governance and public administration; trade and regional integration; agriculture and sustainable development; statistics; and promoting science and technology, including ICTs for development.

Overview of major areas of technical cooperation (with examples)

Analytical and research activities in the above areas are complemented by technical assistance services, which are rendered to member States upon demand, to strengthen their capacity in addressing clearly defined policy and technical challenges in priority areas of development. Such assistance takes the form of regional advisory services; training workshops and seminars; fellowships; and field projects, and reflect the multidisciplinary expertise and comparative advantage of ECA. The Commission's technical assistance is currently focused on providing high quality advisory and other capacity-building services to its member States in support of their efforts to achieve the internationally-agreed development goals, including the MDGs and the objectives of NEPAD. The specific areas of focus are highlighted below:

1. Meeting the MDGs

The objective of ECA's technical cooperation activities in this area is to strengthen the capacity of its member States in the design and implementation of effective pro-poor policies and strategies for meeting the MDGs, with particular emphasis on supporting member States in the design and implementation of MDG-based PRSs. *(For example, advisory services were rendered to Ethiopia, Ghana, Liberia, Mozambique in the preparation of their national PRSs and MDG reports).*

2. Enhancing integrated water resources management for sustainable development

The objective in this area is to enhance the capacity of member States in developing and managing water resources efficiently, productively and sustainably within the framework of the MDGs, NEPAD and the Plan of Implementation of the WSSD. The main focus is on advisory services to assist member States, river basin organizations (RBOs) and regional economic communities (RECs) in developing and implementing integrated river basin and watershed management strategies for irrigation and agriculture,

including promoting transboundary cooperation in the use and management of shared water resources; and field projects oriented to capacity building and sharing of best practices in effective water resources management. *(For example, ECA published and disseminated the first edition of the African Water Development Report (AWDR), to support the effective implementation and monitoring of the water-related commitments and targets of the MDGs and NEPAD; and provided technical assistance to the Lake Chad Basin Commission in the preparation of a master plan for the environmentally sustainable management of the Lake Chad Basin).*

3. Governance and public administration

Assistance in this area aims at strengthening the national capacity in public policy development and public sector reforms to build a capable state and create an enabling environment for private sector-led growth and development. The focus is on providing assistance to member States in improving institutional effectiveness, political governance, improving public financial management and accountability, and strengthening economic and corporate governance systems in support of the implementation of the APRM and NEPAD.

4. Strengthening Africa's capacity in information and communication technology (ICT) for development

The Commission's technical and advisory services in this area is aimed at strengthening the capacity member States and RECs in the formulation and implementation of national, subregional and regional policies and strategies for promoting the use of information and communication technologies for development, with particular focus on applications on key development sectors such as e-government, e-health, e-commerce, e-learning and e-agriculture. Capacity building support is also provided in harmonizing national and subregional policy and regulatory frameworks. *(For example, advisory services were provided to Comoros, the Gambia, Mali and Malawi in strengthening their capacity to mainstream their national ICTs plan and policies into PRSs. At the regional level, assistance was provided to 1 COMESA, EAC, AMU, ECOWAS and CEMAC in the formulation and implementation of regional information and communication plans and strategies, including capacity building for harmonizing national policies and regulatory frameworks).*

5. Promoting trade and building capacities of member States on trade issues and WTO negotiations

The main service lines in this area include the provision of advisory services, training workshops and seminars to strengthen the capacity of national policymakers and trade negotiators to help them understand the emerging issues of relevance to Africa in the context of the WTO Agreements and other trade-related multilateral initiatives, such as the ACP/EU Cotonou Agreement. Direct support is also provided to the WTO Geneva Africa Group on WTO negotiations and the Doha work programme; and assistance is provided to member States and subregional groupings in promoting intraregional trade and regional integration. *(For example, ECA recently organized a seminar for the African Group in Geneva, which led to the adoption of a regional common position on Sensitive Products and Special Products in the context of the Doha work programme).*

6. Integrating gender concerns in development

Technical assistance in this area is focused on promoting implementation of the regional and global Platforms for Action on gender equality. In this regard, emphasis is given to providing capacity building support to member States for gender mainstreaming in national policies, programmes and structures; capacity and networking support for women's economic empowerment; and assistance in enhancing women's legal and human rights. Assistance is also provided to enhance the capacity of member States in the implementation, monitoring and reporting of progress on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol. *(For example, ECA organized a series of national and regional training workshops to enhance skills for gender mainstreaming and the use of monitoring tools and instruments for measuring progress in the implementation of the Platforms for Action. ECA also responded to requests from South Africa, Namibia and Seychelles in the development and operationalization of their national gender training manuals).*

7. Statistics

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