

Third meeting of the Working Group on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

27-29 Nov. 2011, Doha-Qatar

DAY ONE, the 27th of Nov. 2011

Introduction and development so far by Mu'ayyad Mehyar

Development of the Working Group on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (WRGE WG):

- March 2010: WRGE WG was established following the 5th high-level AEHRD meeting in order to streamline the meeting recommendations.
- May 2010: First WRGE WG meeting: a strategic framework was developed along with a set of prioritized issues:
 1. Conformity of National Law and Practices with International Law
 2. Affirmative Action and Gender Mainstreaming
 3. Education for Gender Equality
 4. Combating Violence against Women
 5. Development of projects and action plans
- February 2011: Second WRGE WG meeting: a project was proposed by the National centre for Human Rights in Jordan to work on violence against women, which was unanimously endorsed by the members of the working group. In the meeting the members concluded an action plan with the following milestones:
 - A draft logframe with identification of outcomes, objectives, outputs, activities and indicators
 - Mapping study on violence against women in legislation and in practice: June 30th 2011
 - Needs assessment: July 30th 2011
 - Identification of target groups: August 5th 2011
 - Identification of trainers: August 5th 2011
 - Design/adapt training content, materials and programmes: October 30th 2011
 - Conclude Memoranda of Understandings (MoUs) with targeted agencies, October 30th 2011
 - Organize a multidisciplinary training workshop: December 30th 2011
 - Pre evaluation of the training content: November 30th 2011
 - Post evaluation of the training content and effect: December 30th 2011
 - National seminar to share best/worst practices: March 30th 2012
 - Regional seminar: November 30th 2012

Most institutions still need to send a report on their project to the AEHRD Secretariat. It is very important to have finished this process soonest and prior to the upcoming regional seminar.

In case of changes of representatives in the WG it is important for these to be communicated with the AEHRD Secretariat and the members of the working group to follow up on the progress of the WG.

Presentation by the National Centre for Human Rights, Ms. Reem Abu Hassan & Anas Saket, Jordan

A presentation was given on the general work of NCHR on women's rights internally, nationally and internationally. These points can be found in Ms. Reem Abu Hassan's PowerPoint presentation.

Presentation of project on Violence against Women 2011-2012

- Overall *objective*: contributing towards limiting violence against women and fostering the role of the NCHR in combating VAW focusing on domestic violence and women with disabilities.
- Expected *outcome*: Strengthening the justice sector's capacity on gender based violence
- The *action plan* was presented.
- *Target groups*: Judges, prosecutors, law enforcements, officials, employees of women's shelters, media representatives, relevant CSOs and psychologist.
- Identification of *trainers* was presented.
- *MOUs* with selected agencies.
- *Aims and structure* of the trainings was presented.

If there is a problem with lack of funding, then create a LFA for donors and budget the program. The Secretariat can provide cover letters stating that the program is part of the AEHRD. There are many donors on women's rights issues.

Important to note lessons learned from each milestone

Presentation by the National Commission for Human Rights, Mr. Jaber, Qatar

The NCHR has sought as to combat violence against women through awareness and education, e.g. workshops:

1. Workshop on CEDAW 11-12 October 2011. Target group: human rights workers and relevant governmental bodies
2. Workshop on gender-based violence in collaboration with UNHCR 25-26 October 2011. Target group: government agencies and relevant national institutions.
3. Participation in a "my work is my right" workshop 24 October 2011 on the right of women to work set up by the Foundation for the Protection of Women and Children. And a seminar on trafficking.

NCHR is currently cooperating with OHCHR on making a questionnaire on women's rights in Qatar, with the aim of identifying public opinion trends in Qatar about the rights contained in CEDAW.

NCHR has begun the preparation for a program to combat violence against women through strengthening the justice system.

Presentation by the Equality Ombudsman, Mr. Jamal Nijim, Sweden

- Presentation of the historical development of women's rights in Sweden
- A study on the legislation on violence against women has been conducted. Following this the Swedish government has made an action plan of 52 points.
- An example of one of these points was provided. The aim was to provide training to the judiciary staff. In the PowerPoint belonging to this presentation a detailed account of the process is described, from identifying the training needs, to development of the training program, implementation and the final evaluation.
- Important lessons: involve different stakeholders throughout the entire process, and it is recommendable to have neutral evaluations of programmes.

The Swedish Equality Ombudsman functions differently from NHRIs. There is a clear cut division between the responsibility of the Equality Ombudsman and other agencies, and the Ombudsman only deals with inequality discrimination, whereas violence against women is the responsibility of public authorities, the judiciary and the police authorities.

DAY TWO, the 28th of Nov. 2011

Presentation by the Human Rights Commission, Dr. Bahija Azzi, Saudi Arabia

A presentation of the recent improvements in the area of women's rights legislation and practice was presented. Due to lack of available data on cases of violence against women, it is difficult to estimate the nature and extent of it. It is thus necessary to create a database to start analyzing relations of causes and effects.

- Needs assessment on how to combat violence against women was done, resulting in needs for:
 - Legislation criminalizing violence against women
 - Creating a culture of prevention of violence against women, e.g. women lack awareness about their rights
 - Treatment centers, family counseling, training and other empowerment programs to protect the family.
- Action plan:
 - Providing training programs for the judiciary
 - Providing courses for shelter staff
 - Conduct a study on violence against women from a legal perspective with reference to national laws and compare with international standards.
 - Provide training programs for media representative in order to raise awareness

Presentation by the National Human Rights Council, Ms. Naima Benwakrim, Morocco

Formal statistics on violence against women was presented and can be found in Naima Benwakrim's PowerPoint presentation.

Measures taken by the government to combat violence against women:

- Modification of the criminal law
- Preparation of draft law to criminalize domestic violence
- Development of a strategy in 2002 to combat violence against women targeting the legislative framework with the aim of developing human and organizational capacities.
- Creation of competent medical centers
- National research on violence against women

Measures taken by NGOs to combat violence against women:

- Conducting research, including creating a database and producing annual reports
- Creation of shelters and centers for legal counseling and support to female victims of violence
- Advocacy and awareness raising programs

Challenges in combating violence against women:

- Absence of official statistical data
- Lack of centers and follow-up assistance to victims of violence
- The criminal law is not based on gender equality and needs comprehensive revisions, e.g. creation of shelters is actually not legal
- Lack of financial resources and human resources with expertise in existing centers

Presentation by the Independent Commission for Human Rights, Mr. Salahaldin Abdalaty, Palestine

A presentation was given on the work of the ICHR and on violence against women in Palestine. These points can be found in Mr. Salahaldin Abdalaty's PowerPoint presentation.

The role of ICHR in combating violence against women:

- Receiving complaints on violence against women, including investigation and follow up.
- Educate and train law enforcement officials and police
- Monitors and issues reports
- Works to amend legislation
- Field visits to e.g. shelters

The ICHR's project:

- Conduction of a survey covering all stakeholders. The study uncovers the achievements in combating violence against women, including the adoption of national policies aimed at reducing violence against women, development of a gender unit within the police and establishment of the National Committee for Combating Violence against Women in 2008 etc.
- Challenges include gender discriminatory laws, cultures which do not recognize women's rights.

The Way Forward: Roundtable Discussion

Regional Conference: The regional conference in November 2012 is the key future activity of WRGE WG. It is important that all participating institutions take note of the project time plan and conclude their projects and collect their experiences prior to it. Suggestion: Regional papers should be collected one month in advance of the seminar, donors should be invited to the conference, and a report with recommendations should be produced and distributed following the conference.

Communication from the secretariat: suggestion of creating a Facebook page, sending reminders of deadlines, create a more interactive webpage.

Reminder: everyone should register on the AEHRD website: www.aehrd.info . Marie Helmstedt will then assist members to create their own profiles on the website.

Award Ceremony to H.E. Dr. Muhyieddeen Touq; Former Commissioner General of the National Centre for Human Rights in Jordan and Former member of the Steering Committee of the AEHRD

On the margins of the working group meeting in Doha-Qatar, **Dr. Ali Al Marri**; the Chairman of the National Human Rights Committee in Qatar and **Mu'ayyad Mehyar**; Programme Manager of the AEHRD, awarded **H.E. Dr. Muhyieddeen Touq** and awarded him a certificate of appreciation in recognition of his invaluable contribution to the AEHRD process and outcomes..