



Economic Commission for Africa



Ministry of Communications
Government of Ghana



The African Regional Preparatory Conference for the WSIS

OECD/ECA Joint Workshop on ICT and Poverty Reduction

29 January 2005

1. Background

ECA has been coordinating the implementation of the African Information Society Initiative (AISI) ¹. The Initiative was adopted by the ECA's Conference of African Ministers of Social and Economic Planning in 1996, adopted the same year by the Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity and supported by the then G7+1 as Africa's major ICT initiative in its 1997 Denver Summit.

In order to translate the regional vision at the national level, ECA has assisted more than 30 countries in developing ICT-led national socio-economic development policies and plans, called National Information and Communication Infrastructure (NICI) policies and plans². While ECA will continue its assistance towards member States which have embarked on the policy formulation processes, more emphasis will be placed on the implementation of the policies and plans with a view to accelerating socio-economic development among countries with national ICT policies and plans.

One of the focus areas in the implementation process is rural development and poverty reduction which subsequently require strengthened linkages with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP). As a concrete application of ICT to socio-economic development in Africa, the African Center for Gender and Development (ACGD) of ECA has assisted women entrepreneurs to establish the Enterprise Development Facilities for African Women (EDF)³. The Facilities aim to address the constraints faced by African women in informal and formal small businesses, and give them access to information training and business opportunities, so that they can expand their businesses and improve their lives. In order to showcase ICT impacts on poverty reduction and economic development and strengthen the linkage between initiatives and policies, the Development Information Services

¹ <http://www.uneca.org/aisi/>

² <http://www.uneca.org/aisi/nici/strategies.htm>

³ http://www.uneca.org/fr/acgd/en/800x600/en_home/en_new/en_new_040713.htm

Division (DISD) of ECA is planning its fourth Committee on Development Information (CODI-IV) in April 2005 under the theme of *Information as an Economic Resource*.

At the same time, various international agencies have been advocating for ICT mainstreaming in the overall national development frameworks, such as MDGs and PRSP. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) is one of such agencies which have been spearheading for greater use of ICTs in development activities and enhanced collaboration and cooperation among partners⁴.

2. Objectives

The proposed meeting on ICT and Poverty Reduction during the WSIS Preparatory Conference will focus on two areas: one on how to implement NICI policies and plans for pro-poor growth, namely ICTs contributions to economic growth in rural areas and among the poor; and the other on ICT mainstreaming in PRSP. More specifically, the first session will examine impacts of ICT on pro-poor growth and how to ensure pro-poor perspectives reflected in the NICI programmes and plans. The second session will recommend how to mainstream ICT in PRSP and strengthen linkage among NICIs, MDGs and PRSP. The meeting will also discuss mechanisms or programmes which can be put in place as a result.

The outcome of the meeting will feed into the plenary session of the Regional Conference for WSIS and will be reflected in the implementation of NICI policies and plans and PRSP.

3. Proposed Dates and Venue

The proposed date for this workshop is the 29th of January 2005 at the Kofi Annan Center of Excellence.

4. Proposed Participants

- Key ministries and agencies working on PRSPs
- National NICI focal points
- CSOs
- Research Institutions
- EDF entrepreneurs

It is expected that 30 participants will attend the meeting.

5. Partners

⁴ http://www.oecd.org/topic/0,2686,en_2649_34835_1_1_1_1_37409,00.html

OECD will provide resource persons and some of the PRSP focal points in some selected member States.

6. Proposed Agenda

1. Session I: Opening

The meeting will commence with opening remarks by Officer-in-Charge of the Development Information Services Division (DISD) of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and a representative from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The session will highlight the objectives and expected outcomes of the meeting and introduce meeting participants. **2. Session II: Overview of the African Information Society Initiative (AISI)**

This session will aim to present an overview of AISI and its implementation status as a regional framework to develop Africa's Information Society. This will be followed by an assessment of the latest developments and progress made in the formulation and implementation of National Information and Communication Infrastructure (NICI) policies and plans in examining focus areas and entry points to accelerate poverty reduction efforts and socio-economic development. The session also intends to showcase good examples and lessons learned by presenting the Enterprise Development Facilities (EDF), initiatives by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Discussions on the way forward, Q&A, will conclude this session.

3. Session III: ICT and Pro-Poor Growth: Mainstreaming ICT into PRSP

This session, which will be led by OECD will present a report the organization has been compiling in order to deepen the understanding of the linkages and relationships between ICT and pro-poor growth.

4. Session IV: Closing

The session will -summarise the discussions of Session II and III and synthesize them into a set of concrete proposals, recommendations and way forward. This- will then be presented to the plenary of the Conference.