

Remarks by ILO Representative for Malawi, Mozambique
& Zambia,

Mr Gerry Finnegan, on the occasion of the launch of the Guide on
Gender & Entrepreneurship Together:
GET Ahead for Women in Enterprise
10 April 2008

Madam Director of Ceremonies
Minister of Gender and Women in Development, Hon. Patricia Mulasikwanda
MP
Ambassador of Ireland to Zambia, HE Bill Nolan
Acting PS, GIDD, Ms Yeta
Colleagues from the UN family in Zambia
Senior officials from Government, – GIDD, MLSS, MCDSS, etc.
Representatives from Employers’ and Workers’ organizations in Zambia
Representatives of the Cooperating Partners
Representatives of NGOs and Women Entrepreneurs’ Associations
Members of the Press
Ladies & Gentlemen

It is a great honour and privilege for me to be able to welcome you all to this important occasion – the launch of the African version of the ILO’s Guide on GET Ahead. I have a special warm welcome for the Honourable Minister, as I have spoken to her over the past few months to inform her of this imminent event. At rather short notice, the Hon. Minister has agreed to be our Guest of Honour, and I am truly appreciative of her support. Another very special welcome goes to my very good friend and compatriot, HE Mr Bill Nolan, Irish Ambassador. The Irish Government – and indeed Bill himself – has been a truly stalwart supporter of the ILO’s programme on Women’s Entrepreneurship Development and Gender Equality (WEDGE) in Zambia and elsewhere over the years. It is through this programme that we have been able to produce the original GET Ahead, and indeed produce the African version that is being launched here today. You may ask yourselves, “Why GET Ahead?” “Why another manual on enterprise development?” Indeed, the ILO is known worldwide for its small business training materials, such as Start and Improve Your

Business (SIYB). The ILO did a review of existing small business training materials, including those from ILO, GTZ-CEFE, UNIFEM, etc. We realized that there is a lot of material of “enterprise development” – not much of which incorporates gender issues, and there is a lot of material on “gender issues” – not much of which emphasizes entrepreneurship. We discovered that there is a gap when it comes to combining enterprise development and gender-related issues. This is what motivated ILO and its WEDGE team to embark on the production of GET Ahead.

This is also a special occasion for myself, for you might recognise one of the names on the front cover of this publication, as I am one of the original authors of GET Ahead. In fact I carried out the very first pilot activities during two training programmes in Thailand in December 2000. The “Asian” version was further developed in Laos and Cambodia, where it was translated into local languages. Over the past few years it has also been translated and used extensively in countries such as Thailand, Viet Nam and China.

Indeed, as part of the ILO’s support for early recovery following the Tsunami disaster in several Asian countries, the ILO has used the GET Ahead materials and approach to enable women in Banda Aceh – one of the regions most affected by the disaster – to regain their livelihoods and create employment opportunities. Just a few days ago, I received a report on the continuing progress that ILO is making by using GET Ahead in Indonesia. In addition, a few weeks ago, the ILO introduced GET Ahead to Palestinian women, as a means of economically empowering those women through enterprise development.

Based on our global experiences and the increasing demand for GET Ahead, it has been most appropriate for ILO to develop an “African version” – where the illustrations, the names, the products and the approach have all been modified to better suit the African context. I am particularly pleased to state that this “African version” was developed right here in Zambia, in a process that commenced in December 2006, when we brought together experienced trainers from Zambia and elsewhere to start the process of “Africanization”. This

process has been ably led by Ms Vivian Mthetwa, who is also with us today. I wish to express my appreciation for the valuable work that has been carried out by Vivian, as well as other resource persons, such as Evans Lwanga, Elizabeth Simonda and others.

In this African version, we have also adopted a more inclusive approach towards women with disabilities and women living with HIV & AIDS. We are also having the materials translated into Bemba and Njyanja, and adapting the manual for people with disabilities by producing LARGE PRINT and Braille versions.

In recent months, while the finalization of the publication has been ongoing, we have also undertaken some preliminary training here in Zambia, and by now we have a number of “expert trainers” in GET Ahead, including people from MCDSS, women entrepreneurs’ associations, and Cheshire Homes.

I am very pleased that next week will mark the first official Training of Trainers’ programme on the newly published GET Ahead manual, and this will be done jointly by ILO and CAMFED, in order to enable CAMFED reach out to its target groups of young women in Luapula, Northern and Western Provinces.

Hon. Minister, as you will be aware, we had hoped to have this publication ready for launching around International Women’s Day, 8 March 2008. However, due to power cuts, our printing company has experienced a lot of difficulties in meeting deadlines. Indeed, that is the reason for the short notice in inviting you all here today.

The ILO is the UN Specialized Agency dealing with Employment and Labour matters. The ILO also has a strong commitment to ending discrimination in the labour market, and this is supported by four (4) International Labour Conventions – the “Equality Conventions”. We see the labour market as including both the formal and informal economies; and we look at employment as including wage employment, self-employment and entrepreneurship. GET Ahead can be a valuable tool in combatting gender-based inequalities facing women in business.

Hon. Minister, you are aware that the ILO is working closely with its sister organizations in the UN family in order to “deliver as One UN in Zambia”. The ILO is now the Deputy Lead – supporting UNDP – both within the UN family, as well as in the Cooperating Partners’ Gender Group in Zambia.

Together with Government – your Ministry and GIDD – we have been working side by side in order to contribute to the development of the new Joint Gender Support Programme (JGSP). This provides an excellent opportunity for a harmonized approach to assisting Government in contributing towards the JGSP – based on our respective strengths and competencies.

I am pleased to say that the GET Ahead Guide should immediately contribute to the achievement of Output 6 from the JGSP – “Strategies for addressing economic and social vulnerabilities at household and community levels strengthened”.

There is a large number of women engaged in economic activities and in business. However, many of these women do not regard their activities as business, but rather as subsistence activities or hobbies. If you ask what they are doing, they are likely to say: “A bit of this and that”, or “Moving up and down”. What we really want to do is get more women to take their income-generation and business activities more seriously; and also to ensure that the support agencies – including banks and business development service providers – take women more seriously in their efforts at STARTING and GROWING their enterprises.

Hon. Minister, Ambassador Bill, ladies and gentlemen, I trust that our partners throughout Zambia, and indeed throughout Africa, can benefit from this latest contribution from the ILO and the UN family. I wish to thank you all for your attention.