



International Workshop on

**Support Systems for Women Entrepreneurs
in South-East Europe (SEE)**

23 April – 10 May , 2012

in cooperation with

UNECE - United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

The Golda Meir Mount Carmel International Training Center (MCTC), Haifa

MASHAV – Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation, Jerusalem, Israel

ABOUT MASHAV – Israel’s Agency for International Development Cooperation, Israel’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was founded in late 1957, and is responsible for the design, coordination and implementation of the State of Israel’s development cooperation programs.

MASHAV concentrates on human and institutional capacity building by sharing Israel’s own development experience and expertise, imparting know-how and transferring innovative technologies and tested methodologies adaptable to the needs of developing countries.

MASHAV’s approach is to ensure social, economic and environmental sustainable development, joining the international community’s efforts to implement the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

In the event of natural disasters, MASHAV also provides humanitarian assistance and participates in reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts.



ABOUT UNECE The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) is one of five regional commissions of the United Nations. Its major aim is to promote economic integration across its 56 member countries, located in the European Union, non-EU Western and Eastern Europe, South-East Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia and North America. UNECE provides policy-oriented analysis, advice, and capacity-building to member states and cooperates with partner agencies, civil society, and key actors from the private sector.

UNECE works to facilitate international cooperation within and beyond the UNECE region through norms, standards and conventions, as well as monitoring international commitments in a wide array of areas. These range from economic cooperation and integration, energy, environment, housing and land management, to gender, population, statistics, timber, trade, and transport.

UNECE has a long-standing commitment to the promotion of women’s entrepreneurship in South-East Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. In addition to capacity-building workshops for women entrepreneurs on information and communication technologies and support systems organized in cooperation with

ABOUT MCTC - The Golda Meir Mount Carmel International Training Center (MCTC) was established in 1961 to assist in the training of women engaged in community work in the newly emerging states in Africa and Asia.

Since the establishment of MCTC, some 17,500 participants from over 150 countries in Asia, Africa, Europe, Central Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America, Middle East, Oceania and the Caribbean have attended almost 600 training activities and 27 International Conferences for Women Leaders, conducted in Israel. In addition, MCTC conducts between 20 - 30 institutional capacity building programs in partner countries around the world each year, for hundreds more trainees throughout the developing world.

MCTC focuses on: Community Development, Early Childhood Education and Organization and Management of Microenterprises, all with gender as a cross-cutting issue. In each training program there are up to 30 women and men from 10 to 27 countries. Usually two workshops are conducted concurrently in different languages (English, French, Spanish, Russian or Arabic).

The Center is located on Mount Carmel in Haifa. The building consists of living accommodation, classrooms, recreation and dining facilities. A library specializing in education, social sciences and humanities, and a computer laboratory with internet access serve the participants.

MCTC enjoys the active cooperation of a number of international organizations, governmental and non-governmental organizations and development authorities.

MASHAV and MCTC, activities include research assessing the business environment for women entrepreneurs and sub-regional concern, such as the lack of networking opportunities, difficult access to credit and lack of specific knowledge and skills. UNECE co-organized the First Forum for South East European Women Entrepreneurs in cooperation with the Regional Cooperation Council and the Government of Turkey in Istanbul in September 2010. Region-wide fora for Women Entrepreneurs were organized in 2001 and 2003 and the Third Forum is planned for 2012. The promotion of women’s entrepreneurship is supported by the Working Group on Gender and Economy within the United Nations Special Program for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA). The group works to raise awareness on gender and economy issues, exchange good practices in mainstreaming gender into economic policies, develop pilot projects in selected areas and promote cross-sectional linkages and synergies with other relevant areas of SPECA activities such as statistics, trade and information.

BACKGROUND

The effects of the financial crisis which started in the USA in 2007 and spread to the European economies have already been observed in many areas, spreading through all economic agents and affecting their behaviour. Most of all, however, the crisis affected micro – enterprises and SMEs, as they have relied mostly on domestic credit markets. At the same time, these enterprises are the backbone of the Balkan economies. But the crisis is also an opportunity for restructuring and change. It is a survival strategy for business women in the region.¹

In the countries of South-East Europe, which aspire to become part of the EU in the coming years, women entrepreneurs are still an untapped source of business and job creation. A substantial gap exists between male and female entrepreneurship. A renewed emphasis in current European Commission policies for a more entrepreneurial Europe and for women's entrepreneurship as a priority pillar within the recently enacted European Small Business Act (SBA), ensuring policy alignment, monitoring systems and supporting frameworks for women's entrepreneurship, requires a concerted commitment by all pre-accession countries to bring forward and ensure improvements in women's employment and participation in the economy.²

In April 2010, independent experts in women's entrepreneurship from all pre-accession countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Kosovo, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey) gathered in Istanbul and developed four indicators considered as significant for a more strategic development of women's enterprises in the region. These indicators are: policy and data for women's entrepreneurship, training for women's entrepreneurship, improved access to finance for women entrepreneurs, networking and good practice.³

At the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) Summit in September 2010, countries committed themselves to "promoting small and medium-sized enterprises through initiatives such as skills enhancement and technical training programmes, vocational training and entrepreneurial skills development" as well as "the promotion of financial services (...) for micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises."⁴

In the light of on-going economic crisis, as economies in South-East Europe continue to suffer from persistent slow-down due to spillover effects of sluggish trade and financial flows it is even more important that governments of these countries and the international community work together to respond to the main barriers and therefore foster women's entrepreneurial potential. The current situation calls for special measures and for an increase in donor support both in terms of technical assistance, transferring knowledge, facilitating access to information and networking, the organization of special credit programs targeting female-owned or led SMEs as well as financial assistance to develop targeted projects⁵.

It is in this framework that the present international workshop on "**Support Systems for Women Entrepreneurs In South-East Europe (SEE)**" is organized in cooperation with UNECE by the Golda Meir Mount Carmel International Training Center (MCTC), operating on behalf of MASHAV and supported by the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In recent years, MCTC in cooperation with UNECE has organized 12 workshops in Israel for women from former Soviet Union countries, as well as several on the spot courses in the region.

¹ Malinka Koparanova, "Women's entrepreneurship development in South-East Europe: Overview and challenges", UNECE, November, 2011

² Mirlinda Kusari Purrini, "Economic Empowerment of Rural Women through Enterprise Development in Post-Conflict Settings," Expert Group Meeting, Enabling rural women's economic empowerment: institutions, opportunities and participation, Accra, September 2011, p.1

³ Ibid, p.2

⁴ A/65/L.1, Para 70 (d) and (h)

⁵ Malinka Koparanova, "Women's entrepreneurship development in South-East Europe: Overview and challenges", UNECE, November, 2011

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROGRAM

Micro and small enterprises, many of which are run by women, are recognized as an important tool to create new opportunities and to generate additional sources of income. There is a recognized need for support tools and support systems that can give a holistic package to a woman who wants or sometimes is forced to find some alternative income by her starting own business.

Micro-enterprises are more flexible and adaptable to rapid changes than bigger companies. However, small-scale entrepreneurs, especially at the early stage of their development, often lack the necessary information and tools needed for running their businesses. They are also in need of updated data about the market and about the threats and opportunities around them. Planners have thus become aware of the need to enhance knowledge and managerial skills to ensure the success and survival of new small business ventures and of the importance of creating appropriate frameworks that can offer support, guidance, and managerial tools to those willing to take the risk of entrepreneurship.

Israel has been engaged in supporting small businesses for over two decades and its professional centers - Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs) and Technological Incubators - provide a wide range of services to entrepreneurs and business owners.

MCTC has been sharing the Israeli experience with participants from all over the world and has successfully cooperated in entrepreneurial training and in the establishment of business support centers in former participants' countries. It is within this framework that the present workshop is offered.

OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of the proposed workshop, the participants will have:

- exchanged know - how on different tools for fostering women's entrepreneurial potential
- widened their knowledge of support systems for small-scale entrepreneurs as a tool for regional and local development
- discussed the position of women entrepreneurs at times of rapid global change and outlined best practices
- presented a practical proposal for supporting women to start or improve a business in their own settings

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

The workshop is designed for 26 – 30 participants working in governmental institutions and SME support agencies, NGOs dealing with small business support and development and women's business associations. Outstanding individual entrepreneurs should also apply.

Candidates are expected to have a background of relevant studies in economics, business administration, regional planning, industrial management, or related subjects, with a minimum of five years of work experience. Candidates working in rural areas and in remote regions of a country are encouraged to apply.

A good command of English is required.

WORKSHOP PROCEDURE

Participants reside at MCTC and the studies are intensive. Five days a week are normally devoted to classroom study and observation visits. Saturday and Sunday will be spent on assignments or on excursions to places of historical, religious or general interest. The themes will be presented in the form of lectures and workshops, by lecturers from the academic world and by those with experience in the private and institutional sectors. A special practical module on organizing and running a business will be part of the program.



PROGRAM OF STUDIES

Contents

- Marketing strategies for small businesses in a changing environment
- Entrepreneurial Training – Business Laboratories
- Women in business networking
- Financial schemes for small scale entrepreneurs
- Women in small businesses - psychological obstacles
- Support systems in Israel
- Preparation of a project proposal

Study Visits

Participants will have the opportunity to meet Israeli women entrepreneurs in different settings and to visit Development Centers and other institutions involved in supporting microenterprise development.

Among them:

- Small Business Development Centers
- Technology Incubators
- Women's enterprises

Exchange of Professional Experiences

An important aspect of the Workshop is the exchange of experiences amongst its participants and several sessions will be devoted to this purpose. The rich knowledge brought by students from different countries is a very valuable contribution both to the proceedings and to their future development.

Final Assignment

At the end of the Workshop, participants will present to the plenum a practical project proposal or innovative idea related to the subject matter that could be implemented in their own settings.

CERTIFICATE

Upon completion of the Workshop the graduates will receive a certificate confirming their attendance and active participation.

APPLICATION

Application forms may be downloaded from MASHAV's website (<http://mashav.mfa.gov.il/mfm/Data/201780.pdf>), or obtained from Israeli Diplomatic and/or Consular Representatives serving the applicant's country. All forms must be returned to the Israeli Diplomatic and/or Consular Representatives who will forward them to us.

The completed applications for admission to the Workshop must be received at MCTC in Haifa, as soon as possible but **not later than March 1st, 2012.**

ITEMS COVERED BY THE SCHOLARSHIP

- **Studies:** Lectures, group and individual tutoring, field visits, written study material and use of reference library.
- **Accommodation:** - two students to a room - linen, hot water, heating
- **Full Board**
- **Cultural and Social Activities**
- **Excursions to historical and religious sites**

Health Services

Medical insurance covers medical services and hospitalization in case of emergency and accident. It does not cover the treatment of chronic or serious diseases, specific medications taken by the participant on a regular basis, dental care, eyeglasses, or the period of pregnancy. Participants using specific medications on a regular basis must bring sufficient quantities for the duration of their stay.

Health forms must be completed and signed by a physician. If the trainee's health deteriorates due to a chronic ailment or serious disease not described on the form, he/she will be held responsible for all medical and other expenses incurred in treatment in Israel. Furthermore, the Center will not be obliged to retain the trainee until the end of the workshop.

The Health Authorities recommend that visitors to Israel make sure they have been inoculated against tetanus in the last ten years.

Miscellaneous - Daily papers and periodicals. - Laundry facilities on the premises.

Participants are responsible for all other expenses.

N.B. The scholarship does not cover flight tickets to and from Israel.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Weather - The workshop will take place in spring, when temperatures may range from 15° C to 25° C.

Clothing

Participants are advised to bring warm and light clothing and comfortable low-heeled shoes for excursions and study visits.

Passport and Visa

Passports must be valid for the period of the workshop and include an entry visa into Israel. Your visa will be issued by the Israeli representative serving your country. Two additional passport-size photographs are also required for various documents.

Booking

The date and flight number of the booking to Israel must be confirmed to assure arrival before the opening of the Workshop on April 23rd, 2012 and departure no later than the day after May 10th, 2012. Rerouting is entirely at the participants' expense.

Luggage - Many airline companies allow only 20Kg. (44 lb.) of luggage. There is an extra charge for overweight.

Personal Insurance

Participants are advised to insure any valuable personal belongings, since MCTC takes no responsibility for them.

Foreign Exchange All the major currencies are exchangeable in Israel.

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