The Center for Research on Disabilities and the Employment of Special Populations

The Program for Socio-Economic Empowerment of Women at the Mahut Center in Haifa and Kol Ha-Isha in Jerusalem

Dalia Mandler ♦ Denise Naon ♦ Judith King

The study was initiated by JDC-TEVET and funded with its assistance.
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Executive Summary

Background
Research findings and field experience have shown that suitable programming may help women from vulnerable groups participate in the labor market to a greater extent and develop financial independence. The Program for Socio-Economic Empowerment of Women was designed to advance women from vulnerable groups towards financial independence, addressing the poorly educated, mothers of small children (whether married or single), new immigrants, ultra-Orthodox and Arab women.

The program was developed by TEVET in partnership with Kol Ha-Isha in Jerusalem and the Mahut Center in Haifa, as part of TEVET's programs for the promotion of employment among vulnerable populations out of the labor market for long stretches of time. It was implemented with TEVET's professional support and funded jointly by TEVET, participating associations, local authorities and other partners from 2006 to 2009.

The program was designed on the basis of JDC's Eshet Hayil program, which rests on the idea that integration into the labor force is a multi-stage, long-term process that should be gradual and assisted. The program methods are group work through workshops, lectures and mentoring sessions, as well as individualized, providing support through all stages.

The Mahut Center in Haifa and Kol Ha-Isha in Jerusalem are two centers implemented by and for women, and focusing on assisting and empowering women socio-economically. The centers, experienced in working with diverse populations of women who have found it difficult to integrate into the labor market, have developed unique methods of empowerment. Adopting an overall approach to women's needs, they offer two-track training solutions, for salaried jobs and business entrepreneurship respectively, supporting the women through the stages of job search, employment integration and job transitions.

Participants on both tracks are exposed to content aimed at reinforcing self-confidence about finding work or starting a business, and to practical lessons to ease their integration into the workforce. The job track imparts such skills as CV writing, interview competency, searching databases of jobs, as well as auxiliary tools such as time management, accepting authority and teamwork. An additional component of the job track is an employment-oriented basic computer course. The underlying assumption is that participation in this course enhances one's self-confidence and self-image, increasing the chances of finding work. Furthermore, as part of the program, a number of participants are permitted to apply for stipends for professional training. The business track equips participants with practical "start-up" tools, such as developing a clientele, formulating a business idea, preparing a business plan, managing finances and working with banks.
Towards the close of 2007, TEVET asked the Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute to examine the implementation and operation of the program in the light of its explicit goals; the extent to which participants found good jobs; and whether the implementation of the program yielded an intervention model applicable to other settings in Israel. The study was conducted in 2008-09.

This report presents the findings on the program as implemented from July 2006 to June 2009 at the two women’s empowerment centers: Mahut in Haifa and Kol Ha-Isha in Jerusalem, with the funding of TEVET in partnership with implementing organizations, local authorities and others.

**Study Goals**

To examine:

- How the program was implemented and operated at the two centers, in the light of its goals
- The employment status of participants two years after joining the program (hereafter, "entry"):
  - The rate of integration into employment and the quality of work obtained
  - Participant characteristics: those who found work versus those who did not, and the reasons for the latter
- The assessment of participants of the program’s contribution to their self-confidence and employment integration, and the needs for additional assistance
- The assessment of implementers and working partners at municipal agencies of how the various program components were implemented and whether they were beneficial.

Every study goal was examined by a different method according to the time of measurement, the research tools and the data sources:

- **The implementation** was examined in the light of TEVET's measures (as elaborated below) and by comparing the two centers some 18 months after the program began in January-March 2008. The data, updated at the end of three years, were collected in semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with the director and coordinating staff at each center. In total, 20 women on staff were interviewed.

- **The changes in employment status** were investigated via:
  - *Telephone interviews* with participants some 18 to 24 months after entry, in January-August 2009. Out of 187 participants after two years in the program, 83% (155) were interviewed): 100 at Mahut in Haifa and 55 at Kol Ha-Isha in Jerusalem; 6% failed to be located, and 11% refused to take part in the study.
  - *Comparison group:* To estimate the program impact on the change in the employment status of participants, a group of women were drawn from the 2005-07 Labor Force Survey of the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) who, in socio-demographic characteristics and employment backgrounds, were similar to the women in program. The women’s employment status was checked 15 months after entry into the program or following the first interview of the CBS Labor Force Survey, as the case may be. At the first stage, only non-employed women interested in working were chosen for the two groups.
Subsequently, each program participant was matched with a woman of similar characteristics in the comparison group, by means of the Nearest Neighbor method. This method identifies the woman in the comparison group who is most similar to a participant of the program according to selected characteristics.

◆ The intervention model was examined through:
  - A discussion group with the participation of most staff members from both centers and TEVET program directors to learn about the components of the model and the extent of their contribution to the success of participants
  - Interviews with colleagues at municipal agencies: in Jerusalem and Haifa, there were also 19 interviews with professional women who worked closely with the program and were well acquainted with the centers. The interviews examined the professionalism of program staff, the quality of the program and its benefit to participants.

Background Characteristics of Participants
Socio-Demographic Characteristics

◆ Age: Some two-thirds of the women were 40-59 years old, an age deemed "difficult for job placement." The remaining third were aged 30-39.

◆ Family status: Nearly all the participants (92%) were mothers, some 41% of them were single parents: the proportion of single mothers at Mahut was prominent – 47% versus 31% at Kol Ha-Isha.

◆ Number of children: 52% of the participants (72% at Kol Ha-Isha and 40% at Mahut) had at least three children.

◆ Religion: Nearly all the participants (93%) were Jewish, by their own definition.

◆ Number of years in Israel: Nearly all the participants (84%) were longstanding Israelis, the rest had immigrated to Israel since 1990.

◆ Type of Dwelling: 61% owned their apartments or lived in apartments owned by their spouses versus 77% of all longstanding Israeli women (CBS, Income Survey, 2005b); 33% lived in rented apartments.

◆ State of health and disabilities: Poor health and physical/mental disabilities pose a barrier to finding work. Eighty-one percent reported that their health was generally very good (33%) or good (48%). Twenty-seven percent reported having a physical disability that affected their fitness for work. Of those who reported good health, 18% had a physical disability versus 67% of those reporting poor health.

Education and Professional Background
The potential to integrate into the labor market depends largely on the human capital of the participants, e.g., education, Hebrew and English proficiency, profession, type of occupation and professional experience.

◆ Education: Thirty-four percent of the participants at Mahut (37%) and Kol Ha-Isha (29%) had no matriculation diploma; 66% had at least a matriculation diploma; 21% – had only a
matriculation diploma, 26% – a post-high-school vocational certificate, and 19% – an academic degree. At Kol Ha-Isha, where most of the women were ultra-orthodox, a prominent percentage (42%) had a post-high-school vocational certificate from teacher training colleges.

♦ **Command of simple Hebrew:** Based on a measure of seven simple Hebrew skills, 96% of the participants rated their command of simple Hebrew as very good (86%) or good (10%).

♦ **Comprehension of English instructions:** A relatively low percentage of participants rated their comprehension of English instructions for the use of equipment as very good or good – 40%. At Kol Ha-Isha, the rate was 31% versus 45% at Mahut.

♦ **Professional background prior to the program:** Nearly all the participants (90%) reported having a profession before entry – 93% at Mahut and 86% at Kol Ha-Isha.

♦ **Type of occupation:** Almost all the participants had worked in "women's occupations," i.e., fields predominated by women and marked by a low wage range: 15% – as school and kindergarten teachers; 25% – in office work, mainly secretarial; 10% – in nursing; 14% – in sales and services, mainly as saleswomen or in childcare; and 7% – in skilled work, such as seamstresses, chefs and pastry chefs.

♦ **Professional certification and experience:** Seventy-five percent of the participants having a profession held a professional certificate; 86% of them had worked in their profession for an average of 10 years.

**Employment in the Five-Year Period prior to Entry**

♦ **Continuous or sporadic employment:** Most of the participants (72%) had worked continuously (for at least three months at the same job) at various periods in the five years preceding the program. A few (8%) had worked only at temporary jobs (less than three continuous months at the same job) in the preceding five years, and 20% had not worked at all. Of the latter, Kol Ha-Isha had a higher proportion than Mahut: 31% versus 14%, respectively.

♦ **Proximity to or “distance” from the labor market:** The longer the participants had been out of the labor market, the more difficult it was for them to integrate into employment: 30% had been employed at entry into the program and 22% – close to entry; 8% had worked up until six months prior to entry; 14% had worked for seven to 12 months prior to entry. In other words, about half were “close” to the labor market. On the other hand, 20% had worked for various periods in the two to five years before the program and 28% had not worked continuously or at all in the five years preceding the program.

**Employment Status**

The primary and main goal of the program was to integrate participants into continuous employment. In the light of this, we examined the employment rate at the time of the interview and the rate of employment integration over two years, between entry and the interview.
In addition, we examined the retention rates, the rate of non-employed at the time of the interview, and their characteristics.

- **The employment rate at the time of the interview** was 63%; 48% had integrated into employment since entry (whether having found work or changed jobs) whereas 15% continued at the jobs they had held at entry.

- **Rate of employment integration over two years**: Seventy-eight percent of the participants had worked to some extent between entry and the interview: 61% had taken up new employment (whether having found work or changed jobs) whereas the other 17% continued at the jobs they had held at entry.

- **Employment retention**: Given the fluctuation in the employment status of participants, the study also examined another aspect, the duration of continuous employment. It found that some 80% of the participants who had integrated into new employment over the two years, were working at the time of the interview; two-thirds worked at a single job while a third worked at two jobs.

At the time of the interview, it was found that 54% of the participants who had integrated into salaried employment had remained at the same place for 8 to 24 months or for an average of 10 consecutive months; 37% had worked for 12 to 24 months.

The examination of employment retention, though not necessarily at the same workplace, found that for half of those who had changed jobs there had been no gap between the first and second jobs prior to the interview.

- **Characteristics of the non-employed at the time of the interview**: Thirty-seven percent of the participants were not employed at the time of the interview. The non-employed and the employed showed significant differences in family status, number of children and proximity to the labor market. The non-employed included a higher rate of married mothers – 64% versus 42%; a lower rate of single parents – 34% versus 55%; and a higher average number of children: 4.1 versus 3.3. Regarding proximity to the labor market – 45% had not worked continuously or at all in the five years preceding the program versus 18% of the employed. No differences were found between the non-employed looking for work an those not looking for work. About a third of the non-employed had started to work after entry though they were not employed at the time of the interview. Thus, in their regard at least, the state of non-employment was not permanent.

**Changes in the Employment Rate following Participation in the Program**

To examine program outcomes in terms of the employment rate, the study conducted two types of comparison: a) between the employment rate at entry and at the interview, two years later; b) and the employment rate between program participants and a similar group in terms of socio-demographic and employment characteristics, drawn from CBS Labor Force Surveys (2005-07).

a) The first comparison compared the employment rate of participants at the time of the interview to rate at the time of entry into the program.
- 30% were employed at the time of entry and 63% at the time of the interview; i.e., within two years of entry, there was an increase of 33 percentage points in the rate of total participants employed. At Mahut, there was an increase of 30 percentage points; at Kol Ha-Isha – of 38 percentage points. Note that in absolute terms following the program, Kol Ha-Isha placed about half the number of participants in jobs than did Mahut (55 versus 100 respectively).

- 87% of the participants employed at entry were working some two years later; about half of them – at new jobs.

- 53% of the women not employed at entry were working some two years later.

- In total, the program helped 48% of the participants improve their employment status: 37% were not employed at the time of entry and were working two years later; 11% were employed at entry and changed jobs in which they were working at the time of the interview. The desire to change their place of work had been their main motivation for joining the program.

- It was found that the program was more helpful to participants who were “closer” to the employment market than to those more “distant,” although in this group, too, the employment status improved considerably: 67% of the participants employed up to a year before entry were working at the time of the interview versus 46% of those whose last job had been more than a year before entry or who had not worked at all.

b) Comparison group: To examine the extent to which the change in employment rate could be attributed to the program, we compared the employment rate of program participants and of a similar group drawn from CBS Labor Force Surveys (2005-07). In both groups, the women had not been employed at the first point examined: entry into the program or the first interview of the Labor Force Survey. Some 15 months later, it was found that the employment rate of program participants not employed at entry had risen from 0% to 66%; in the comparison group, from 0% to 30%. In other words, after 15 months, the employment rate of program participants increased by 36 percentage points relative to that of the comparison group. This finding corroborates the hypothesis that the change in the employment rate may be attributed to the program.

Quality of Employment at the Time of the Interview

Another main goal of the program was to help participants integrate into decent jobs that would enable them to live in dignity, i.e., at least a minimum wage plus social benefits. The extent to which this goal was achieved was investigated in a number of ways: the quality of employment of participants at the time of the interview was examined by both objective measures – such as number of hours (full-time or part-time) and salary, and subjective measures – such as satisfaction. The study also examined changes in work for participants employed at entry and at the interview.
Measures of Quality of Employment

- **Type of work** (self-report): 76% were employed in some sort of skilled capacity; 46% – in their own profession, 30% – in a different profession; 24% worked at unskilled jobs though nearly all reportedly had a profession prior to entry.

- **Employment status**: Some two years after entry, 87% held salaried jobs, the rest were self-employed.

- **Full-/part-time employment and number of working hours per week**: Program implementers assumed that full-time employment can potentially lift participants out of the cycle of poverty. The aspiration thus was for most participants to work full-time. In reality, a third were employed full-time (at least 35 hrs/week) and the rest, part-time. Participants worked an average of 29 hrs/week. No differences were found between full- and part-time employment in terms of family status, number of children, type of work (whether in one's own profession, another profession or unskilled jobs), or by empowerment center.

Two main reasons were cited for part-time work: more than half (57%) did not choose to work part-time but had failed to find full-time work or additional part-time work. In other words, these participants were potential candidates for full-time work. On the other hand, a third did choose to work part-time due to childcare demands (29%) or the need to care for an ill relative (3%).

- **Wages**: The average monthly wage of the participants was NIS 3,057 with half of them earning up to NIS 2,700. The average hourly wage was NIS 28.60. Full-time employees (an average of 45 hrs/wk) earned an average of NIS 4,433/month, i.e., more than the minimum wage, which was then NIS 3,850. Part-time employees (an average of 21 hrs/wk) earned an average of NIS 29.8/hr, i.e., more than the minimum wage, which was then NIS 20.70/hr.

- **Social benefits**: Nearly all the employees reported receipt of reimbursement for transportation expenses. Three-quarters to two-thirds reported receiving paid sick leave and annual vacation (72% and 68% respectively). For half of them, monies were paid into pension or savings funds. A handful reported receipt of additional fringe benefits, such as payments into an advance/in-service training fund and holiday and/or clothing bonuses.

- **Satisfaction with various aspects of work**
  
  **Salaried employees**: Overall, most of the employees (81%) were very satisfied or satisfied with their jobs: 34% – very satisfied, and 47% – satisfied. Nearly all were very satisfied or satisfied with various aspects of their work, such as relations with colleagues (90%), treatment by superiors (85%), physical conditions (85%), type of work (83%), extent of interest in the work (79%), and the opportunity to utilize one's knowledge and skills (70%). On the other hand, far lower rates were very satisfied or satisfied with the wages (37%), fringe benefits (45%), and opportunities for advancement (35%).

  **Self-employed**: These women constituted 13% of all participants. They were all found to be very satisfied or satisfied with their work in general, the type of work, and the opportunity to utilize their knowledge and skills. Most were very satisfied or satisfied with the physical
conditions at work (77%), the chances of enlarging their business (77%) and their income (62%).

Improving the Employment Status of Participants Employed at Entry and Working in New Jobs Two Years Later:

As noted, about half of the participants employed at the time of entry were working at new jobs two years later. The study examined the changes in the quality of employment of this group to ascertain whether the program had helped to improve it.

- No significant change was found in the employment status of this group with respect to type of work, wages, full- or part-time work and the rate of employees receiving remuneration for social benefits. Though the above objective measures did not show improvement, job satisfaction was found to have risen: the rate of very satisfied or satisfied with work in general rose from 45% to 94%. In particular, the rate of satisfaction rose with the type of work, the level of interest and the opportunities for advancement. One possible explanation is that job changes were a matter of choice accompanied by expectations of improving one’s employment status according to the objective measures as well.

Sources of Income and Changes in the Household Financial Status

- Household sources of income were: a participant's work (63%), a spouse's work (37%), child allowance (70%), and income support benefits (15%). In the assessment of participants, their household financial status had not improved in wake of the program. Their wages, in any case, were low due to the type of job and the amount of working hours. Moreover, their wages may have replaced income support benefits so that in total, the household income had not increased.

Assessment by Participants of the Contribution of the Program and Satisfaction with It

- **Basic program training tracks**: Most of the participants were directed to the preparatory track for employees; only a few, to business entrepreneurship – 72% and 18% respectively. Some 7% were permitted to participate in both tracks and 3% participated in neither, receiving individual mentoring.

- **Workshop**: More than two-thirds reported that the workshop had contributed to strengthening their self-image and employment motivation to a very great or great extent; the range was from 84% – who learned how to handle job interviews – to 53% – who learned how to handle sexual harassment in the workplace. Half the participants said the workshop had helped them acquire auxiliary employment tools to a very great or great extent. Nearly all (93%) were satisfied with the workshop: 27% were very satisfied and 66% – satisfied.

- **Basic computer course, employee track**: Two-thirds (a similar percentage at both centers) of the participants who completed the basic employee preparatory course went on to take the computer course. Most (85%) completed it and were very satisfied or satisfied with it (80%). In the assessment of two-thirds, the course had improved to a very great or great extent: their self-confidence; how they were perceived by others; and their ability to use the Internet for
job search (68%, 65%, 66% respectively). Yet only a third noted that the course had contributed to their employment in more skilled work, at a higher wage grade, a higher salary, and better working conditions. In parallel, few noted that they were proficient in Word (15%); in the use of the Internet (12%); or in the use of email (26%). Furthermore, no differences were found between course participants and non-participants regarding proficiency in various computer programs. As said, the course imparted basic knowledge with the emphasis on reinforcing self-confidence and self-image, and less so on mastering Office (computer) programs. It may be worth considering a restructuring of the course to further improve the employment skills of participants.

♦ Receipt of stipend for professional training: Seven of the interviewees who participated in the program at Mahut applied for and received a stipend for professional training in the fields of financial insurance, payroll accounts, computer QA, and secretarial work. Nearly all deemed that the studies had improved their employment status in the present or would do so in the future. The stipend program was not offered at Kol Ha-Isha.

♦ Business entrepreneurship course: In the assessment of most participants, the business track offered by the centers had contributed greatly to their sense of self-efficacy in starting a business, whether by reinforcing their self-confidence, helping them reach a decision about going into business or enhancing their motivation: 74%, 63% and 61% respectively. In addition, they said that the course was very helpful regarding practical aspects, such as attracting a clientele, formulating a business idea, preparing a business plan, and financial management – 81%, 76%, 76% and 71% respectively. A smaller percentage noted that the course had improved their knowledge of working with banks, insuring a business, and familiarization with services offered to business people – 47%, 47% and 34% respectively.

♦ Additional types of help were cited by participants as required for purposes of finding work, advancing in the labor market or starting a business: nearly all (90%) pointed to a need to improve their Hebrew (they were apparently proficient only in simple Hebrew); about half (45%) – to train in a profession; and a third (34%) – to improve their computer skills and knowledge of English.

♦ Coordinator's support during and after the course, for two to three years. All the participants reportedly had contact with the coordinators of employment or of business entrepreneurship during the course/workshop: face-to-face contact (72%), at least once every two weeks (61%). For a large proportion of the participants, the contact extended beyond the course and was often intensive.

♦ General program satisfaction: Nearly all the participants (90%) were satisfied with the program: 56% – very satisfied, and 34% – satisfied. Similarly, nearly all (95%) said they would recommend the program to other women in similar situations. Half (55%) were also very satisfied or satisfied with the assistance provided by program staff in finding work or starting their own business. As expected, the employment rate was higher among those who were satisfied with the program than those who were not.
Summary of Findings on the Implementation of the Program

The findings on the program at the end of three years of implementation were summarized with regard to the following questions: a) Were the program components implemented according to plan? b) Is it possible to consolidate the program in three years of implementation? c) Are there features of the program that contribute to its success, and was an implementation model formulated?

a) Were the program components implemented?

As planned, the basic infrastructure of the program was put into place at the two centers. This included staff, venues for training, a basic training course, and a database of employers and partnerships. At Mahut in Haifa, the program was implemented from June 2006; at Kol Ha-Isha in Jerusalem – from January 2007.

Number of participants in the program: According to plan, 310 women were trained at Mahut by the end of the three years. On the other hand, at Kol Ha-Isha, neither the original nor the adjusted targets were met: only 105 women were trained by the end of two-and-a-half years. In total, 415 women were trained at both centers, constituting 69% of the original target or 77% of the adjusted target.

Training tracks: The plan was to offer participants a variety of employment options along three tracks: two for the unemployed – to prepare them for salaried work and business entrepreneurship; and one for the employed interested in upgrading their occupational status. In fact, Mahut implemented the business entrepreneurship track for only one cohort, after which suitable participants were referred to a women's organization specializing in the field while the center, itself, specialized in the training track for salaried employment. In contrast, Kol Ha-Isha supported an integrated model of salaried employment and business entrepreneurship. At both centers, the staffs agreed that each track constitutes a separate specialty and demands differential organization. But they did not agree on the optimal way to implement the model.

At Mahut, the track of upgrading employment was applied in its original format, but it did not interest the employed participants. Activities were thus moved to an afternoon job club where both employed and non-employed participants met every three weeks. At Kol Ha-Isha, the "upgrade" component was not implemented.

Stipend program: The plan was for each center to award annual stipends for professional training or higher education to three women. At Mahut, the option was broadened: 54 women participated in professional training and in two instances, also in internships at a workplace where they could practice their new skills and improve their chances of finding employment. At Kol Ha-Isha, the stipend component was not implemented.

Community approach: The plan was to recruit and train 10 volunteer mentors at each center to lend the participants support after the basic training course and throughout the process of
integrating into employment. At Mahut, 28 volunteers were trained of whom 12 actively supported participants. At Kol Ha-Isha, this component was not implemented.

**Developing an employer network and workshops:** The plan was for each center to hold three workshops for employers to raise awareness about what constituted "offensive" employment and about the prevention of sexual harassment. Mahut held five workshops but the staff felt that they were not as successful as desired, and they were terminated. At Kol Ha-Isha this component was not implemented.

**Expanding program activity to additional neighborhoods/communities:** At Mahut, attempts were made to implement the program in the Arab sector, in the town of Sakhnin and in a mixed Haifa neighborhood, but there were numerous obstacles. At Kol Ha-Isha, this component was not implemented.

**Additional dissemination activity:** To raise public awareness about employing women from vulnerable population groups, Mahut initiated lectures for additional audiences – directors at the Beersheba municipality, coordinators of employment programs, staff of the nursing faculty at Haifa University, and students. Four conferences were held on various aspects of employing more vulnerable women.

*In summary,* while the main components were implemented at the two centers, implementation differed, particularly with regard to the number of women trained and the training tracks. The other components were implemented fully or partially only at Mahut. We cannot, therefore, evaluate the extent to which their implementation may be applicable to additional settings possibly interested in the program. Mahut introduced components beyond the original blueprint, such as internships for graduates of professional training, more referrals to professional training, and the dissemination of knowledge on the rights of working women via lectures for additional audiences apart from employer groups.

**b) Is it possible to consolidate the program in three years of implementation?**

The findings show that the program developed differently at each center. At Mahut, the program was consolidated and opportunities were created to continue its implementation after TEVET’s funding came to an end. Contributing factors were staff increases thanks to funding from the emergency fund earmarked for northern communities and hiring more people in part-time positions. Other factors were staff professionalism due to on-the-job experience and, equally important, substantial administrative commitment to achieving the program goals.

At Kol Ha-Isha, a considerable portion of the components (apart from the key components) were not implemented. Possible reasons were: the nature of the population (ultra-Orthodox women), the director changed four times, the professional style of the directors which emphasized treating the women’s additional problems beyond the question of employment.

Since the findings at the two centers were different, it is difficult to state clearly whether the program can be consolidated in three years of implementation.
c) In the opinion of the center staff and their municipal partners, did the program have features that contributed to its success?

A number of features contributing to the success of the program emerged in staff discussions at both centers and in interviews with colleagues at municipal agencies:

**Staff approach:** At both centers, a staff of women implement the program for women, based on the belief that the labor market practices gender discrimination and that women are best able to strengthen women. Additionally, the staff transmit the concept that vulnerable women, too, are able to develop and advance.

**Professionalization and the development of unique tools** to work with vulnerable, poor and excluded women whose employment needs were not met by other frameworks: The approach is individual, adapting the content of training to the needs and abilities of the participants, while the work with them proceeds with great sensitivity and respect. Colleagues at municipal agencies and in the community noted that the program accords a good deal of weight to the emotional sphere, especially to reinforcing self-confidence and the conviction that change is possible.

**Content, level and extent of preparation:** Course content is transmitted at a high level by talented lecturers and professionals. The depth and extent of training are considerable compared with similar programs offered by other agencies.

**Personal long-term follow-up** for two to three years from entry facilitates the provision of support in situations of multiple crises.

**Dissemination of knowledge:** Discussion at Mahut (Appendix II) emphasized that to succeed in integrating the women into favorable employment, it is necessary to create and disseminate more knowledge on the employment of vulnerable women. Mahut has actively pursued this goal and since the start of the program, has held four conferences on the subject, produced two reports and initiated meetings with professionals and employers.

**Additional components common to TEVET intervention programs and contributing to the success of the program are:** developing a relationship with employers, creating partnerships with community bodies, and building up the program’s reputation.

**Afterword**

The program funding, promised for three years with an option to renew, stopped due to the world economic crisis – after three years at Mahut and after two-and-a-half years at Kol Ha-Isha. It was suggested that Mahut be absorbed by the social service department at Haifa's municipality, but the center chose to remain autonomous and retain its identity. In the absence of a plan for continued functioning and financing, and the lack of knowledge as to further funding, both centers have applied to other funding sources so as to be able to continue their work in the field of employment, meanwhile still implementing the program. At the same time, the program was not expanded to additional locales nor did sufficient experience accrue to test its possible implementation on the national level.
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