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Economic Commission  
for Africa

**United Nations and GuideStar International  
working together to put all African Charities Online**

GuideStar International (GSI) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) announced in August a joint venture to develop a free web portal for African civil society organisations, which will showcase the work of all NGOs, charities, nonprofit organisations and community based organisations from the smallest to the largest. Utilising a shared internet platform, organisations will, for the first time, be able to display their vision and mission, objectives, activities, needs and finances to donors, researchers, policy makers and the general public. The service, known as GuideStar, is already fully operational in the US [www.guidestar.org](http://www.guidestar.org) and the UK [www.guidestar.org.uk](http://www.guidestar.org.uk) where these websites contain detailed information on hundreds of thousands of registered charities and non-profit institutions. GuideStar International is also working to develop similar systems in Europe, Canada, India, South Korea and South Africa.

GuideStar will enable charitable organisations in Africa to upload essential information about their organisations through a user-friendly interactive webpage, where they can also upload additional information, publications and photographs. This can then be accessed through the free website to help increase transparency and accountability to the public they serve. It will also contribute toward building an effective database that would indicate the outreach and the level of influence these organizations have both in social and economic spheres of African countries.

According to Jalal Abdel-Latif, Chief of the Civil Society Section of UNECA, "UN-ECA is embarking on this project because we believe in the fundamental importance of strong, vibrant and responsive civil societies. We seek to ensure that the work of these vital organisations is revealed and enabled. We believe that the GuideStar System will provide a tried and tested means for the provision of transparent information on the objectives, activities, accomplishments and finances

of nonprofits. Such transparency is critical to elicit public trust in these organisations, thereby also attracting a more generous and accountable allocation of society's resources."

Caroline Neligan, Director of Partnerships and Development at GuideStar International said: "Our vision is of nationally, regionally and globally connected African civil society where decisions within and across borders are driven by transparent, high quality and comprehensive information".

### **The Launch Process**

The UN-ECA and GuideStar International will collaborate with national registrars and regulators, as well as civil society umbrella groups and associations to populate the portal with information on all legally registered charities, NGOs and nonprofits in each participating country.

One of the first steps in the project will be to undertake a rapid assessment of selected countries. This will enable greater understanding of the peculiarities, constraints and capabilities of African civil society organisations in order to pilot a set of GuideStar interventions in partnership with local institutions. The vast informal community-based sector, the lack of access to the internet among grassroots and rural organisations, the legal and home-grown ideas of the sector as well as the local attitudes toward information sharing pose challenges to implementing GuideStar Systems in Africa. In order to better understand the specific constraints under which these organisations operate, they will engage community-based networks, NGOs and public agencies to advise on the most practical approach to motivate all stakeholders to adopt a standard transparency and accountability facility such as GuideStar.

**Ends.**

## Notes for Editors

### About GuideStar International

GuideStar International (GSI) [www.guidestarinternational.org](http://www.guidestarinternational.org), is working with leaders of civil society throughout the world to build a network of national online "GuideStar" services that report the aims, activities, accomplishments and finances of each country's Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) variously known as NGOs, Community-Based Organisations (CBOs), charities, and nonprofits. We believe that transparency achieved through provision of essential information on CSOs at a public website is vital to ensure the strength and success of civil society.

GSI is building a highly searchable, online network of these national GuideStars to support cross border philanthropy and services. New GuideStars are also under development in Hungary, Germany, India, The Netherlands, Ireland, through an EC funded Project as well as South Africa, India and South Korea. For more information on our work please visit our website at [www.guidestarinternational.org](http://www.guidestarinternational.org)

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