



IX CEMOFPS CONFERENCE
"The Arab Spring: The Post-2015 Agenda and
the Spanish Cooperation for Development"

13/02/2014

Mona NUSEIBEH

Programme Support Consultant for UN Women oPt. Jerusalem

Good morning,

I will start by telling you a bit about UN women. We've been working here, well we started working as UNIFEL since 1997 and we continue working here as UN Women. We work on 5 main strategic goals which are: governance and humanitarian actions, women political and economic security and rights, ending violence against women and financing for gender equality. Today we are going to talk about the MDG Fund, a program which began in 2009 and ended in 2013 and was funded by the government of Spain. What's special about the MDG Program? They were unique, they were the first joint program in the Palestinian Territory and they had special approach of having local ownership and they involved 8 UN agencies in decision making and 5 ministries. It got a bit complicated as you can imagine, but the program completed and they had a lot of success stories, and this is why we are discussing them today.

The program worked on three levels and had a holistic approach a bottom up human right approach and a result based approach. They worked on the grass roots civil society and policy levels. The MDG are the millennium development goals which were decided by the whole world, all the members of the UN to meet the needs of poorest by the year 2015. The MDG trust fund was an initiative by the UN and the Spanish government to achieve these goals. The program address goals number one and three, which are eradicating extreme hunger and poverty and promote gender equality and women empowerment and cultural and development.

There were three outcomes in both programs. UN Women worked on all three outcomes. The outputs of the activities where divided between the UN agencies where

they had to implement and coordinate with the relevant counterparts and stake holders as well as with each other and civil society. So at UN Women we believe that for women to be actually empowered they need three things. They have to be independent from violence against women, they have to have economic independence or empowerment. And in order to be politically active they have to have those two and to contribute to each other. Working on all these three outcomes, provided the MDG with a holistic approach that can have a real action and a real impact on empowerment for women.

I am going to talk a bit about the outcomes and going to give an example on success stories.

The first outcome was the largest outcome fighting gender based violence. It had different levels and this why it had success. I am going to give you an example of a gender based national strategy to combat violence against women which was done by the Ministry of Social Affairs in support of UN women. We embedded an actual UN women staff member, a gender expert in the Ministry for the purpose of institutionalization and we supported them in creating the first participatory gender based violence strategy to come against violence against women. It follows the theory of change, where you define the long term goal the short term goals and the intermediate term goals in order to achieve your goals. We started to use a bottom up participatory approach to address real issues. It involved experts, Ministries, even victims of violence, civil society, women's organizations, there were many challenges and difficulties of course. The bigger picture like Jesus repeat all the challenges that we face here but specifically for this activity the capacity of the ministry of women's affair staff had to be built in order for them to contribute or to implement the strategy and it was also difficult to coordinate with all the involved people in the formulation of the strategy because you can't exclude anyone when you're preparing a national strategy. But in the end, we had a very good output: the strategy was endorsed by the Cabinet of Ministres and adopted by 5 lines ministries who included it in their work plan and budget because without budget you can't implement anything. The ministries were Minister of Education, Minister of Health, Minister of Interior, Minister of Justice and Minister of of Social Affairs.

When it comes to democratization and political participation we worked with women's technical affairs committee on a number of activities. Basically, at the grassroots organizations to increase women's participation, strengthen their presence and to voice woman's needs, specifically at the local councils level. As you can see women are present in may councils and the percentage of women in councils has been increasing over the last years. Now it is above the quota which is 20%. What we did

within the MDG, once the quota was applied during the 2012 - 2013 elections and they were towards the ending phase but still active, we helped women to run for elections and supported them as much as we could and a lot of them were actually able to become members of the local councils.

I am going to give you an example of a success story: Siham Abourrob was one of the beneficiaries of the political participation and empowerment project she received training on gender equality and women's right, international normative conventions, civic work, lobbying, advocacy as well as public actions.

I am going to quote Siham: "the program helped in refining my skills, providing me with information specifically the specialized training in institutionalisation of gender, this helped me in the formulation of strategy in the organization allowed me to see the need of organization to service all segments of the society and not being confined to women."

The organization she is referred to here is the organization that she actually founded in Jarmun and despite the many challenges that she faced she was able through the MDG to network with other organizations and to get the necessary training for all the members of the organizations. In addition to this, Siham was determined to take part in the decision making in her village which is a very small village close to Jenin. During the last elections the local government strategy was to integrate few villages together to have one local council representing them all. So seven of these villages were put together to create Burj abi Amel council, and of course when you merge limited seats lots of complications, men are competing for the seats and it was very difficult for women to be involved and the process excluded and marginalized women. But with the support of the program we helped her to continue and she was convinced in the need to continue and for the women to be represented in the local council. So she run in the election, she persevered and she became a member.

In the end Siham says: "The obstacles I faced included financial issues, customs, and society refusal of the presence of women in the political sphere especially during the merging of the local councils where the competition between men in these seven villages was severe. In the end I was able to join and become a member while still some male members still not accepting me I insist on voicing my opinion and insist in taking part in the decision making despite the attempts to exclude me."

The third outcome: increase women's economic empowerment. We also had a holistic approach and used the theory of change. I am going to give an example of one of our beneficiaries as well as a success story of Aisha Dweka who participated in MDG

training on the development of marketable and traditional Palestinian crafts that are modernized in order for them to be marketable with very high quality control, to ensure that they are sold anywhere in the world with international standards. So the training was on home appliances clothing and accessories. Through the MDG she also had the chance to produce through the networking although it is not part of the project, she had the chance to design a hotel room with all accessories in a hotel in Nablus. I suggest that you visit it is very nice. Although Aisha did not receive a grant from the program, we gave grants to a lot of people but the amount was limited, and she did not get to receive a grant. She still persisted and she continued working and she was able to establish her own business. She does silver accessories and traditional Palestinian embroideries and fabric, it is being sold in Palestine and she also participated in exhibitions in the USA and Canada. Not only she was able to network through the program, but she was able to get a job in one of the projects of another UN agency, where she is responsible for the quality control of the products they make which are educational toys for children which have Palestinian fabric and embroideries into them. Everyone is proud of her and can talk about how great she is and how much she is contributing to the success of the project.

The MDG also contributed a lot of other things such as documenting lessons learned and best practices. They were crosscutting and they promoted synergies across other units of UN women that also benefited from the UN MDG and strengthened the relationship among UN agencies and ministries when working together, and they focused on sustainability through local ownership and civil society organizations and ministries who continue to work with the beneficiaries until today.

At UN Women we have a project that is called the "Spring Forward Program". It is based on the MDG and it continues working on the economic and political outcomes in the wake of the Arab spring. But the program only started recently, so we don't have success stories to tell yet, but soon we will have some. And also for the post- 2015 framework which the UN is working on and it is based on the MDG, of course, it's still in progress so we don't have anything concrete, but we are looking forward to seeing something soon.

Thank you.