

WEO holds the Hotline Stakeholder's Seminar



On March 28th of March, WEO sponsored the Hotline Project stakeholder's seminar in cooperation with Landsorganisationen af Kvinde Krisecentre (LOKK), the Center for Women Equality (CWE) and the Jordanian Women Union (JWU). The purpose of the stakeholder seminar was to bring all project stakeholders together and discuss the progress of the Hotline Project.



The place for the venue was the Chwarchara Hotel in Erbil, Iraq. The stakeholders' seminar gathered the members of the Kurdish Parliament, government, international and local NGO's, media and civil society in presenting the progress and results from the hotline project. Ms. Suzan Aref, Director of WEO opened the ceremony by welcoming participants and thanking all involved in supporting the event. Mrs. Bayan Saleh, Chairman for the Center for Women Equality presented the work of her organization and how she had the idea about starting a hotline for women victims of violence in Kurdistan.



There were many VIP attendances, Mr. Petter Ølberg the Ambassador of Norway visited the seminar, and many representatives from Parliament, ministries including the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Endowment and Religious Affairs, the Ministry of Interior (Directorate of Violence Against Women), local and international NGO's like the International Rescue Committee and the media.

The seminar continued with a presentation from Ms. Suzan Aref, director of the WEO. In her presentation, she gave an introduction of the hotline project, discussed statistics on violence against women in Erbil and the need for the hotline in Kurdistan. She described the implementation of the hotline project, which included awareness sessions, the legal mobile clinic that provides the services of a lawyer, social worker and a psychologist. The project also looks to create a network that include stakeholders such as the parliament, government, NGO's, lawyers, doctors, judges, detectives, doctors, Imams in order to exchange ideas and experience that will help strengthen the women issues.



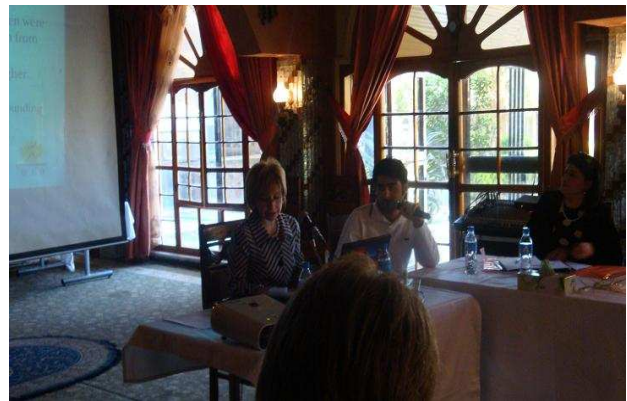
Mette Volsing and Lis Vahlun from LOKK Organization presented the history of how shelters started in Denmark and how they operate. The Danish shelters were established on a voluntary basis during the late seventies and the early eighties all over the country. In Denmark, they have 40 shelters with room for 300 women and their children. Each year 2.000 women and the same amount of children are staying in a shelter. The average stay is 40 days but some women are staying much longer. The single women and her children can stay at the shelter for free or paying a symbolic amount.

The main part of the budget is publicly funded. Besides providing a safe place to stay for women; another core service provided is empowerment of the women. This is done through talks with the shelter workers about the women's actual situation, about being a victim of domestic violence and about her

strengths and desires. These talks are taken individual and in groups and the whole idea is, that the women satiating at the same time support each other.

A very important part of the shelter work is focusing on the children. They suffer from growing up in families with domestic violence and they can be seriously harmed mentally and socially even if they are not beaten themselves. Most shelters have specially educated staff members to focus on the children and help them to overcome the situation. Lately, LOKK published a book about the methods used in this work. The presentation was followed by questions and answers by the audience and a discussion of ideas and strategies that could be implemented to improve the hotline project in Kurdistan. Participants showed concern about a variety of issues such as cultural differences between shelters in Denmark and Kurdistan, security and location of the shelter. Ms. Volsing from LOKK explained that they work in close cooperation with the police and that within minutes, the police would be in the shelter if there was a security issue. The other main difference is that in Kurdistan, due to risk posed to the women in Kurdistan, they are not allowed to go out of the shelter and the shelter is under constant surveillance by the police while in Denmark, this is not the case and is a requirement that women are allowed to go outside.

At the end Ms. Suzan concentrated on her suggestion for opening a non-governmental Shelter in Erbil, there is only one governed shelter which does not cover the need for women, and Aref insisted to pressure on ministries including the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and the Parliament to help for working on it as soon as possible.



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Also on 30-31 there was a workshop in the WEO hall, the attendees was from the Shelter and discuss the way to deal with the cases and about the listening centers for women cases, the attendees were the same, the Danish delegation with the Jordanian Women Union, Ms. Bahar from the Shelter and Ms. Bayan Saleh from the Center for Women Equality.



Through the workshop, they worked on two of the WEO cases and made a play to show how to deal with the cases, and in the end the attendances just criticized and offered suggestions on how to handle the cases to offer the best advice for the victims.

At the end the team decided to offer a one-Day training course about role playing (how to deal with the cases) for each Women Empowerment and the Shelter staff by the Jordanian Women Union.