



# The ECA Knowledge Management Strategy



United Nations  
Economic Commission for Africa

# **The ECA Knowledge Management Strategy**

## **Managing the Knowledge of a Knowledge Organization**

*Including the work of the Re-profiling Task Force 7,  
“Knowledge Networking Strategy” issued July 2013*

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## Executive summary

The 2012-2013 reprofiling exercise, introduced for ECA to effectively support Africa's transformative agenda, created a Division for Public Information and Knowledge Management, bringing together four Sections with strategic responsibilities for improving ECA's visibility and impact – communications, publication, ICT, and knowledge and library services. One of the Division's challenges, to be addressed by its Knowledge and Library Services Section, is to ensure that knowledge flows are consistently incorporated into the business of the organization, so that ECA can successfully achieve its aspirations. Supporting this intention, the Knowledge Networking Strategy Task Force, one of the 10 charged with proposing new ways of doing business, recommended a Knowledge Management Strategy, to rationalize how ECA acquires, shares and applies knowledge.

ECA has attempted KM strategies in the past, but these were primarily focused on knowledge-sharing platforms, and produced mixed results. As a knowledge organization, ECA's strategy should focus on how knowledge flows through its business model. In this

regard, the reprofiled ECA incorporates a very dynamic model for knowledge flows, whereby the "back office" units generate policy ideas, and the "front office" units deliver these ideas to national, subregional and regional policymakers, and feeds back new areas for work to the policy generating units.

With this new, promising alignment, the vision proposed for knowledge management in ECA is **to ensure that it becomes and remains Africa's premier think tank, consistently generating top quality, thoroughly researched products reflecting the latest thinking on issues relating to Africa's transformative agenda.** For this to occur, all of ECA's operations, research, products and advice should systematically incorporate the most reliable, relevant, up-to-date and comprehensive knowledge available from the continent and beyond.

Based on the above vision and mission, the following principles are intended to guide resource, staffing and work planning decisions for ECA's knowledge management efforts. Implications of these principles on actions to be carried out by the responsible units are also summarized.

**1. ECA's knowledge management strategy should not be about the software platform.** KLSS should advise the organization on knowledge architecture issues – how to build knowledge into business processes. Platforms can be a component of this process, but not necessarily, and different platforms are suitable for different processes. Knowledge officers in the SROs should promote professional connections and networking in their respective subregions, and support knowledge collection and dissemination efforts. No extensive training or significant development costs should be needed to operate or use a platform.

**2. ECA's knowledge sharing activities, in the context of the KM strategy, should be purpose-driven.** ECA should focus on responding to requests for knowledge, and should discontinue broad-brush and costly supply-oriented approaches such as websites designed to “push” knowledge. The Library's knowledge collection should be as comprehensive as possible, with the ASKIA federated search engine as a one-stop shop meeting demand from Africa and beyond. The number of participating libraries should be continually expanded, as should ASKIA's efforts to remain the user's first choice. The Library should feature a research service, with a staff contingent dedicated to responding to requests from ECA and elsewhere to compile “ECA Knowledge Guides” having the most relevant source

material available. The Library's physical facilities should become the actualized representation of the collection/connection interface, and redone as a “learning commons”, with professionals from ECA, local UN offices and outside visitors interacting in a collegial, inviting space.

**3. ECA should feature knowledge facilitation as a service to its professional Communities.** Creating and supporting knowledge networks and Communities of Practice should remain a key feature of the new ECA profile, and “Solution Exchange” – a peer-to-peer research service based on professional Communities of Practice – should be included as an additional intervention. Solution Exchange should begin with up to three Communities, and depending on the outcome of these initial efforts, additional Communities should be introduced, until the full range of ECA's thematic focus areas include comparable professional Communities in their knowledge networking activities.

**4. ECA's internal processes should incorporate its knowledge into its business processes.** The organization should have a clearly defined knowledge architecture, with strategically placed points in its business processes ensuring that ECA's products, projects and policies reflect the learnings from its staff and its Communities of Practice. Product development should engage the professional Communities; lessons

learned from experiences should be factored into programme and project design; capacity development as an ECA practice should be subject to continual learning.

**5. How well ECA staff both share and apply knowledge should benefit their careers.** ECA should award knowledge sharing and acknowledge the value of staff contributions. To encourage sharing, the corporate scorecard should post the number of member contributions to Community conversations, along with the quality rating awarded by Community participants. Recognition of the leaders through award ceremonies would enhance their recognition as outstanding representatives of ECA's new profile. To apply knowledge, the programme manual should require a section on "due diligence" to indicate the steps taken to investigate comparative experiences and findings from past lessons learned, using, where relevant, the Library's "Knowledge Guides." To gain knowledge, the latest capacity development practices should be incorporated into staff learning modules. An internal network on operational issues should facilitate knowledge sharing across ECA.

Concerning the Task Force recommendations, face-to-face meetings are important for Community-building, but increased virtual interaction through knowledge networking could make workshops more purposeful and efficient. Also, it is not advisable to create many small "Communities of Practice", as CoPs are

for entire professional disciplines.

Implementation of the KM Strategy falls to the Knowledge and Library Services Section, as the key unit responsible for ECA's knowledge management function. For this KLSS should be organized into units for "Connections", Knowledge Engineering, "Collections", "Services", and Programme Management and Coordination. A Business Plan should be prepared to build the necessary capacities to deliver on the Strategy. Strategy implementation should be overseen by the PIKMD Director, who would report to Senior Management Team every six months. Quality Assurance should be through SPOQD's Programme Accountability Framework, based on criteria established for the individual functional responsibilities and the Strategy as a whole.

Risks identified include – lack of financing for knowledge facilitation; ASKIA not achieving its one-stop shop goal; insufficient capacity in KLSS to meet demand for knowledge networking and research services; ineffective implementation of knowledge-enabled business processes. Each of these risks can be mitigated, and Part 8 of the paper offers suggestions to this effect.

This Knowledge Management Strategy, if implemented successfully, would bring knowledge into the core of ECA's business, and bring it a long way to becoming Africa's premier think tank.





# PART 1 – Introduction

Over the recent years, global socioeconomic and political dynamics have opened up historic and unprecedented opportunities for African nations. To achieve the promised breakthroughs in economic growth, social development and environmental sustainability, African policymakers need sound, well-founded advice to ground national decision-making.

In this context, the Executive Secretary, Mr. Carlos Lopes, in consultation with the staff at large, has taken a strategic refocusing of the organization. ECA's 2013-2015 Business Plan intends the Commission "to become the think tank of record on matters pertaining to African development", at the forefront of providing the continent's leaders with advice based on reliable data and in-depth research, leading to better decision-making and policy direction for stimulating Africa's economic future and transformation. To reach this goal, the Executive Secretary commissioned a reprofiling process to examine ECA's roles, functions, structures and systems, and to realign them to reflect the new realities of the African transformative development agenda.

The work was carried out over 2013, and implementation has begun with the 2014-2015 biennium.

Among the key features of the reprofiling was the creation of a new Division for Public Information and Knowledge Management, bringing together four sections having strategic responsibilities for improving ECA's visibility and impact – communications, publication, ICT, and knowledge and library services. One of the challenges for this new Division – and to its Knowledge and Library Services Section in particular – is to ensure that knowledge flows are consistently incorporated into the business of the organization, so that ECA can become the premier think tank it aspires to be.

In addition, the reprofiling exercise saw the commissioning of 10 Task Forces<sup>1</sup>, one of which

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<sup>1</sup> These task forces were:

1. Capacity Development Strategy for ECA (Enhanced support to member states)
2. Rules of Engagement for ECA key initiatives (Delivering on major conferences and publications)
3. Governance of associated agencies (One set of rules for the management of the Centres)
4. Databank Architecture for ECA (one common databank)
5. ECA Communications Strategy
6. Conference Planning (Disciplined Calendar of Events)
7. Knowledge Networking Strategy (Significant reduction in the number of workshops)
8. Gender Parity targets (Ambitious gender parity policies)

addressed the issue of knowledge networking as a way to reduce the number of workshops that make up a large proportion of ECA's regular programme of work and its budget. The Task Force recommended introducing a Knowledge Management Strategy, to help rationalize the workshops in the wider context of how ECA acquires, shares and applies knowledge.

ECA's ability to offer African leaders sound, well considered and comprehensive policy advice that can influence the decisions addressing policy challenges, is heavily dependent on its ability to effectively harness the relevant knowledge. To this end, therefore, the present paper lays out an organizational strategy for how the ECA intends to manage its knowledge, both internally in support of organizational effectiveness, and externally as a service to its client audiences and its goal of becoming the foremost think tank in Africa.

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9. Re-profiling and training initiative (No post reduction but re-alignment to re-profiled functions)
  10. ECA Green Policy (Targeted carbon footprint)

## PART 2 – Overview of past ECA Knowledge Management Efforts

Knowledge Management as a means to enhance organizational effectiveness is a relatively recent trend for the UN Agencies, beginning only around 2000. It was initially identified as a means for persons to share best practices and tap into documentary knowledge generated through monitoring and evaluation reports, so that Agencies did not “reinvent the wheel” in their ongoing work. The concept of a “knowledge organization” also gained currency over that time, distinguishing the organizations – including many UN Agencies – that gained their relevance and influence through research and advisory services, capacity development and normative standard-setting rather than through financial resources or the supply of material goods.

As both concepts evolved over the next decade they did not always connect. Early knowledge management consultants were often purveyors of software platforms where “best practices”

could be uploaded and accessed by staff searching for them. Meanwhile the more successful knowledge organizations – the private sector management consulting firms – developed business models based on research services that sought out, consolidated and packaged published and internal work that was then made available to clients for considerable sums.

As Knowledge Management awareness spread, many knowledge organizations of the UN System, unfortunately, took to KM as software platform and not to the knowledge organization business model. The Economic Commission for Africa – one of the more prototypical UN knowledge organizations – first looked at the concept in a consultancy report commissioned in 2000 on “A Comprehensive ICT Strategy for ECA”. The report acknowledged that ECA was in the knowledge generation and delivery business and, among other things, stressed a need to leverage new technologies – software platforms – to become more effective.

Since that time, ECA Knowledge Management efforts have focused primarily on knowledge-networking and sharing with partners through technology platforms.

For example, the Africa Knowledge Networks Forum, established in 2001 to facilitate knowledge-sharing and research partnerships with professional networks and key knowledge end-users, included among other things the use of a website which participants were requested to visit regularly, supplemented with an email discussion list. The site was not effectively utilized and ceased activities with the change of leadership at ECA in 2005. The Knowledge Management Strategy developed in 2006 intended to “gradually transform the internal and external operations of the Commission in order to achieve its goal to be a knowledge-based organization”. It was to be implemented through a web-based knowledge-sharing platform, used by Communities of Practice.

ECA 2007-2009 Business Plan continued the association of knowledge management in ECA with external-facing, platform-based knowledge networking. The Plan’s KM objective was “to build and disseminate knowledge, share best practices and provide technical expertise to the RECs and member States”. Several knowledge networks were launched, including the UN Support to AU/NEPAD Regional Consultation Mechanism, the Observatory on Regional Integration, a network on trade issues for an Africa-South America trade ministerial meeting, and an African Learning Group on Poverty Reduction Strategies and the MDGs.

The 2010-2012 Business Plan extended knowledge management’s external-facing emphasis, and the strategy remained in place until the 2013 reprofiling effort.

Between 2011 and 2013, the organization’s primary knowledge management effort consisted of introducing an ECA website for knowledge management and e-learning (<http://knowledge.africa-devnet.org/>) to promote knowledge sharing on economic and social development issues and provide strategic inputs into development policies of African member States and Regional Economic Communities. The platform was populated with selected knowledge products of the Commission and its partner organizations – flagship publications, policy briefs, summaries of e-discussions, country profiles, data on various developmental indicators etc. Sustained knowledge sharing, however, faltered – while a promising 692 members signed up on the platform, and 35 groups were created, the average group membership was 12, only one had more than 35 members, only one is still active, and discussions have been sporadic.

While knowledge management in ECA remained focused on web-based knowledge sharing platforms, the Library continued knowledge collection activities outside the scope of this effort. Begun in 1959 as a traditional document repository accessed by a card catalogue, the Library has steadily adapted with the times to move its material to a digital format where knowledge organizations and individuals can access it. The current situation is as follows:

- a. **The General collection** consists of over 300,000 titles of books and periodicals in different formats and the **African Government Publications** collection of

selected official publications of African Governments, the African Union and the African Development Bank. These are accessed via the Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC) at: <http://libcat.uneca.org/>;

**b. E-Resources collection** consists of over 35 premium full-text online databases, providing access to over 90,000 titles of e-journals, e-books and statistical databases accessed at: <http://atoz.ebsco.com/Titles/9719>;

**c. The ECA Publications collection** consists of over 26,000 titles and 21,000 digital files on socioeconomic development issues on Africa, and represents the Commission's corporate memory. Accessed at <http://repository.uneca.org>;

**d. Access to Scientific and Socioeconomic Knowledge in Africa (ASKIA) online portal** acts as a one-stop-shop to socioeconomic knowledge on and from Africa. The ASKIA online portal connects users to various information resources available on the web over an interactive one-stop search engine that contextualizes, ranks, and intelligently clusters knowledge according to various criteria. This service is available at: <http://askia.uneca.org/>.

The main issue for this rather impressive library collection is that since it has not been incorporated into a knowledge management strategy, there has been no particular motivation for staff to systematically incorporate these resources into their knowledge work.

For a knowledge organization, managing knowledge is not about a stand-alone work process that tries to get its staff and partners to use a website platform. Rather, managing knowledge is the lifeblood of the organization. It is time, finally, to bring knowledge management into the knowledge organization by taking a page from the consulting firms – and successful policy think tanks – to focus on ECA's business model and the knowledge architecture within it.



## PART 3 – The New ECA Business Model

To realize its aspiration as the premier think tank for Africa, ECA's reprofiling exercise produced a Business Model that can be described as consisting of two main dimensions:

- a. As a generator of sound, innovative and appropriate policy ideas through policy research, statistical data collection and analysis, and professional consultation; and
- b. As a deliverer of these policy ideas, on request, through capacity development, provided through advice, support and training, so that ECA member States and their regional and subregional organizations are able to effectively introduce them.

**Generator of policy ideas.** This dimension, which can be likened to the “back office” functions to support the policy delivery role, stresses the need for the highest quality professional rigour in developing and promoting sound, innovative and appropriate

policy ideas addressing four key thematic areas of priority concern for Africa's transformation – **Macroeconomic policy, Regional integration and trade, Social development policy, and areas of increasingly growing importance for Africa**, such as new technologies and innovations; “green economy” and natural resources; climate policy; and minerals development.

Of particular importance to attaining the highest calibre policy work in all these areas is the need for reliable, timely and relevant statistical data collection and analysis, which are the responsibilities of the **Africa Center for Statistics** and the **Data Centers of the five ECA Subregional Offices**.

The “back office” Divisions' specialists combine statistical analysis with business intelligence, decisions of ECA's governing body and their own networks to identify and deliver well-founded policy research to address the continent's most pressing policy gaps. The research is used to derive new ideas – innovative approaches and well-founded solutions for consideration by national, subregional and regional bodies, including coherent and consistent African positions in global forums.



**Deliverer of policy ideas.** The “front office” functions of this business model are to develop capacities and facilitate consideration and adoption of the policies derived through the research and analysis work. The three delivery channels are:

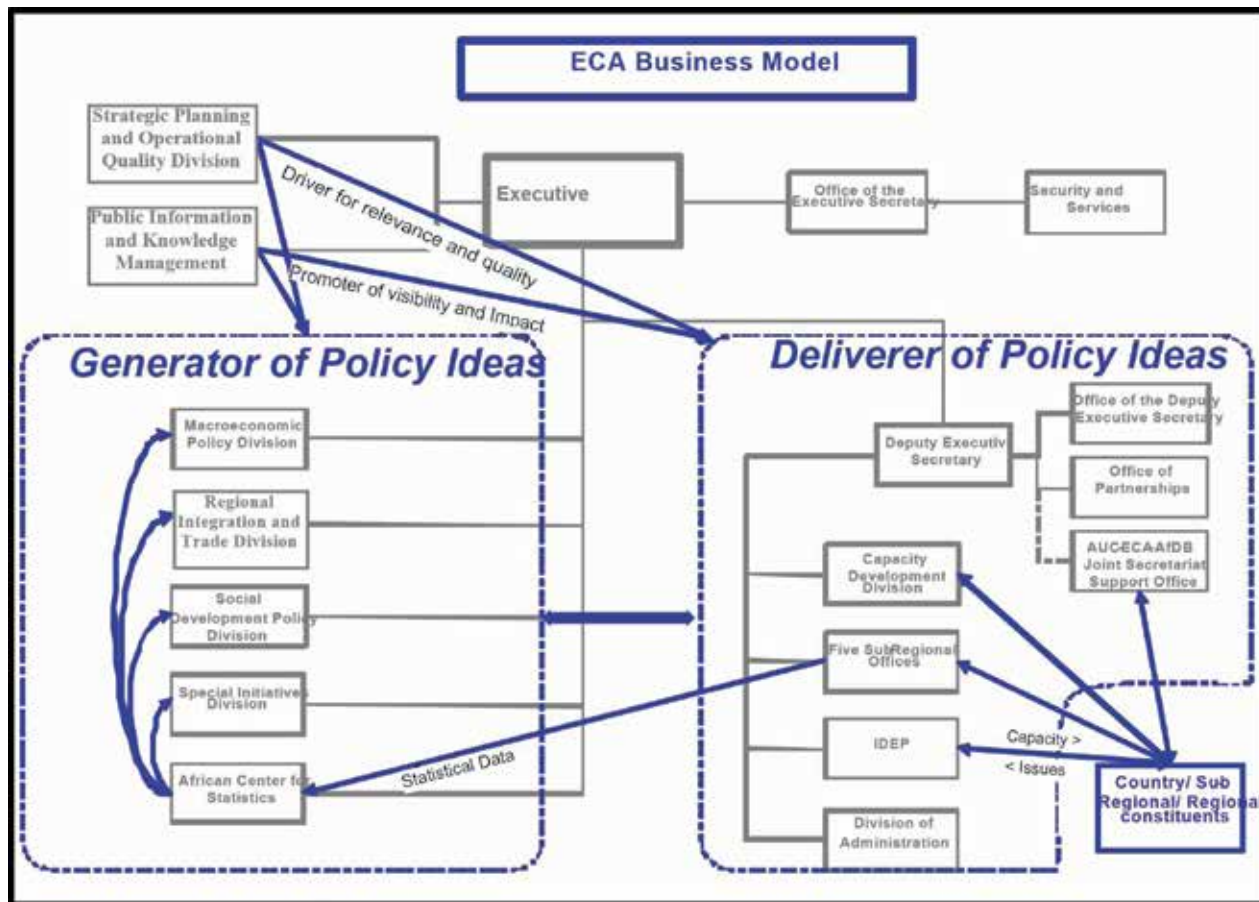
- a. **Policy advice** to national policymakers, through support to capacity-development initiatives and through regional advisory teams of experts in four areas: industrialization, macroeconomic policy, development planning and natural resource contract negotiations;
- b. **Policy support** to regional and subregional efforts and to African Union Commission, NEPAD Planning and Coordination Agency, the APRM Secretariat and Regional Economic Communities;
- c. **Training** of policymakers and other stakeholders such as African Civil Society to provide them with the requisite skills and knowledge through the full range of training modalities – on-site courses and e-learning modules.

Armed with the latest, best and most appropriate policy ideas, the specialists engaged in policy delivery should be in demand by their constituents in national, subregional and regional institutions, and should develop close working relationships that, in addition to enhancing performance, would also feed back on-the-ground realities and evolving issues to the policy researchers to better inform their “back office” work.

- **Supporting structures:** The core of ECA’s Business Model is sharpened and enhanced through the roles and functions of its supporting organizational units, helping to achieve the “premier” status of its think tank role:
- d. **Strategic Planning and Operational Quality:** As one of the “staff” Divisions of the Executive Secretary, these functions encompass planning, budgeting, evaluation, Quality Assurance and performance monitoring. It is the unit concerned with resource allocation, and it should contain the authority, tools and information to translate the organization’s priorities and strategic opportunities into programmes and initiatives that reflect realistic performance goals and results informed by the operational realities.
- e. **Public Information and Knowledge Management:** As the second “staff” Division of the Executive Secretary, these functions combine communications, publications and document management, ICT, and knowledge and library services into ensuring that the products delivered can truly be presented as exemplifying the highest standards of excellence.
- f. **Others:** The reprofiled organization includes several additional units that maintain traditional functions – Office of the Executive Secretary; Office of the Deputy Executive Secretary, Office of Partnerships; Division of Administration, and Security and Safety Services. These units have also been realigned to ensure

that their roles and functions support and promote the successful implementation of the new business model.

The Figure below details ECA's new organizational structure overlaid with the Business Model described above.





## PART 4 – The Role of Knowledge in the New Model

As noted earlier, ECA is fundamentally a “knowledge organization”. While knowledge is also important to the African Development Bank and the African Union, ECA’s primary role among the Pan-African institutions is making knowledge and know-how available to its constituents.

“Knowledge” is what someone “knows”, acquired through study, observation, sharing, and one’s own experience. Knowledge is not to be confused with information, used for communications and for management. Whereas information informs, knowledge adds value by benefiting learning – both individually, as one person gains knowledge from another, and organizationally, as an organization gains knowledge from its staff. Furthermore, knowledge itself cannot be managed; rather, “knowledge management” refers to the management of **knowledge flows** – into, through and out of an organization. As such,

knowledge management enhances overall organizational effectiveness by consolidating collective individual knowledge, including lessons learned from past experience, and applying it to new situations and environments, continually improving and refining what works and what doesn’t in a given context.

**Knowledge stocks** (or “knowledge assets”) are found in two formats – collection and connection. “Collections” offer documented knowledge from repositories and portals; “connections” obtains knowledge that people have not written down. It is knowledge someone has gained through experience or learned from professional peers over the course of a career. In the development profession, where **how** something is achieved is as critical to success as the solution itself (the **what**), experiential knowledge is as valuable as expert knowledge. Furthermore, “connecting” professional peers encourages sharing and collaboration, building familiarity and trust, and strengthening a group’s coherence and influence as a Community of Practice.

In the re-profiled ECA, the Public Information and Knowledge Management Division is responsible for knowledge management processes. The relevant functions are:

- a. Providing library, learning, knowledge and information services to ECA Divisions, member States, subregional organizations and other institutions as well as to Africa’s development partners; and
- b. Promoting networking and information-sharing with policymakers, other stakeholders, including partners, United Nations organizations and development organizations working on African development issues.

To perform these functions, the Division includes the **Knowledge and Library Services Section**, to act as a “one-stop shop” access point for African knowledge collections, and as coordinator for knowledge facilitation services connecting African professional Communities.

With respect to the role of knowledge in ECA Business Model, knowledge acquired from engaging with professional Communities, combined with knowledge obtained through comprehensive document collections, and applied to ECA research, products and advice, would help assure the organization’s place in the top tier of global think tanks.

However, an effective knowledge management strategy is required to ensure this result.

# PART 5 – Suggested Principles for the Knowledge Management Strategy

The following vision and corresponding mission addresses the present demands on the organization for more cost-effective management and utilization of its current and potential knowledge resources.

## Vision and Mission

The vision for ECA Knowledge Management Strategy is **to ensure that the organization becomes and remains Africa’s premier think tank, consistently generating top quality, thoroughly researched products reflecting the latest thinking on issues relating to Africa’s transformative agenda.**

For this to occur, all of ECA operations, research, products and advice should systematically incorporate the most reliable, relevant, up-to-date and comprehensive

knowledge available from the continent and beyond.

To this end, the strategy can be considered successful when ECA obtains the most relevant, up-to-date and comprehensive knowledge available from the continent and beyond:

- The most **reliable** knowledge – obtained from sources trusted both by ECA and the wider professional Community;
- The most **relevant** knowledge – vetted and targeted to include only those sources bearing directly on an issue;
- The most **up-to-date** knowledge – using the latest documentary material and real-time interactions from professional peers;
- The most **comprehensive** knowledge – tapping all available repositories and knowledge networks to bring in the full spectrum of perspectives and issues.

and when the knowledge is systematically incorporated into ECA operations, research, products and advice:

- Incorporated into **operations** – introducing “knowledge-enabled” business processes, to ensure organizational learning;
- Incorporated into **research** – mandating that knowledge “discovery” is factored into corporate research work;
- Incorporated into **products** – seeking out the experiences and perspectives of professionals through desk research, Community consultations and peer reviews;
- Incorporated into **advice** – through workflows that stress learning before, during and after events and interventions.

## Guiding Principles of the Strategy

Based on the above vision and the corresponding mission to realize it, the following five principles are intended to guide resource, staffing and work planning decisions for ECA’s knowledge management efforts.

**1. ECA knowledge management strategy should not be about the software platform.** Knowledge is what people know, and knowledge management is to get what someone knows to the person who needs to know it as fast as possible. Depending on the context, the ways to do that can be face-to-face, telephone, e-mail, or by reading the person’s blog posts, articles or books (virtually or in print).

- 2. ECA knowledge sharing activities, in the context of the KM strategy, should be purpose-driven.** Sharing of knowledge is most valuable if there is a compelling reason, such as a collective product that needs to be generated on a deadline, or an immediate problem from a close, trusted colleague that needs your experience to be resolved. Conversely, sharing of “best practices” or other “interesting” material assumes that someone has the time, inclination and curiosity to read it.
- 3. ECA should feature knowledge facilitation as a service to its professional Communities.** ECA can take advantage of its impartiality as a UN Agency and of its special relationship with African governments to act as convener of African Professional Communities of Practice for the purpose of sharing knowledge, experience and solutions, and for increasing the engagement of African’s development-oriented professionals in the work of ECA.
- 4. ECA internal processes should incorporate its knowledge into its business processes.** ECA should tap its knowledge resources – its people and its knowledge repositories, to benefit organizational learning, product improvement, and enhanced capacity-development practices.

**5. How well ECA policy staff both share and apply knowledge should benefit their careers.** If ECA is to become a world-class think tank, the staff generating and delivering policy ideas must be motivated to remain current with their professional field and to play a prominent and visible role within it. Operations staff should share and apply others' knowledge as well.

The implications of these guiding principles are covered in the following section.





# PART 6 – Implications of the Strategy for Knowledge Management in ECA

## **Guiding Principle 1: ECA knowledge management strategy should not be about the software platform.**

As discussed in the Overview in Part 2 above, many organizations introducing knowledge management strategies perceive KM to be technology-driven. The argument usually goes like this – large, distributed organizations are typically “siloed”, where one unit is unaware of the activities and experiences of another, until they come together in a meeting and find out. Similarly, a community of professionals will participate in an event and discover that their concerns or challenges have been addressed by colleagues. If the gap is perceived to be a need for better sharing of knowledge, then introducing a facilitating technology such

as an interactive website application or a corporate social networking platform will release this pent-up demand for the people interested in learning from each other, sharing best practices and other items of interest. And by presenting KM as a technology, the organization is able to attract financial resources to create a new unit, design an attractive website, purchase (or build) a state-of-the-art software platform, hire professional “knowledge management officers” to manage it, and train the organization’s staff on its use.

The problem with this picture is that it is based on the assumption that people would share more if only they had a platform to do so. This is not necessarily the case. Without a compelling reason to share – for example, it would help your career, or it is built into a business process – most busy professionals will place voluntary “sharing” far down their priority to-do list. Secondly, persons who may be happy to share information may not be as willing to share their knowledge; following the traditional adage of “knowledge is power”, they would prefer to withhold what they know until they are compensated for it in some way. Finally, sharing over a platform “dehumanizes” the experience, disregarding the most valuable dimension of all – face time.

Additional reasons why technology-driven knowledge sharing tends to fail are covered under the discussion of knowledge networking, in Guiding Principle 4, below. Fundamentally, however, and as noted under the analysis in Part 2 above, the emphasis on technology belies the need for a clearer understanding of what being a “knowledge organization” implies. Knowledge flows, and not knowledge platforms, are what the knowledge management strategy should be concerned with.

Looking at KM Strategy in this light, the following implications become apparent:

**Putting knowledge to work:** The role of KLSS, as the unit responsible for knowledge management, should be to advise the organization about knowledge architecture issues – how to build knowledge into business processes, including help with reengineering workflows, as well as the most appropriate modalities for this whether it be using a technology, a business system, or a simple automated or manual procedure. The other units of ECA should come to KLSS whenever they need the following:

- a. Advice within ECA on business process re-engineering, to help identify if, where, in what way and what kind of knowledge should be factored in, and assistance with building the workflows, systems and processes to facilitate organizational learning and knowledge networking;
- b. Advice on knowledge networking for maximizing interaction among network

members. A separate **Addendum** (linked or available on request) spells out the decision-making parameters for creating knowledge networks and corresponding software applications.

**Changing the job of the SRO “knowledge officer”:** The designated “knowledge officers” in the Subregional Offices have so far been occupied mainly with websites and knowledge-sharing platforms. In the present context, what would be more valuable to the organization is for the SRO knowledge officers to focus on promoting professional connections and knowledge networking within the countries and subregional organizations under their purview, supporting the organization’s efforts to engage Professional Communities in knowledge-sharing both regionally and in countries. They could also support knowledge collection and dissemination efforts.

**Don’t spend a lot on technology training:** Most technology platforms featured in the Addendum are off-the-shelf, fully intuitive applications, which the IT specialists in ITUSS and the Subregional Offices would be able to install and, together with the Web managers if needed, customize. ECA also own licenses for several of them. Therefore no extensive user training or significant development costs should be required for administrators to operate or network members to use an identified platform.

## **Guiding Principle 2: ECA knowledge sharing activities, in the context of the KM strategy, should be purpose-driven.**

### **Focusing on “Knowledge on Demand”:**

Following from the first guiding principle, knowledge management is not an end in itself, defined by websites designed to “push” material that staff have written or read, assuming that others would find it interesting. Sharing should be encouraged, as it promotes interaction and familiarity among groups. However sharing in this sense has more to do with communications than knowledge management. In the context of a Knowledge Management strategy, the effort of sharing knowledge should be maximized in terms of value to the organization. Specifically, the effort invested in supplying knowledge should take place only when someone actually asks for it. The concept of a “knowledge audit”, or a “knowledge mapping” exercise, where consultants expend considerable resources and efforts to inventory the supply of available knowledge for the purpose of identifying the missing knowledge nuggets, assumes that these items are not infinite in nature. It is much more cost-effective to focus time and effort on responding to actual demand, rather than on generating a supply for a hypothetical demand. ECA’s KM efforts should therefore focus knowledge-sharing on responding to requests for knowledge, and discontinue previously emphasized broad-brush and costly approaches such as knowledge audits or websites designed to “push” someone’s knowledge.

**Creating Africa’s one-stop shop digital library:** Document repositories – knowledge collections – play a critical role in a knowledge management strategy. Repositories of documented knowledge are invaluable as a source of knowledge for persons seeking comparative experiences, lessons learned, the state of the art, or the historical record. Repositories are sources of supply, but the distinction is that repositories strive to be comprehensive and not selective – unlike a supply-driven approach, assumptions about what might be valuable are left to the users themselves. Repositories are the sources for researchers seeking to respond to demand.

To meet a demand-driven approach, ECA library should work towards making its knowledge collection as comprehensive as possible. For this, the ASKIA federated search engine should strive to be the one-stop-shop for digital material in Africa and beyond. Continual and systematic efforts should take place to expand the number participating library and documentation centers, to the point where any digital material – not just books and papers but also multi-media material and geo-spatial collections – can be found there. Digitalizing the backlog of ECA’s own Institutional Repository, now about two-thirds done, should be expeditiously completed. And the AVLIN initiative – The African Virtual Library and Information Network, conceived to help African libraries and documentation centers digitize their material but in limbo for over ten years, should be revived and brought into ASKIA.

### **And making it as user-friendly as**

**possible:** The key to a successful one-stop shop repository is the way its material is organized – how well it enables users to quickly find the most relevant knowledge available.

Where a Google text search can bring up many thousands of hits, a structured search engine does the filtering work for the user, bringing up only the most relevant material. ASKIA uses a best-in-class structured search engine, featuring a widely adopted, user-friendly standard for metadata – the information about a digital record used for structured searching. The development effort is now going into expanding its scope by adding French and other languages, and adding customization features (“My ASKIA”) that allow users to tailor searches and search results to their preferences. Beyond the current development phase, ASKIA should be subject to continual improvements – such as, for example, introducing a mobile application – so that it can consistently remain the user’s first choice for documented knowledge relevant to Africa, and become a prominent feature of Africa’s primary think tank.

### **Turning the Library into ECA Research**

**Service:** The Library facility at ECA, housed in a separate four-story building, was designed for the time when document repositories were books on shelves, accessible by card catalogues. The shelves and catalogues are still there, but many of the books on the shelves are ancient and unused, and the index cards have been thrown out. Similarly, staffing of the library services retains features from its hard-copy days, with cataloging assistants and reference clerks who, with more users working

on-line, have less critical roles. There is ample scope, therefore, for a repurposing of Library facilities and its staffing to increase its strategic relevance to ECA’s new goals.

To make the Library more relevant to the Knowledge Management strategy, it should be reorganized as a research service, with a staff contingent dedicated to responding to requests from ECA authors and elsewhere to compile the most relevant source material available for preparing a research paper, case study, thematic publication, keynote address or any other similar request. Known as a “Libguide” (Library guide), or branded with a name reflecting an ECA service (for example, “ECA Knowledge Guide”), this document can be generated by Library staff upon consultation with the client in terms of the kind of material it should contain. It can be a templated product of 4-5 pages maximum, produced on a fixed turnaround time, featuring the most relevant selections proposed by the researchers, brief abstracts, and hyperlinks. ECA staff could avail of the service free of charge, while help for external users could be fee-based.

### **And making it as user-friendly as**

**possible:** Reconfiguring the Library space to remove unused material and shelves opens up opportunities for updating its physical space. The Knowledge and Library Services Section represents the interface between knowledge “connection” and the “collection” dimensions, and the Library facilities could become the actualized representation of the interface. Specifically, the space could be redone as a “learning commons”, with a collegial, inviting environment for professionals from ECA and

local UN offices, conference participants or the general public to interact, study, attend lectures or interactive events, browse artwork, commemorative installations or historical material, use the internet or do research in dedicated workstations. As the initial step in this process an architectural study should be undertaken to make recommendations on how to proceed.

### **Guiding Principle 3 – ECA should feature knowledge facilitation as a service to its professional Communities.**

Knowledge networking can be a valuable way to increase communication and knowledge-sharing among professionals having common interests, or to promote discussion around priority issues that would benefit from brainstorming. However in spite of it being a popular tool in a KM toolbox, sustaining participant interest can often be problematic, and most of ECA knowledge networks have faltered. Some constraining issues are:

- a. Members – particularly government officials working under capacity constraints – may not see sufficient value to spend the hours necessary to contribute meaningfully;
- b. Staff assigned to moderation responsibilities as one of many tasks find themselves unable to devote the time needed to encourage responses;
- c. User interfaces are too complex or

take too much effort, particularly for password-protected websites, or for persons used to communicating over e-mail;

- d. Discussion issues or member requests for sharing may not be formulated in a way that makes them compelling to respond to; or, conversely, where the formulation results in members expressing controversial or defamatory views that alienate other members or their organizations;
- e. Language issues, in case a member’s native language is not the one being used; or if discussions are translated, the loss in momentum to sustain a discussion thread;
- f. Connectivity issues, particularly when Communities include members for whom internet is costly, unreliable or missing altogether;
- g. Absence of a knowledge-sharing culture in some countries or organizations, where communication outside of an official hierarchy is discouraged or against agency policy
- h. A tendency for some participants to see network sites as one-way channels to “share” material for which the interest or relevance has not been determined;
- i. And finally – the general lack of appreciation for the level of effort that goes into making a knowledge-sharing network successful.

Addressing these constraints, a recent UN initiative, **Solution Exchange**, has had considerable success in promoting knowledge-sharing among development professionals having common interests. First begun in India in 2005, and currently operational under five UN Teams (India, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and the Pacific region), Solution Exchange is a public-facing knowledge-sharing service offered by United Nations Country Teams in several countries around the world. The formula is simple:

- 1. Create social networks of professionals** – Communities of Practice – based on professional disciplines and organized around national or regional development priorities;
- 2. Put them on e-mail lists** facilitated by 2-person teams in UN Agency offices, for impartiality;
- 3. Put Community members to work** helping each other out.

Three virtual services are offered – the peer-to-peer **Query** service, **e-Consultations** on draft plans, policies and programmes, and **e-Discussions** for brainstorming on key Community concerns. Each service produces a **Consolidated Reply** summarizing the thread and extracting the experiences and resources recommended by contributors. One face-to-face service, **Collaboration**, arranges small teams – “**Action Groups**” – to work on commissioned assignments. Solution Exchange Communities also hold **Annual Forums**, where members interact, network and strengthen Community identity.

Community Organization is also simple: The relevant UN Agency head(s) are the **Community conveners**. They are supported by the two-person, full-time professional **Facilitation Team** to manage the four services. And a **Resource Group** of 20-25 key actors in the sector leads the Community.

Solution Exchange works because:

- People who belong to Communities of Practice freely share their knowledge, challenging the old assumption that people prefer to protect their knowledge;
- Experiential knowledge is as valuable as expert knowledge, challenging the old assumption that the “experts” have all the knowledge;
- It uses e-mail to capture the “tacit” knowledge in people’s heads and turn it into documented knowledge, opening up a large, previously untapped source of experience and expertise to practitioners at all levels, from front line workers to national policy-makers;
- It applies a simple, straightforward operating formula, noted above – a two-person Resource Team working from a UN Agency office connecting members through an e-mail list;
- Above all, participation in a Community of professional peers gives contributors recognition – it is good for their careers.

In terms of results, Solution Exchange:

- Improves effectiveness of development



professionals, offering them a wide range of solutions, connecting them to colleagues with common interests, disseminating their ideas and innovations, and enhancing their reputations;

- b. Improves influence of Communities of Practice, providing a forum to articulate and advocate members' issues, promoting participation and collaboration on strategic undertakings, and ensuring relevant, appropriate policy decisions;
- c. Improves national development efforts, tapping the power of Communities to help tackle national challenges with solutions informed by deep practitioner experience and wide-ranging perspectives, both within the country and from comparative experiences elsewhere.

**Introducing Solution Exchange:** Creating and supporting knowledge networks and Communities of Practice, with all the advantages they offer, should remain a key feature of the new ECA profile. To this end, Solution Exchange knowledge facilitation services should be included as an additional intervention. With a Facilitation Team of two full-time, service-oriented, highly skilled professionals, many inhibitors to successful networks would be addressed. Additionally, offering facilitation services would tap into the impartial, trusted nature of ECA and increase its visibility, value and reputation among its primary clients. Finally, by offering this service, ECA also stands to benefit through increased

opportunities for consultation to produce more relevant, better informed policies, and to enhance buy-in of the results.

Annex 1 presents draft “leaflets” for providing Solution Exchange Services to two existing Communities – the **African Statistical Knowledge Network** and the **African Planners Network**, respectively. A leaflet describes the key features of a Community – its focus, issues covered, who should join, and who its leaders are. These two Communities were identified in February 2013 as promising places to start; subsequently a **Gender and Development Community** has been proposed. Depending on the outcome of these initial efforts, additional Communities should be introduced, until the full range of ECA’s thematic focus areas include comparable professional Communities in their knowledge networking activities.

### **Guiding Principle 4: ECA internal processes should incorporate its knowledge into its business processes.**

In order to achieve its aspiration of becoming Africa’s premier think tank, ECA would need to focus on maximizing its access to and utilization of knowledge. For this, procedures should be instituted that will ensure this result. The organization should have a clearly defined knowledge architecture, with strategically placed points in its business processes ensuring that ECA products, projects and policies reflect the learnings from its staff and its Communities of Practice.



**Developing products:** Taking advantage of the in-house resources and the thematic Communities, the workflow for developing ECA branded products should ensure that whatever is produced by ECA reflects the latest, most comprehensive and implementable policy ideas. These products should also be demand-driven and based on clear priority demand, leading to fewer but more highly anticipated quantities.

1. **Identify the issues:** The areas of priority concerns for which policy ideas from an ECA thematic unit would be in high demand would be sourced from:
  - a. ECA regular work programming process;
  - b. Decisions arising from the Conference of Ministers or from any of the regular policy-making or advisory bodies supported by the Thematic Unit;
  - c. A Community's leadership ("Resource Group");
  - d. A query posted to a Community that uncovers a major concern facing the sector;
  - e. Assessment derived from an "ECA Knowledge Guide" commissioned for research; and
  - f. Feedback from ECA constituent bodies as a result of earlier policy delivery efforts.
2. **Brainstorm solutions:** Engage the relevant Community in an e-discussion to identify experiences and views on potential

approaches and policies to address the issues. Additionally, tap in-house resources, including the library's extensive collections of documented knowledge.

3. **Formulate the product:** Convene an expert working group ("Action Group") comprised of the Community members identified from the brainstorming with the most extensive knowledge, ideas or experiences to frame the product or policy idea; use in-house or consultancy resources for writing up the actual document. Obtain a "Knowledge Guide" from the library to see what knowledge exists, and commission research or analysis to fill in any knowledge gaps.
4. **Solicit feedback and buy-in:** Circulate the draft to the Community for an e-consultation, for comments and suggestions for improvement. Buy-in of the result by Community members and, by extension, their organizations, is facilitated as a result of the consultative approach.
5. **Finalize and issue the product:** Finalize the product or policy idea taking the feedback into account. Include Community engagement activities and feedback in the "Campaign" for its launch.
6. **Gauge impact and influence:** Establish and track "success indicators" to determine whether the product/policy idea is having the desired effect of influencing national, subregional or regional policymaking.

### **Ensuring organizational learning:**

“Knowledge-enabled business processes” should be introduced so that, for example, strategy, programme and project development include a step for “due diligence” to factor in results of Community consultations and evaluation findings. Developing and maintaining these processes would fall under the Strategic Planning Unit’s purview.

- 1. Establish entry points** in policy, programme, strategy or project formulation processes which would benefit from knowledge inputs. This would be done by, for example, adding a “due diligence” section at the point of selecting the approach or strategy proposed, where the drafter would have to demonstrate the extent to which comparative experiences and advice was sought and/or research carried out.
- 2. Tap the Community and in-house resources** as a source for the “due diligence” section in a systematic manner. This could be done by commissioning and then reviewing an ECA Knowledge Guide, and by reviewing past Community “Consolidated Replies” or, if none exist, posting a Query seeking experiences and advice. Monitoring and Evaluation reports of past and ongoing projects should also be researched for this section.
- 3. Turn collective knowledge into organizational learning.** The Strategic Planning Unit’s Operational Quality Section should be responsible for codifying the lessons learned, by continually reviewing experiences and feedback on performance,

and updating programming rules and procedures on this basis.

### **Enhancing capacity development:**

ECA should use knowledge flows to continually enhance its approach to Capacity Development. A once-yearly ECA “retreat” would be an occasion to bring the past years’ learnings into focus and produce insights and recommendations to take forward in this fundamental dimension of ECA’s think tank role. The retreat would examine the knowledge gained from Community interaction, research and analysis of the thematic units, feedback from the Capacity Development Division and the Subregional Offices, and findings from evaluations and monitoring by the Strategic Planning Unit. Results would be factored into practice for the coming year by the relevant Divisions. In addition to enhancing ECA’s own effectiveness, IDEP would apply these insights into updates for its training modules for African planners and administrators.

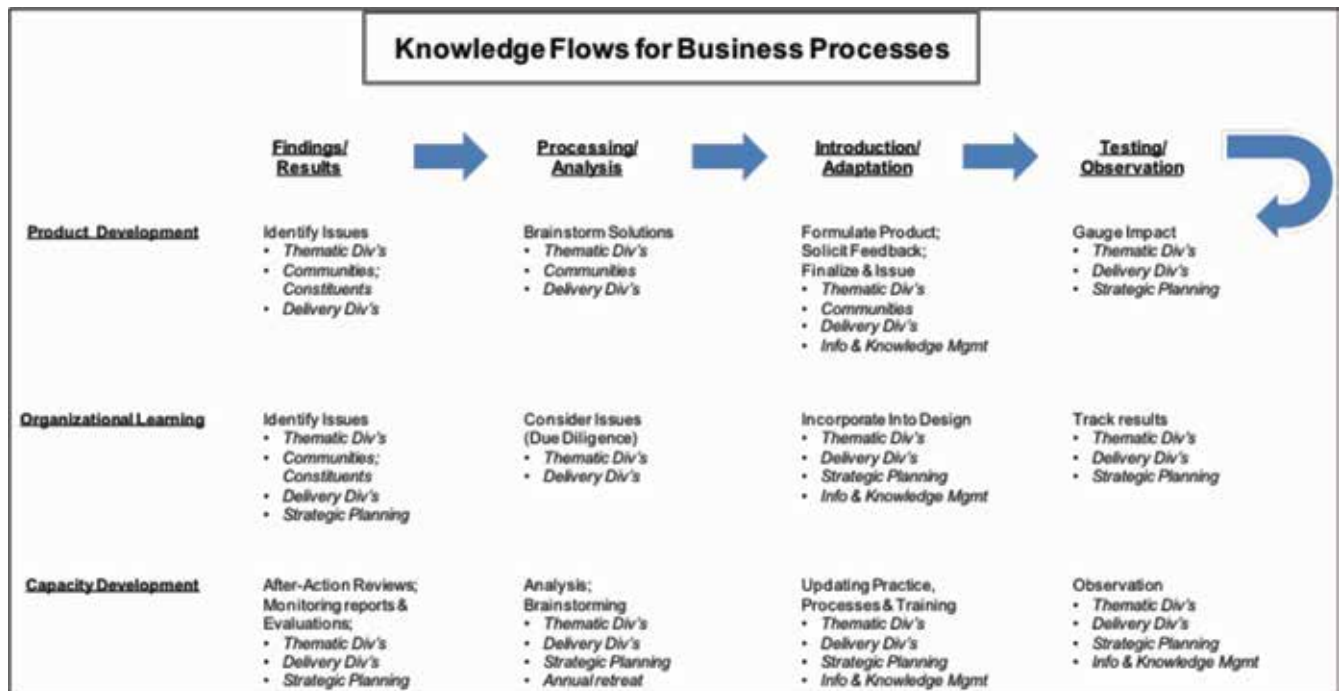
- 1. Regularize “After-Action Reviews”.** Every planned intervention carried out by an ECA unit should conclude with a structured session where the key internal actors the ask four questions of an “AAR”: What was supposed to happen? What actually happened? How do we account for the difference? What can we learn from the experience? Results are reflected in a summary report.
- 2. Commission analyses.** Prior to the annual retreat, Units would use the AAR reports to prepare a brief “lessons learned” paper for presentation.

3. **Brainstorming.** The Retreat would review the AAR reports, along with the other reflections from Community interactions, evaluations etc. for elements to bring into ECA practice
4. **Updating.** Recommendations from the brainstorming would be applied to processes, practices and training modules, as relevant.
5. **Feedback.** The cycle repeats itself as new ideas are tested.

processes should become a regular feature of ECA operations in all the areas covered above. Knowledge flows are always two-way – findings lead to practice which in turn generates findings. As a knowledge organization, taking account of feedback from all perspectives is the only way to ensure continual learning and to remain in the forefront of the field.

The following diagrams of the knowledge architecture and knowledge flows described above.

Feedback from After Action Reviews, Quality assessments, monitoring and evaluation



## **Guiding Principle 5: How well ECA policy staff both share and apply knowledge should benefit their careers.**

Both knowledge-enabled business processes and dynamic knowledge networks require participation – staff and partners should be sufficiently motivated to both contribute knowledge and utilize others’ knowledge. Both of these dimensions face challenges in achieving, and need to be managed effectively through direct interventions that reflect on staff performance.

**Sharing knowledge:** If ECA product development step requires searching the networks for comparative experiences, then the search would not be effective if the experiences are only from a few participants. On the other hand, if staff saw personal value in actively participating in the networks then the knowledge base would be more comprehensive. If, say, 600 professionals with an average of 10 years of work experience joined a Solution Exchange Community, that is 6,000 years of knowledge to draw from. People are motivated to participate when it is good for their career – when they are recognized and rewarded for being an outstanding professional willing to share valuable experience. To this end, ECA should take steps to award knowledge sharing and acknowledge the value of contributions. To measure knowledge sharing, the corporate scorecard should post the number of contributions made by members, to generate a “competition”. And Community participants in and outside of ECA should be able to rate the quality of

a contribution (anonymously), which would be included in the scorecard along with the “sharing” counter. Recognition through award ceremonies for the leaders each year could showcase their performance and enhance their recognition among their peers as outstanding representatives of ECA’s new profile. Reflecting individual results in annual performance assessments would boost the career prospects for the higher achievers, and perhaps help lower achievers realize they should seek more suitable positions.

**Applying knowledge:** As noted above, the best way to ensure that available knowledge is applied towards organizational learning, product development or capacity development is to write it into the programme manual. Before signing off on any project document or product, a paragraph in the approval sheet on “due diligence” should be completed indicating the steps taken to investigate comparative experiences and findings from past lessons learned. Instructions for completing this section should include both knowledge acquired from Community experiences and from the relevant ECA Knowledge Guide. The former will serve to encourage staff to use the Community networks, and the latter the Library research service, directing traffic from ECA to both knowledge resources, and raising the level of quality of both ECA projects and products.

**Gaining knowledge:** Organizational learning will greatly improve from knowledge management, but individual learning must also. Mastering the practice of Capacity Development, which all ECA staff should

aspire to, also requires a special effort. Instituting the capacity development recommendations spelled out above would also benefit from wider exposure, and the once-yearly “retreat” should include all professional staff. The capacity development techniques introduced should be incorporated into the staff learning modules, giving newcomers and opportunity to gain the know-how to carry them out. And the Facilitation Teams anchoring the Solution Exchange knowledge networks should create their own knowledge network for learning and experience-sharing, and should make their findings available to other ECA professionals aspiring to take on that role.

**Benefitting all staff:** The above suggestions have largely referred to policy professionals and ECA products. However, the same knowledge management processes can also be used for ECA operations and relate to all of its staff, both policy and operations, professionals and general service, current and retired/reassigned. To this end, informal knowledge-sharing across ECA should be encouraged using “Unite” or a simple Google Groups discussion forum – with translation enabled, to allow everyone to read contributions in French, English and Amharic – which could be used for discussing and reviewing policy changes, interpreting rules, offering experiences and “tips and tricks” on implementing procedures etc. UMOJA’s introduction would make an excellent opportunity to share ideas and experiences with other peers on these implementation issues. Highlights should be brought to mainstream attention through the proposed ECA internal newsletter and comparable forums. Contributors for the

most and best ideas should be tracked in the scorecard in the same manner as the thematic network contributions noted above, and a comparable award introduced.

## A Word about the Task Force Recommendations

**On reducing the number of workshops:** The Task Force on Knowledge Networking, in addition to recommending a Knowledge Management Strategy, included several recommendations relating to their mandate to reduce the number of workshops and meetings, spelled out in section 4.1. Specifically, 4.1.1 recommended setting up comprehensive internal review criteria for ECA publications before they go for Expert Group Meetings/ Validation Workshops. 4.1.2 recommended partnering with African universities, research institutions, and individual experts to provide external reviews in ECA key research areas. And 4.1.3 recommended streamlining EGMs and validation workshops under Extrabudgetary resources. All these recommendations can be fully supported; 4.1.1 in particular has been covered under the Publications Guidelines issued as an information circular in November 2013. However, regular opportunities for face-to-face interactions of members of a Community of Practice should be an important part of a knowledge management strategy, as they are important for networking opportunities and for increasing familiarity and trust among members. The issue is not so much reducing the number of workshops, but making them more purposeful, effective and efficient. This can be accomplished through the use of

knowledge networks to share pre-meeting documentation, policy papers, draft reports etc. for comment and feedback, so that a meeting, when it does happen, can focus on any outstanding areas of difference and then taking any recommendations forward. The collaboration spaces identified in annex 1 are designed for this purpose, including, for example, a shared workspace allowing participants to edit a conference document or draft report.

Accordingly, while the KM strategy can include the three recommendations put forward by the Task Force relating to workshops, the driving rationale should not be workshop reduction, but workshop value. Time saved in discussions over papers can be time used for networking, learning and experience-sharing, and generating new opportunities for group collaboration.

**And on increasing other knowledge networking activities:** Section 4.2 consisted of four recommendations for increasing other knowledge networking activities:

- a. 4.2.1 Develop an ECA comprehensive Knowledge Management Strategy, to be operational by January 2014;
- b. 4.2.2 Divisions should be proposing Communities of Practice in key research areas in line with the biennium's programme of work;
- c. 4.2.3 In countries where internet/ technology accessibility is weak, ECA should partner with other UN Agencies present in the country to provide these

services to participating members in the various Communities of Practice;

- d. 4.2.4 Library and Knowledge Services Section shall facilitate the hosting and organizational processes to support regular and meaningful dialogue.

The Comprehensive KM Strategy and the role of KLSS, including starting up Solution Exchange, is adequately addressed here. The second recommendation has also been covered, but not in the manner the Task Force foresaw, with CoPs comprised of 20-30 experts in the knowledge area. A Community of Practice is not a small group. It represents people of a profession, or a discipline – a practice – which has or can establish operational norms for how it carries out its work. It can be closely associated with a Professional Association, although it is less formally structured and in fact can sometimes be a precursor to an Association. In the two examples given here, both African Planners and African Statisticians are established professional associations, and the reason for bringing them into the Strategy is to use the CoP format and provide it with Solution Exchange services is to make these Associations more valuable to their members. And finally, the third recommendation is not considered appropriate for the strategy since, in addition to its not being accepted by ECA management, has the technology-focused orientation that the KM strategy is moving away from.





## PART 7 – Organizational arrangements

**Management Arrangements** – KLSS as the Strategy implementing unit.

While library services has been featured in ECA since the beginning, bringing it together with knowledge services has formalized the “connection-collection” interface within one Section. The above strategy takes full advantage of this interrelationship, and over the coming months the structure and resources needed for KLSS to effectively implement the strategy should be put in place. In terms of resources, a business plan will be prepared and authorized separately to build the necessary capacities to deliver on the strategy, through projects financed from the regular programme or from extrabudgetary resources.

Organizationally, the roles reflected in the strategy should be represented in the responsibilities of the sections. Specifically, the

Sections should cover:

- **Connections** – covering ECA-sponsored knowledge networks and Communities of Practice. It would entail providing ECA units and partners on the most appropriate set ups for the type of knowledge network envisaged, and coordinating the Solution Exchange services provided by the substantive units.
- **Knowledge engineering** – covering knowledge-related ECA business processes. It would entail advising the relevant ECA units on introducing knowledge-enabled business processes and participating in related business process reengineering efforts for organizational learning, product development, capacity development, and staff performance metrics. Because this unit would have the relevant expertise, it could also address general business systems re-engineering efforts (ARMS; other workflows) in absence of any other unit having this functional responsibility.
- **Collections** – covering the digital and physical library repositories. Digital collections responsibilities would entail



full completion and maintenance of ECA Institutional Repository; full development of ASKIA's features, bringing new ASKIA collections on board, supporting AVLIN, and promoting ASKIA to the wider African professional Community. Physical library responsibilities would be managing purchases and subscriptions; cataloguing and organizing material for bookshelves and galleries.

- **Services** – Meeting requests for “ECA Knowledge Guides” and other requests for research assistance. It would entail preparing Knowledge Guides in consultation with the client, including researching sources and compiling content; tapping the full resources of the library for any relevant material requested; managing the physical library services, including borrowing facilities and the research desk; keeping content current on ECA KLSS website pages.
- **Programme management and coordination** – ensuring the effective administrative, operational and coordination responsibilities for the Section. It would entail preparing and monitoring the implementation of the Section's work programmes and budgets; administering the Section's financial, human resource, procurement, logistic and records management responsibilities; coordinating with the PIKMD Directorate; liaising with the knowledge officers in the Subregional Offices on the substantive aspects of their connection and collection work.

## Oversight, Guidance and Quality Assurance Arrangements

**Oversight and accountability:**  
Arrangements suggested are as follows:

- The Director of the Public Information and Knowledge Management Division should be responsible for the oversight and day-to-day monitoring of the Business Plan for the Knowledge and Library Services Section. For this, the Directorate would work with the Section to prepare the Business Plan and the component projects, assist in arranging financing for the Plan projects, and review Plan progress quarterly.
- The Senior Management Team should be the body reviewing and endorsing the Strategic Plan, presented by the PIKMD Director, and for monitoring its implementation. The Plan should be a standing agenda item for SMT meetings at six month intervals.

**Guidance:** The strategy laid out in this paper represents a forward-thinking approach to knowledge management that, while well-suited to ECA aspirations of becoming Africa's premier think tank, is not sufficiently conventional to have a panel of domain experts who could provide substantive advice and guidance. The field of knowledge management is advancing rapidly, however, and so the relevance of and need for a guiding body should be kept under review, and reconsidered

at the periodic review meetings of the SMT.

**Quality Assurance:** Regular feedback should be provided on the implementation of the Knowledge Management Strategy and the corresponding Business Plan, and arrangements put in place for determining its impact on the performance of ECA. Specifically,

- **Success criteria** for the overall Strategy were spelled out at the beginning of Part 3. In the Business Plan, these success criteria would be detailed and monitored in the context of the biennial reviews by the SMT.
- **Performance criteria.** To oversee the various dimensions of the Strategy from a performance perspective, the Strategic Planning and Operational Quality Division should incorporate progress and performance parameters into its overall Programme Accountability Framework. Quality Assurance aspects for the functional responsibilities of KLSS should be as follows:
  - a. Connections – performance would be determined by the vitality of the knowledge networks created, following standardized indicators (developed under Solution Exchange) for network membership activity, product development, impact and influence;

- b. Knowledge engineering – indicators would be identified on a case-by-case basis to determine the increased effectiveness of the business processes being addressed;
  - c. Collections – intermediate and long term targets would be set periodically on the extent to which collections are being built and comprehensiveness achieved. Ease-of-use for the search criteria and customization features would be determined through periodic user feedback surveys;
  - d. Services – Feedback on quality and timeliness of responses to service requests, as well as on the quality of the services provided in the physical library, would be obtained through standardized user satisfaction surveys;
  - e. Programme management and coordination – the PIKMD Director would provide the Quality Assurance for this aspect.
- **Monitoring.** Progress and performance monitoring on the Business Plan and on the extent to which it is meeting the Strategy goals would be done quarterly by the PIKMD Directorate.



## PART 8 – Risks and assumptions

The following should be accounted for in rolling out the Knowledge Management Strategy:

**That resources needed for knowledge facilitation services are available.** The absence of definitive work on what makes knowledge networks successful has resulted in a general lack of appreciation on investing in member facilitation relative to investing in technology platforms. Whereas donor sponsors are usually willing to finance the latter, they are often less willing to finance the staff resources needed to ensure successful management of Community interaction. To address this issue, introducing ECA Solution Exchange services would proceed with up to three Communities initially using resources already available, and from these initial experiences demonstrate the case for full-time facilitation. Once the demonstration succeeds, potential donors should be more likely to finance additional Communities. Given that

external financing is only required for the first two years before a Community Resource Group takes over the budget, prospects for sustainability should not be a donor concern.

**That ASKIA can become the one-stop shop for development professionals to access Africa’s knowledge collections.** ECA aspiration as a think tank includes owning the go-to knowledge collections site for professionals everywhere, but the field is crowded and there may be competition from existing sites. To help ensure the desired result, ASKIA would be widely publicized both through the Community networks and from the Research Service facility. A key feature of the AVLIN Community of African library professionals would be uploading material to ASKIA. Finally, ASKIA’s system design would be continually reviewed and user feedback obtained to ensure that it remains easy to use for both uploading and searching material.

**That the capacity of KLSS is adequate to meet the demand for knowledge networking.** If the initial Solution Exchange Communities are successful it could mean a rapid surge in the number of Communities and other knowledge networks proposed. It is therefore possible that the coordination

and training requirements could exceed the capacities of the “Connections” unit. To mitigate this possibility, a determination of future demand would be prepared at the conclusion of the initial trials, and the cost of additional capacities needed would be incorporated into the budgets for new Communities.

**That the capacity of KLSS is adequate to meet the demand for the research services.** Similar to knowledge networking, a successful research service could exceed the ability of the research staff to cope with the requests in a timely and comprehensive manner. To address this possibility, norms would be established and used to calculate levels of effort relative to client satisfaction levels. If required, the Service unit would recover the costs for additional capacity from its external clients.

**That the knowledge-enabled business processes have the intended effect.** The processes under Guiding Principle 4 above involve units other than PIKMD and require additional effort from staff, and so would have to be championed by all division heads. To ensure these are successfully rolled out and that the benefits are worth the extra effort, the KLSS Knowledge Engineering staff should have special skills related not just to process engineering but also people skills needed for gaining buy-in. Depending on the specialist’s assessment, different approaches would be applied to systems development and roll-out, including piloting, awareness and orientation workshops, skills training, etc. The roll-out work would be continually monitored and adjusted based on feedback. And indicators on system cost-effectiveness would be captured and reported on as part of the Strategy’s monitoring process.

## PART 9 – Conclusions

A strategy paper lays out how an organization intends to approach a particular business function, in this case knowledge management. It establishes the parameters against which decisions are taken, projects are approved, and resources are allocated. It also projects how the particular function supports the organization's overall business model in the most effective manner. From the strategy comes a business plan and corresponding resource allocations and investment decisions. Rather than focusing in on programme plans and budgets directly, the strategy allows for the preliminary step of providing the rationale behind plan contents.

In the case of the Knowledge Management strategy, the goal is for ECA to systematically ensure that all of its operations, research, products and advice incorporate the most reliable, relevant, up-to-date and comprehensive knowledge available from the continent and beyond. This intention leads to five guiding principles: ECA knowledge management strategy should not be about the software platform; its knowledge sharing activities should be purpose-driven; it should

feature knowledge facilitation as a service to its professional Communities; its internal processes should incorporate its knowledge into its business processes; and how well its policy staff both share and apply knowledge should benefit their careers. From these principles, a series of implications are derived that determine the KM-related activities to be carried out and how the responsibilities would be organized.

The implications represent a very different perspective from ECA's previous KM efforts. Whereas the earlier efforts saw knowledge management as a separate, technology-oriented effort primarily used for knowledge-sharing, this current strategy takes a more fundamental approach, concentrating on the ways in which knowledge supports ECA's core business, and how it can be better leveraged to make a difference in the quality, effectiveness and impact of ECA's work. There is essentially not a lot of additional investment required in terms of staff or extrabudgetary resources – most of the implications promise to reduce costs and effort, with the exception of the knowledge facilitation services. These can be seen not so much as a “knowledge management” effort than a new, innovative

product of ECA to engage its primary stakeholders. In fact, the paradox of this type of KM strategy is that the more successful it is in enhancing organizational effectiveness, the more “invisible” it becomes as a separately identified effort. If knowledge is the lifeblood of ECA, then knowledge management is, very simply, an integral part of how ECA is managed.

# Annex 1: Solution Exchange Leaflets

## Solution Exchange for the African Statistical Knowledge Network (draft)

### Focus

Solution Exchange for the African Statistical Knowledge Network (ASK Net) is a service provided to the professional community of African statisticians and other professionals providing or using the statistical information needed to effectively plan, manage, monitor and assess the performance of Africa's national, regional and interregional development efforts.

**Solution Exchange** is a United Nations-sponsored peer-to-peer facilitation service for professionals having similar interests and concerns ("Communities of Practice"), tapping their knowledge and experience towards the common objective of problem-solving. Through Solution Exchange, colleagues from diverse organizations and backgrounds help each other address the day-to-day issues they face, increasing the effectiveness of their

individual and collective efforts. ASK Net is introducing Solution Exchange to promote interaction and knowledge-sharing among its members and with other professionals of the wider African statistical community.

### Issues Covered

ASK Net's Solution Exchange service addresses issues relating to strengthening capacities for the African statistical community to provide relevant, accurate, timely and consistent statistics:

- Statistical data collection strategies and systems – censuses; surveys; administrative data collection systems
- Statistical topics – civil registration and vital statistics; economic statistics and national accounts; demographic and social statistics; employment and informal sector; gender statistics; development indicators
- Institutional and infrastructure requirements
- Training and certification of statistical professionals



- Statistical indicators, definitions, standards, classification and standard-setting
- Data processing and analysis methodologies; data management and dissemination
- Statistical products – statistical bulletins and reports
- Statistical coordination and harmonization initiatives

### Who Should Join

Participants in this service are members of ASK Net and other professionals from Africa and elsewhere who produce, use or are interested in African statistics:

- Statisticians working in governmental and intergovernmental organizations
- Policy researchers, academicians and trainers focusing on statistical issues
- Staff of NGOs, consulting firms and other private sector companies with statistical expertise
- Officials of foundations and donors sponsors of statistical initiatives
- Members of statistical societies and professional associations
- Other professionals in fields related to statistical collection and analysis

### Who are the Leaders

The Solution Exchange service to the statistical community in Africa falls under the ASK Net initiative of the African Centre for Statistics. Its oversight body is the Statistical Commission for Africa, the intergovernmental body that guides the Economic Commission for Africa in the work of statistics. The African Centre for Statistics is the convener.

### Solution Exchange for the African Planners Network (draft)

#### Focus

Solution Exchange for the African Planners Network is a service provided to the community of professionals concerned with planning, monitoring and assessing the performance of the economic and social development of African countries and regional economic communities.

**Solution Exchange** is a United Nations-sponsored peer-to-peer facilitation service for professionals having similar interests and concerns (“Communities of Practice”), tapping their knowledge and experience towards the common objective of problem-solving. Through Solution Exchange, colleagues from diverse organizations and backgrounds help each other address the day-to-day issues they face, increasing the effectiveness of their individual and collective efforts. The African Planners Network is introducing Solution

Exchange as a way to promote interaction and knowledge-sharing among its members and with other professionals involved in governing and managing Africa's development efforts.

### **Issues covered**

The African Planners Network's Solution Exchange service addresses issues relating to strengthening capacities of African Planners to provide relevant, timely and effective plans for national, regional and interregional sustainable economic and social development efforts:

- Planning strategies and systems – Long-term planning and visioning exercises; medium term planning; annual planning and planning's relationship with budgeting and financial management.
  - Planning processes – priority-setting; citizen engagement, consultation and participation; roles of the political authorities; interrelationships with political processes and with budgeting processes; central, intermediate and local level planning processes.
  - Planning parameters – public sector planning; socio-economic development planning; investment planning; macro-economic planning; sector planning
  - Plan monitoring and evaluation processes – performance and impact indicators; public participation; timetables and correction mechanisms
- Planning research; analytical tools and reporting methodologies to improve relevance and impact
  - Planning infrastructure and institutional arrangements – Planning agencies; Planning, Finance and Economic Affairs Ministries; Regional Economic Communities; research and policy institutes
  - Training and certification of planners
  - Planning products – plan documents and reports

### **Who Should Join**

Participants in this service are African Planners Network members and other professionals from Africa and elsewhere who produce, use or are interested in African planning instruments:

- Planners working in governmental and intergovernmental organizations
- Policy researchers, academicians and trainers focusing on planning
- Staff of NGOs, Consulting firms and other private sector companies with planning expertise
- Officials of foundations and donor sponsors of planning initiatives
- Other professionals in fields related to planning and plan implementation

## **Who Are the Leaders**

The Solution Exchange service to the African Planners Network is guided by the Committee of Experts of the ECA Conference of Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Affairs. The ECA Macroeconomic Planning Division is the convener.

# Annex 2 – Summary of Actions suggested, based on the implications of adopting the Knowledge Management Strategy and its Guiding Principles

## **Guiding Principle 1: ECA knowledge management strategy should not be about the software platform.**

1. Have KLSS's role be advising on knowledge architecture issues – factoring knowledge into business processes within ECA and maximizing ECA knowledge-sharing with its partners
2. Focus SRO knowledge officers on promoting professional connections and knowledge networking within their subregions, and on supporting knowledge collection and dissemination efforts.
3. Introduce only knowledge management technology platforms that do not require extensive user training or significant development costs for administrators to operate or members to use.

## **Guiding Principle 2: ECA knowledge sharing activities, in the context of the KM strategy, should be purpose-driven.**

4. Focus knowledge-sharing in ECA on responding to requests for knowledge, and discontinue broad-brush and costly approaches such as websites designed to “push” knowledge.
5. Make Library knowledge collection as comprehensive as possible, and have ASKIA strive to be the one-stop-shop for digital material in Africa and beyond.
6. Subject ASKIA to continual improvements so that it can remain the first choice for documented knowledge relevant to Africa, and become a prominent feature of ECA's brand.

7. Have the Library offer a research service, with a staff contingent dedicated to compiling comprehensive “ECA Knowledge Guides” for authors from ECA and elsewhere.
8. Redo Library space as a “learning commons”, with a collegial, inviting environment for professional staff and visitors to interact, study, attend lectures or events

### **Guiding Principle 3 – ECA should feature knowledge facilitation as a service to its professional Communities.**

9. Include Solution Exchange as a service to Communities to address past success inhibitors and increase ECA’s visibility, value and reputation among its primary clients.

### **Guiding Principle 4: ECA internal processes should incorporate its knowledge into its business processes.**

10. Engage the Communities in ECA product development, to ensure that whatever is produced by ECA reflects the latest, most comprehensive and implementable policy ideas.
11. Include a step for “due diligence” in ECA strategy, programme and project development, to factor in results of Community consultations and evaluation findings.

12. Use knowledge flows to continually enhance ECA’s approach to Capacity Development, using lessons learned from past efforts to update its practices and approach.

### **Guiding Principle 5: How well ECA policy staff both share and apply knowledge should benefit their careers.**

13. Recognize ECA staff for excellence in knowledge sharing, with awards for the most frequent and valuable contributions to Community conversations.
14. Include a section on “due diligence” into the rules for project or product development, showing the steps taken to investigate comparative experiences and lessons learned.
15. Incorporate the mastering of capacity development techniques into the staff learning modules, so that all staff have an opportunity to gain the know-how to carry them out.
16. Introduce an internal network in English/ French/Amharic for all ECA staff to share knowledge, experience and ideas on operational issues, and recognize top contributors.

## Actions Relating to the Task Force Recommendations

17. Use knowledge networks to make workshops more efficient and purposeful by taking on prior discussions on the papers and making more time for face-to-face interaction.

## Actions Relating to the Strategy's Organizational Arrangements

18. Organizationally align KLSS units to the roles presented under Part 7 above:
  - **Connections** – helping ECA units and partners set up and coordinate the operation of knowledge networks and Communities of Practice;
  - **Knowledge engineering** – advising on and assisting the relevant ECA units with introducing knowledge-enabled business processes;
  - **Collections** – covering the digital repositories, including the Institutional Repository and ASKIA, and the physical library, including material for bookshelves and galleries;
  - **Services** – meeting requests for “ECA Knowledge Guides” and other requests for research assistance;
19. Establish the Strategy's oversight, guidance and quality assurance arrangements as the following:
  - **Programme management and coordination** – ensuring the effective administrative, operational and coordination responsibilities for the Section.
  - The PIKMD Director would be responsible for the oversight and day-to-day monitoring of the Business Plan for the Knowledge and Library Services Section;
  - The Senior Management Team would review and endorse the Strategic Plan, presented by the PIKMD Director, and for monitoring its implementation, as a standing agenda item twice yearly;
  - The relevance of and need for a guiding body should be kept under review, and reconsidered at the periodic review meetings of the SMT;
  - For quality assurance, the Strategic Planning and Operational Quality Division would incorporate progress and performance parameters into its overall Programme Accountability Framework.



