



## **Economic and Social Council**

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### **Commission on the Status of Women**

#### **Fifty-ninth session**

9-20 March 2015

**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and  
to the special session of the General Assembly entitled  
“Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for  
the twenty-first century”**

### **Statement submitted by Central British Fund for World Jewish Relief, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council**

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.



## **Statement**

As an international Jewish charity based in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, we are committed to meeting the needs of individuals and communities living in poverty, assisting them in the transformation of their lives and livelihoods. We empower women by running livelihood programmes in the countries of the former Soviet Union, Rwanda and India. Our work promotes the economic independence of women through vocational training in line with the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Our livelihood programmes confront emotional barriers to working and address gaps in core skills. We have learned that:

- (a) A personalized approach achieves the best results;
- (b) Stakeholder involvement is key;
- (c) Livelihood interventions take a long-term approach.

## **Republic of Moldova and Ukraine**

Our largest livelihood development schemes are in the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, which are both lower-middle-income countries. Both suffered periods of instability after independence and, although the Republic of Moldova has steadily stabilized, the economic and political situation in Ukraine remains volatile. High levels of poverty, unemployment and underemployment restrict development.

Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova also suffer from the legacy of a flawed social welfare system inherited from the Soviet Union. Charitable programmes that provide welfare to support those on non-existent or low wages exacerbate the problem and can create an environment where receiving benefits is seen as preferable to working. Our programmes empower women to lift their own families out of poverty rather than rely on support from the State.

Women struggle to secure jobs to provide for even their basic needs, despite the high level of female education in Ukraine. Employers demand skills that those out of work do not possess. Women are further hampered by discrimination (especially in pay), a lack of affordable childcare and a sluggish economy.

## **Our response**

Our livelihood development programmes have achieved impressive results, despite this challenging context. We have supported just under 2,000 people since 2011. Some 65 per cent of participants have gained employment upon completing the programme. The programme introduces participants to the world of work and provides vocational training with the support of a dedicated placement officer.

## **What we have learned**

We achieved success by adopting a personal approach and recognizing that there may be psychological barriers that prevent people from entering the job market. We provide more intensive support to vulnerable people, working with participants to help them to overcome low self-esteem and feelings of dependency. We provide tailored vocational training that matches the needs of the job market with the interests of the person. That approach generates a greater willingness to participate and maximizes financial and human resources.

We have also developed strong relationships with employers and other stakeholders. We are seen as a preferred partner for many companies and can train graduates for specific roles. Graduates are then able to negotiate better terms, including flexible hours that allow them to balance their childcare responsibilities.

Our intervention does not stop at the graduation ceremony. Even six months in employment, bringing in a regular family income and boosting self-esteem, is not enough for people to feel that they can live permanently without benefits. Regular follow-up telephone calls and additional mentoring are crucial for all our participants.

### **Conclusions**

The following are our conclusions:

- (a) Effective programmes are those that are tailored to take into account an individual's personality and background;
  - (b) We must work with stakeholders and even our staff to ensure that we are empowering participants to change their own lives;
  - (c) A true measure of livelihood interventions comes in the next generation: to break the cycle of poverty, participants must inspire their children to find meaningful work too.
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