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Statement submitted by Center for Women and Development, 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

Gender equality and women's development have been important goals in Viet Nam in the past years. The implementation in Viet Nam of the Beijing Platform for Action of 1995 reflects the increased awareness and efforts made by the State of Viet Nam and Vietnamese organizations towards achieving these goals.

Since its establishment in 2002, the Center for Women and Development has joined efforts with the Viet Nam Women's Union to implement a number of programmes and activities in line with the Beijing Platform for Action, thus contributing to achieving gender equality and the advancement of women in Viet Nam.

To carry out this work, the Center for Women and Development has been cooperating with and receiving support from United Nations agencies and national and international governmental and non-governmental organizations.

Major contributions to the drafting of policies and laws related to women and gender equality

The Center has contributed to legislative work by:

- Being actively involved in the drafting of the Law on Gender Equality, adopted in 2006. This Law reflects the high commitment of the State of Viet Nam in internalizing the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action and Goal 3 of the Millennium Development Goals on promoting gender equality and empowering women.
- Providing inputs for the Law on Domestic Violence Prevention and Control of 2007 and the Law on the Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking of 2011, based on the Center's practical experiences in operating the first shelter in Viet Nam for women survivors of domestic violence and human trafficking.
- Giving feedback on several important draft legal documents, such as the revised Constitution, adopted in 2013, and the Law on Marriage and Family, adopted in 2014.
- Joining efforts with the Viet Nam Women's Union to develop a proposal to lower the retirement age for female and male workers engaged in heavy and hazardous work, and to increase the retirement age for public servants and employees with a high level of education.
- Joining efforts with the Viet Nam Women's Union to develop a proposal to include survivor counselling and supporting establishments and community-based trusted shelters in the Law on Domestic Violence Prevention and Control. The proposed idea was accepted.
- Making recommendations on women-related issues for the revision of the Civil Code, criminal law and the Criminal Procedure Code.

Main activities in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action

Prevention and control of gender-based violence

In line with the Beijing Platform for Action and under the guidance of the Viet Nam Women's Union, the Center for Women and Development has been implementing the following activities:

- Setting up a counselling office in 2007 to provide advice on their rights and interests to women survivors of domestic violence and human trafficking and to put them in touch with other service providers. With financial and technical assistance from international donors and Vietnamese partners, the Center for Women and Development opened eight satellite counselling offices in provinces. By 15 October 2014, the Center for Women and Development had provided counselling to nearly 4,000 persons on gender equality, domestic violence, human trafficking, marriage and family, child-rearing skills and women- and children-related laws and policies.
- Setting up two local shelters for women survivors of domestic violence and human trafficking in 2007, which provide a timely and comprehensive support package for women and children survivors of domestic violence and human trafficking. This package includes safe accommodation, medical check-ups and the treatment of traumas and illnesses caused by human trafficking and domestic violence, psychological counselling, training on life skills and domestic violence prevention skills, vocational training and job placement, and community reintegration support. By October 2014, the Peace House Shelters had housed and supported 726 residents (507 women and 219 children).
- Setting up and supporting self-help groups, the members are the women survivors housed in the "peace house shelters".
- Strengthening information, education and communication activities in the community and the media on domestic violence and human trafficking prevention and control.

Vocational training and business development support for women

The Center for Women and Development:

- Organizes vocational training for women on embroidery, sewing, hairdressing and hospitality services, as well as social activities for female workers in industrial zones and young women in the vicinity of Hanoi.
- Organizes training courses for women entrepreneurs on market entry strategies, starting up businesses, management and development, product design improvement and product promotion on the domestic and international markets, as well as national and international seminars on social entrepreneurship. In particular, in a joint effort with the Viet Nam Women's Union, the Center for Women and Development helped to launch the Viet Nam Association for Women Entrepreneurs in October 2014. The Association aims to develop and strengthen the nationwide network of Vietnamese women entrepreneurs in the context of international integration.

Information-sharing

The Center for Women and Development:

- Established a women's information and counselling centre in 2013, with free Internet access, audiovisual equipment and books for women. It organizes various training workshops for women on life skills and soft skills, as well as national and international seminars and conferences on women-related issues and other topics.
- Issues publications relating to the prevention and control of domestic violence affecting women and children.
- Organizes events on the occasion of the Viet Nam Family Day and the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women (25 November). These events bring attention to the rights of women and girls and the prevention of violence within the family and of human trafficking and violence against women and girls, among other issues.

Other support services for women

The Center for Women and Development has set up a kindergarten for children under 6 years of age, where children of women survivors of domestic violence and human trafficking get free services.

Favourable conditions

In implementing the Beijing Platform for Action and its agenda under the guidance of the Viet Nam Women's Union, the Center for Women and Development has benefited from the following favourable conditions:

- Women-related laws, such as the Law on Gender Equality of 2006, the Law on Domestic Violence Prevention and Control of 2007 and the Law on Human Trafficking Prevention and Combat 2011, have created a legal background to promote women's rights, particularly for women in disadvantaged groups.
- The Center's staff are young, committed and enthusiastic. The Center's business activities are sustained and generate income to cover social activities.
- Owing to its effective performance, the Center for Women and Development has gained a good reputation among international and national partners.

Challenges

The Center for Women and Development is facing the following challenges:

- An inadequate understanding by the population of the importance of gender equality and the promotion of women's rights.
- Interventions and support for domestic violence and trafficking survivors are still managed on a pilot basis and are targeted mainly at women without considering men.
- Vocational training and employment creation for women survivors are not yet effective, owing to the low education level of these women. Sustainable community reintegration is hampered by the community's limited awareness and the lack of resources.

Way forward

In 2015 and beyond, the Center for Women and Development will continue to implement the Beijing Platform for Action with priority given to the following activities:

- Joining efforts with the Viet Nam Women's Union to organize an international forum on women, peace and development in 2015.
 - Continuing activities to improve the knowledge and skills of women and girls.
 - Effectively operating "peace house shelters" for women survivors of domestic violence and trafficking.
 - Promoting information, education and communication activities to increase awareness in the communities of domestic violence and human trafficking.
 - Continuing activities to empower women economically, including supporting women entrepreneurs.
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