

Israel, UNECE and CATW Side-event

Women's Economic Empowerment as a Tool for Combating and Eliminating Violence against Women

04 March, 2013, 1:15 – 2.30 pm - Conference Room 6

Since the Fourth World Conference in Beijing in 1995, violence against women and girls has reached pandemic proportions. Based on the data available, over 70% of women experience physical, psychological or sexual violence in their lifetime. Trafficking in women for contemporary forms of slavery, including exploitation of prostitution and sexual exploitation, has been addressed in various international and European norms, including the Beijing Platform for action, article 6 of the CEDAW Convention, the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Human Beings, supplementing the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, as well as the Warsaw Convention of the Council of Europe. All these specific treaties address the need to reintegrate the victims of trafficking in human beings (THB) into the education system and the labour market, in particular through the acquisition and improvement of their professional skills.

The topic is of grave importance for both developed and developing countries, as various forms of violence against women are persistently spread worldwide. It has been defined as one of the UN specialized agencies' priority areas and efforts have been undertaken to understand the fundamental political, economic and social causes and use the resulting knowledge of this research to promote better policies and educational programs for violence elimination.

The objective of this side event is to address the economic empowerment of women as a tool for combating and eliminating violence against women. In particular, we would like to discuss how, through entrepreneurship development, women can find an exit from a painful life and fulfill their ambitions for an independent existence.

Entrepreneurship is an important avenue towards women's economic empowerment; one that can provide the means to financial independence. But it also is a powerful factor that boosts women's self-confidence, brings women together in networks in their communities, in regions and across countries and hence makes their voices heard more strongly and at all levels of political and economic life.

In the discussion, we will focus on the linkages between women's economic empowerment and the elimination of violence against women. We will draw particular attention to the development of entrepreneurship as a tool for women to gain independence and a life free from violence. The experience of Israel (MCTC), UNECE, CATW and Azerbaijan in this area will be shared with the audience.

Over the past five decades, the **Golda Meir Mount Carmel International Training Center, (MCTC)**, founded by **MASHAV – Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation** has been advancing the socio-economic situation of women in the developing world. One of MCTC's major goals is training for **employment for women through entrepreneurship**, as a tool for **their economic empowerment and independence**.

The linkage between economic empowerment of women and elimination of violence against women - What is being done by MCTC and UNECE?

MCTC includes in its annual training programs the essential topics of **women's economic empowerment and independence, combating and eliminating violence against women and girls, and the link between the two issues**.

By promoting entrepreneurship among women, we contribute to their well-being, as well as to the socio-economic development of their families and communities. In this process, we address the various types of entrepreneurial activities and fields in which women engage or could engage, reviewing the benefits and impact on the family, and identifying factors that advance or hinder women's successful participation in the entrepreneurial field. We also pay particular attention to women's associations and the role they play to facilitate women's economic activities.

The issue of women's self-employment and entrepreneurship needs to be considered in the overall context of creating a favorable environment for small and micro-enterprises, through the provision of organizational, legal, economic and social incentives.

Since 2006, MCTC has been cooperating with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), through its Senior Social Affairs Officer and Gender Focal Point, Office of the Executive Secretary. MCTC and UNECE have, to date, cooperatively organized 14 workshops in Israel for women from Eastern Europe and Central Asia, as well as on- the- spot activities in the host countries, and one in-house training activity for women from south-east Europe. These workshops, on the topics of ***Support Systems for women in SMEs at National and Local Levels*** and ***Micro-credit and other Support Systems for Women Entrepreneurs; Information and Communication Technologies***, emphasize ways to help women entrepreneurs **achieve financial independence.**

In UNECE, establishing an enabling economic and business environment for women entrepreneurs has been at the core of the work on gender and supported by various sectoral activities, such as transport, trade and energy in the region. Particular attention is paid to the countries from the UN Special Program of the Economies in Central Asia (SPECA). An important area has been addressed through the development of innovation-based enterprises, assisting women to become active players and materialize their ambitions. Through the work of its Statistical Division, UNECE has contributed to monitoring violence against women as a basis for understanding the roots of this process, its spread and variations across regions.

In this way, MCTC and UNECE contribute to the priority theme of this year's CSW Session, **Violence against Women, a crosscutting issue that plagues all countries, societies and religions.** The trainings aim to update the participants' knowledge on the topic, to provide them with new intervention models and techniques, to enable exchange of experiences and sharing of ideas about both the successful and unsuccessful approaches in the participants' home countries.

Changing the Situation through Women's Economic Empowerment – Sharing Best Practices

Bringing society with its various structures into the complex area of eliminating violence against women is crucial. The Israeli NGO 'Women's Spirit' provides an example of a good practice of how women can rehabilitate themselves through entrepreneurship. They believe in 'Financial Independence as a Key to Breaking the Cycle of Violence Against Women. 'Women's Spirit' targets women victims of domestic and sexual violence who suffer from financial deprivation and dependence and experience difficulties in integration into the employment market.

Such women, growing up with, or experiencing violence, have to overcome barriers and fill gaps formed by their own lack of self-esteem and sense of failure. They tend to suffer from a lack of continuity in the employment market, generally as a result of poor education and insufficient professional training. They may fear a man's authority, they have not had the chance to develop professional networks nor, often, have they been to work full time.

By calling the *Women's Spirit* hotline, however, they can put themselves on a positive path leading to employment empowerment and a business program of their own, complete with a follow-up employment mentoring program. Women who have undergone the program were quoted as saying: "The coaching gives you the tools for you to believe in yourself".

The secret of *Women's Spirit's* success lies in the belief that each woman can fulfil her career ambitions. Women are supported on equal terms and provided with individually tailored programs to fit each one's unique needs and abilities for an all-encompassing long-term solution to keep them off

the slide down into the trap of domestic violence, perhaps exacerbated by financial dependence.

CATW believes that one of the main problems around trafficking, is the prevention through educational programs and empowerment of women in situations of vulnerability, as well as to prevent re-victimization in trafficking, by adequate programs of rehabilitation, training and financial activities to gain their autonomy. Women vulnerable to trafficking, or victims and survivors of trafficking, confront stigmatization by society, and the success of their rehabilitation is also connected to the self-esteem they gain from engaging in creative entrepreneurship programs.

Since its creation, CATW has provided widely recognized leadership on local, national, regional, and international levels, in promoting legislative, policy and educational measures to raise awareness about the root causes of human trafficking. CATW holds Special Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and was a key consultant at the UN Transnational Organized Crime Meeting from 1999-2000, the outcome of which is the Palermo Protocol, the world's most recognized legal instrument on human trafficking.

Some example of programs to train women vulnerable to trafficking and trafficked women will be given through CATW's experience with service organizations, such as Iroko Onlus in Italy, specialized in the rehabilitation of Nigerian trafficked women, a pilot experience done in Moldova with the organization Women for Contemporary Society, as well as in the Philippines.

Conclusion

Eliminating violence against women is a complex, multifaceted and global issue requiring global approaches and collaboration at all levels. The Golda Meir Mount Carmel International Training Center provides those, in cooperation with UN entities such as UNECE and with international and regional organizations. By further developing training, education and skills enhancement, we promote poverty eradication through job creation. Stress is placed on raising awareness and enabling women to increase family income through microenterprises/self-employment to become financially independent, standing up for their rights and, if necessary freeing themselves from a violent domestic situation.