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Statement submitted by Women Organization for Development and Capacity Building, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.



Statement

[Original: Arabic]

Women Organization for Development and Capacity Building (Lubna)

The Women Organization for Development and Capacity Building (Lubna) is pleased to be able to participate in the meetings of the Commission on the Status of Women at its fifty-seventh session, which is devoted to combating all forms of violence against women and girls. Achieving that goal is our core work. Lubna is a non-governmental, voluntary and non-profit organization established in 2004 that seeks to build women's political, legal, social and economic capacity. Lubna targets areas of conflict and war and strives to help protect women's dignity and humanity, in order to enable them to be a part of and keep up with developments in society, and thereby gain self-confidence.

Our organization is a member of the network of national organizations working to combat violence against women and children. It is supported by broad base of volunteers who work at the grass-roots level in communities, villages and districts in units that are designated "Lubna Groups". The organization was operating according to its original strategy in the southern States (prior to secession).

Lubna currently operates in certain areas governed by the protocol (in the Tadamun, Roseires, Damazin, Kurmuk, Giyan and Bao districts of Blue Nile state, as well as the eastern rural districts and the Dilling, Kadugli, Babanusa and Mujlid districts of Southern Kordofan). It also operates in voluntary return areas and host communities located in central Darfur state, including the districts of Azoom, Nartati, Wadi Salih, Ruguru, Momo, Rumataz and the Hamidiya Camp in Zalingei. All of these are voluntary return villages and areas in which there is much displacement and poverty. In addition, Lubna also operates in eastern Sudan in Kasla, Gedaref and Red Sea.

Cultural attitudes are one of the challenges that stand in the way of efforts to combat violence against women. Culture plays an important role in the empowerment of women, but there are some customs and traditions that can be considered as violence against women, such as, for example, female genital mutilation, preference for male children and early marriage in some tribes and regions. This is in addition to the violence faced by women in areas of conflict and war, where they have neither security nor shelter, and must bear the burden of child care.

The target groups and beneficiaries of Lubna's activities are women and children (particularly adolescent girls) in camps, voluntary return areas, host communities and those districts that are the poorest and most affected by the war. They receive direct assistance, services and treatment, and are offered and awareness-raising and prevention programmes. Lubna's awareness-raising and training programmes target influential figures in the community, as well as native administration and religious leaders of all denominations, in order to get them involved combating violence against women and girls. We recently began working with teachers and students (the Zalingei project) with a view to getting students involved in peacebuilding and social reconciliation efforts between families.

As part of its activities and programmes aimed at combating violence against women, Lubna offers such services as adult and adolescent education, programmes

to encourage completion of education and kindergarten education. The organization implements health-care programmes that focus on prevention, environmental health, health education, first aid and mental health. Our organization also offers economic and social services, including programmes for small enterprises engaged in agriculture, livestock production and handicrafts, income growth, combating poverty, legal assistance, raising awareness of rights, advocacy and technical assistance for women victims.

Lubna maintains partnerships and coordinates with both international and national organizations, including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund, the Food and Agriculture Organization, the Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development, AECOM Technology Corporation and Catholic Relief Services. Our organization also partners with relevant ministries and agencies, such as the Ministries of Health, Education and Agriculture, and various national agencies, such as Mubadirun, the Sudanese Women's General Union, Rufaida Health Foundation and the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission.

Methods used to combat violence against women include organizing specialized workshops, training courses, lectures and seminars, as well as making use of the use of the media, including radio, television and other mass media, community outreach, posters, drama, audio-visual messages, cartoons and popular sports (uniforms, posters). Documentaries and posters are shown at each project site, along with examples of success stories in combating violence against women (Blue Nile, Southern Kordofan and central Darfur).

Programmes and mechanisms that have contributed to the reduction of violence against women or that have supported the success of programmes aimed at achieving that goal include the implementation of policies and strategies to empower women politically and socially, and the establishment of a central unit to combat violence in the Ministry of Justice that works with the organization in connection with awareness-raising and legal services. Units and mechanisms have also been established in the states and the affected areas. Lubna has provided many victims with legal assistance, services and psychological treatment. A network of organizations engaged in combating violence against women and girls has been established, and Lubna is a member of this network, which has its own statute and by-laws. Our organization participates in the programmes of other organizations engaged in combating violence against women and girls that are aimed at raising the awareness and building the capacity of community and religious leaders and grass-roots people's committees. These organizations strive to achieve continuity in projects implemented by official and voluntary bodies that are aimed at combating violence against women. Lubna also supports efforts to provide technical and in-kind assistance in the area of combating violence against women, including with regard to food security, livelihoods, early recovery, sustainable solutions, water and health. The organization has recently become involved in those areas and has submitted project proposals as part of a consolidated request.

There have been several successful projects that utilized all of the methods that we have mentioned so far, including partnerships, community-based initiatives, peacebuilding, messages, drawing and posters. In the meetings that the organization will request to share its work, we will use various media and films to show training programmes and plays that were presented in local languages in Blue Nile state.

Lubna would also like to show examples of the projects it has implemented on combating violence in the refugee camps and in three voluntary return areas in central Darfur. One of those projects, a collective farms for six tribes, was implemented as part of the peacebuilding programme. Those tribe now live in peace after women became farm owners (economic empowerment) and were given easy-to-use tools (hand-operated pumps and cisterns that do not require too much effort on part of the women). This was accomplished with the assistance of organizations that are active in this field. In central Darfur, women from the Massalit, the Bargu, the Tama, the Fur, Arabs and that Zaghawa, tribes that had been hostile to one another, began working collectively after having voluntarily returned. These women are working in collective farms in the Azoom Valley, a fertile agricultural area. The women do all the farming and they have outstanding social relationships and take part in social and national events. The local government, which granted the women the land through contracts, participates in the celebrations to mark the summer and winter planting seasons, the autumn season and the harvest seasons. They are joined on those occasions by the popular committees of the villages, native administration leaders and donor organizations. Lubna is the supervising organization, and its Groups participate in distributing tools and seed. The beneficiaries have been transformed from victims of war and hostilities into a productive group that has repudiated violence. The team participating in the conference will present illustrative documentation or a film in that regard. Some 50 women in voluntary return areas near Zalingei were awarded ownership of a project to build high-efficiency stoves. The stoves are made locally using locally sourced materials. This women-owned business is intended to help women increase their incomes and ease the burden of finding firewood, an arduous task in view of the distances they have to cover and the difficulty of transporting the firewood. There are also projects to encourage schoolchildren to participate in peacebuilding, reconciliation and peaceful coexistence initiatives. These projects are being implemented with the assistance of a number of foreign and national organizations operating in the state. In the course of the conference, we will present films and documentation on successful experiences in the field.

In Southern Kordofan, our organization has been working with a group of some 300 women from several tribes, including the Nuba, the Baggara, the Misseriya and Hawazma, who have been affected by the war and have endured violence as a result of certain traditions, such as forced, early marriage, which is the case with approximately 30 per cent of group. Some of them had also been forced to divorce or to abandon their husbands owing to tribal disputes. Lubna organized awareness-raising programmes for this group in which several judges, lawyers and representatives of local government, including the head of the Kawik district, participated and helped the women address their problems through the law. We also helped these women improve their living conditions and their prospects for employment. Other outputs of this endeavour include awareness-raising programmes that targeted some 3,000 men and women. The programmes were offered to male and female teachers, female students, parent-teacher council members and community leaders. A group of housewives attended lectures delivered by judges and lawyers, staff from the counter-violence unit and members of the community police. The programme was able to help the affected women solve their problems and raised the awareness of the other groups that participated, including, foremost, female students and young girls not enrolled in school. We will recount some stories of women who succeeded in solving their problems.

In Blue Nile state, which is one of the area covered by the protocol, Lubna targeted the community, the police and demobilized fighters, with a view to establishing a partnership to combat violence against women, in cooperation with UNDP and the United Nations Population Fund. We organized training seminars for health workers, some of whom were selected to be community trainers. The Lubna Groups also participated in forums for youth and women that focused on raising awareness of rights and on the law on violence against women. The awareness-raising methods used include plays performed in local languages and radio programmes. It is clear from the above that our organization uses various means to raise awareness in target groups, and that this is done in a manner that is suited to each community and the problems and obstacles facing it. These areas of Blue Nile state are still in need of additional health, education and awareness-raising programmes and treatment services. Lubna has made several proposals in the area of humanitarian and health services aimed at assisting affected women and young girls in this area.

Based on our experience in combating violence against women, we would like to make some recommendations that can greatly help in eradicating violence against women:

- In order to be more effective, it is important that organizations working in this field should coordinate with each other;
- All obstacles, whether legal, financial or technical, that stand in the way of the continuation of projects that have succeeded in reducing or eradicating violence should be addressed;
- Official and voluntary funding should be provided to projects aimed at combating violence against women;
- All laws should be assessed by both States and organizations, in order to introduce improvements and reforms;
- Networks of organizations working in this field should be created, in order to avoid duplication of effort;
- Projects on raising awareness of the law, support, advocacy and empowerment should be continued;
- Informal and community-based education projects should be supported;
- Parliamentary bodies at all levels, including at the central, state and local levels, should be encouraged to participate in combating violence through the adoption of relevant laws and regulations, and to focus training in that regard;
- Women's legal centres should participate in efforts aimed at amending and promulgating laws and ensuring that they address the issue of violence against women;
- Expertise, experience and success stories in combating violence against women, both at home and abroad, should be exchanged;
- Studies and research on combating violence against women should be conducted and useful information should be provided to programme managers working at the official level and those working in the communities.