

MCTC's Experience in Entrepreneurial Training

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The Golda Meir Mount Carmel International Training Center (MCTC) was founded in Haifa in 1961 by MASHAV, the Center for International Cooperation of the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, within the framework of its international development work, to put gender issues on the international agenda. Two visionary women were behind the Center's establishment: a past Prime Minister of Israel, Golda Meir, and MCTC's founding director, Mina Ben-Zvi, whose progressive views on the need for the advancement of the status of women were far ahead of their time.

Over the years, MCTC has expanded its activities to Latin America, the Mediterranean Region and the transitional societies of Central and Eastern Europe. It has nevertheless maintained its original emphasis on Human Resource Development by training women towards sustainable development. To date over 11,000 participants from 147 countries have attended courses, workshops and seminars at MCTC and thousands more have taken part in On-the-Spot courses in the cooperating countries. Within the framework of its activities, MCTC holds biennial International Seminars for Women Leaders (*see MASHAV News*). These seminars provide a forum for dialogue between women at policy decision level, heads of women's organizations and representatives of international aid agencies. Women are encouraged to overcome culturally-rooted constraints, to call for greater government/NGO collaboration on gender and development issues and to create a more favorable environment for women's access to training, credit, marketing networks and technology.

Microenterprise Programs

One of MCTC's main training spheres focuses on Microenterprise Development, with an emphasis on gender issues and the contribution of women to development. Improving the quality of life of poor rural and marginal urban communities by providing tools for starting or expanding businesses is the aim of this training. By addressing grassroots personnel as well as administrative and planning level professionals involved in supporting small-scale entrepreneurs, MCTC training contributes to poverty alleviation in deprived areas of the developing world.

Special emphasis is placed on training programs for women. Starting small businesses is frequently the only solution for women whose access to the job market has been denied by the social or economic environment. Creating their own microenterprises thus becomes a tool of self-empowerment for women, offering a way of achieving economic independence and sometimes constituting the only option for survival.

Methodology

MCTC's approach imparts knowledge through hands-on experience. Trainees work together in interdisciplinary groups and are actively involved in practical exercises in planning, preparing and presenting final project proposals that will be applicable in their own settings. In this way, potential entrepreneurs acquire a close-to-reality view of what establishing and running a small business is all about, while participants who are counselors receive an authentic feel of what their clients experience.



Most Challenging and Successful Parts of the Curriculum

Among MCTC's greatest challenges is how to transfer business concepts such as feasibility study, market survey, division of labour, production planning and control, sales and promotion, business plans, etc. in a way that is understandable and can be immediately put into practice by trainees at different levels, with or without an entrepreneurial background.

In this regard, MCTC is proud of its success. Below we present some examples that illustrate the impact of training activities held by MASHAV/MCTC in Israel and in developing countries on the target populations at the regional and national levels. It should be noted that women's empowerment, a major concern of MASHAV/MCTC, is invariably a by-product of the various contributions to socio-economic development which are detailed below.

AFRICA

West African Countries

In coordination with the Human Resources and Poverty Division of the Economic Development Institute of the World Bank, MCTC has conducted courses at the Mount Carmel Center on Income Generation and Management of Microenterprises, including important modules on Grassroots Training Management (GMT). These courses train trainers to work with semi-literate and illiterate women to help them manage projects, groups and businesses more efficiently and profitably.

MCTC has cooperated with Winrock International and UNESCO since 1997, to develop the capacity of national women's organizations and to train local women trainers to transfer knowledge and skills to rural women's groups. Eighty-two women and seventeen men participated in workshops held in the Ivory Coast, Senegal and Mali. The training emphasizes organizational development and project planning skills and is then further strengthened by inviting workshop graduates to the full MCTC eight-week course on 'Community Development and Management of Microenterprises Projects'.

Kenya

In 1994 and 1998, MCTC On-the-Spot training courses were held on Organization and Management of Income generating Projects for the Coast Development Authority (responsible for the development of Kenya's coastal province of some 3million people). The CDA has now built up a pool of over 40 Israeli-

trained graduates in development work, thereby benefiting the whole coastal province.

Similar training courses were conducted in 1995 and 1996 by MCTC for the Kenya Institute of Management, the largest management training body in Kenya. The Institute continues to pass on its Israeli-gained knowledge and techniques in its own ongoing business training courses throughout Kenya. An individual example is Jacinta Marie Makokha who took part in the 1986 MCTC course on Organization and Management of Income Generating Projects. In her work as Program Officer for Gender and Development for the Friedrich Ebert Foundation she is currently coordinating a program with the Ministry of Local Government which covers eight Local Authorities and reaches more than 240 women's groups, each with at least 20 women. This program is to be expanded to other local authorities. Speaking at an International Symposium on "The Impact of Women's Training on Microenterprise Development", held at MCTC in June, 2001, Jacinta said that "Apart from the professional input we got, we also learned that the impact of women's training starts at the personal level. ...It's very difficult to start talking about liberating other people when you yourself are struggling."

Malawi

Cooperation with Malawi illustrates the effectiveness of creating a critical mass of persons trained in the same approach, so that the introduction of new directions and techniques has a greater chance of taking root. For example, in 1982, Esnat Kalyati, attended the MCTC Women Leader's Seminar. As Principal Secretary at the Ministry of Community Services Development, she was instrumental in nominating some 35 participants who attended courses at MCTC between the years 1982 to 1995. These people have since been effective in organizing women's groups and promoting income generating projects.

ASIA

India

In 1998 an On-the-Spot course on Women and Entrepreneurship was organized at the request of the Agency for Rural Development, a community development agency which works in some 120 villages, with a total direct and indirect target population of around half a million people. The Minister of Social Welfare of Tamil Nadu State (pop. 70 million) came into contact with this Agency for the first time as a result of the



MCTC training. Impressed by the work of the Agency and with the development of knowledge and skills being acquired by the course participants, she offered government backing to the Agency and loans and grants for the application of the projects planned by the trainees.

A repeat entrepreneurship development course has been carried out in Tamil Nadu State for the Agency, in conjunction with a Training Resource Center for nearly 300 NGOs. The Project Manager of the Center – an outstanding graduate of the 1998 MCTC On-the-Spot course – is responsible for over 700 self-help women's groups.

Nepal

Former participants who are today in a position to influence the changes being made in promoting entrepreneurship in remote regions, have been instrumental in starting small scale businesses at grassroots level. As a result, both professional and local women leaders are active in the non-formal and private sector to help advance women in rural areas.

LATIN AMERICA

Argentina

Support for microenterprises has been an ongoing activity in Israel in the last decade (*see article on page 22*). MCTC has been sharing its experience with Argentina's women since 1993, when members of the Chamber of Women for SMEs participated in a course on Management of Microenterprises in Israel. This nationwide organization has trained women and men all over the country in 24 courses, based on the knowledge acquired in Israel. As a result of these activities, the Israeli team who organized the OTS courses has seen the emergence of many small businesses.

MCTC's activity in the region culminated in a project proposal for the establishment of a Gender Oriented Small Business Development Center, prepared by 25 professionals from the Cordoba area participating in the course (1999). This Center supports entrepreneurs, providing training, consultation and guidance in the critical first steps of starting and running a microenterprise. The project has been presented as a model by Elisa de Zlauvinen and Silvia Priotti (MCTC alumni, in charge of the Center), in Peru, Panama, Ecuador, Buenos Aires-Argentina and in Israel at the International Seminar. In 2003 the project was given a "best practice award" by the Vice President of Argentina.

Mexico

An important part of the program of The Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare in the State of Veracruz is the promotion of self-employment. Until 1995, when Ms. Martha Mendoza Parissi, Director of the Employment Division, participated in a course on Management of Microenterprises in the Community at MCTC, the training given by the scheme consisted only of the technical part (baking, sewing, etc.). A module on Management of Microenterprises was added, as a result of which more than 30% of the women have started their own businesses.

Ecuador

In collaboration with the World Bank and the Young Americas Business Trust (YABT) of the Organization of American States, regional courses for encouraging entrepreneurship at school level have been conducted by MCTC since 2002 (*See article on page 16*). Hundreds of high school teachers from all over Ecuador have been trained in management of microenterprises with the purpose of transferring this knowledge to their pupils. The idea behind this project, supported by the Ministry of Trade and Industry of Ecuador, is to help alleviate poverty by empowering teenagers to be self-sufficient after leaving school, especially at times when employment opportunities are dwindling. A past-participant in a 1994 workshop on Women and Microenterprises is now President of the NGO, Fuden, based in Quito. Fuden provides training, counseling and financial support for over 500 women entrepreneurs on low incomes, from four different provinces in Ecuador. Many of its clients are young urban women from ethnic minorities. In addition to the President, two more MCTC past-participants work for this organization which has international support.

Costa Rica

More than 200 women were trained on leadership and self-help strategies all over the country in cooperation with the Ministry of Women's Affairs in the years 2000 and 2001.

As a result of the first series of seminars in July 2000, a former participant opened her own shop in a suburb of San Jose (and is opening a second one), and a group of women in Liberia (in the East of the country) has opened typical food restaurants. Both expressed the fact that the training had given them courage and tools to dare start.

MCTC is pleased to collaborate with international development organizations such as the World Bank, Winrock International, UNDP, UNESCO, ILO, IDB and others, sharing experiences and contributing to the enhancement of women's involvement in the development process through appropriate training. For example, in the 2001 UNCTAD publication on Women Entrepreneurs in Least Developed Countries, the authors indicate women's limited access to business development services to help them overcome, or at least complement, their insufficient business skills. In this context, MCTC is committed to continuing to empower women and strengthen their contribution to their communities.

