

GUIDELINES FOR USING THE GENERAL DISCUSSION LISTS FOR NATIONAL MACHINEIRES

What is a Discussion List?

A discussion list is a convenient electronic method for a group of people to share information and discuss issues, such as challenges and good practices, within an area of common interest.

Features of discussion lists

- Anyone with an email account can join a discussion list
- A single group email address is used to send messages to every member of the list
- Discussion lists can be moderated (each message reviewed by the administrator, substantive expert or facilitator before posting) or unmoderated (all messages are posted immediately)
- Messages can be accessed either through email or through a website, or a combination of both.
- Messages can be received either in real-time (when they are posted) or in a digest format (one email per day or per week)

The benefits of discussion lists

- Brings together people from disparate locations
- Offers the opportunity for members to post information, make suggestions or pose questions to a large number of people at the same time
- Discussion lists can operate through email only, thereby facilitating participation by those without regular internet connection

Steps to participating in the discussion lists

1. **Sign up.** The E-network team should send the name and email address of staff members who wish to join the list to nmwafrica@uneca.org.
2. **Set your e-mail preferences.**
 - a. **Regular e-mail:** When you subscribe to the discussion list, by default you will receive an e-mail each time someone posts to the list. If you wish to reset this setting after changing it, send an email to lyris@dggroups.org with the following in the body of the message: “set nmwafrica mail”

- b. **E-mail digest:** This option allows you to receive only one e-mail each day with all of that day's messages included in it. To receive a daily digest send an email to lyris@dgroups.org with the following in the body of the message: “set [nmwafrica](#) digest”
3. **Read and post messages:** You will receive emails in your inbox, and can read and respond as desired. New messages should be sent to nmwafrica@dgroups.org. This will distribute your message to every active member of the discussion list.
4. **Reading archived messages:** To access old messages from the discussion list, visit the information portal and click on the discussion list link. After logging in to the discussion list, click on “Discussion” in the left navigation bar.
5. **Unsubscribing:** To unsubscribe from the list send a blank email to leave-nmwafrica@dgroups.org

An FAQ on Dgroups is available at
http://wiki.dgroups.org/index.php/General_and_Usage_FAQ

Accessing the discussion list

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

(a) Through the Internet

- Go to the web portal
- Select the link to the discussion list
- Put your e-mail address and password to login
- Then you will get a page containing links to: discussions, participants, etc
- Choose “discussions”
- Choose “new messages” to send a new one
- Or click on the list of discussions already there to reply

(b) Using your e-mail account

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

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

Etiquette for posting messages

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

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

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Message here
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Thokozile Ruzvidzo
Officer-in-charge
ACGSD, UNECA, Addis Ababa
Ethiopia

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

- Acronyms can be used to abbreviate when possible, however messages that are filled with acronyms can be confusing to readers.

Suggested content for discussion lists

The discussion lists should be used to share pertinent information with other national machineries in Africa that is directly relevant to their work. Although the discussion lists facilitate interaction and networking among its members, it should not be used for personal messages. If you wish to send a personal message to another discussion list member, send a separate email to that person's personal email address and not to the discussion list address (see etiquette guidelines above).

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

- 1) **Share information.** Send updates and information on the activities of your organization, for example, good practices in programming; outcomes of recent research; new developments etc. Other information that can be shared includes upcoming events that may be of interest to other members
- 2) **Ask questions.** Send a query to the discussion list if, for example, you are looking for examples of good practices on particular programming activities; you are seeking experts in a particular field; or you are looking for information on a particular subject, including available resources as well as opinions of other members. See below for tips on sending a query and an example.
- 3) **Respond to questions.** Assist other members of the discussion lists by answering their questions if you are able to provide relevant information.

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

Sending a query

Tips on sending a query

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

Brief background information

Description of the project

Details on exactly what kind of information is being requested

Contact details

Sample query

The following query was originally posted on a UNDP discussion list

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

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

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

We would be in particular interested in:

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

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

Regards,

NAME

ORGANIZATION

COUNTRY

CONTACTDETAILS