



on the move for equality

Newsletter Thursday 20 January

www.ei-ie.org/women - Bangkok, Thailand, 20-23 January 2011

Welcome to the First EI World Women's Conference!



What a pleasure to be meeting with such a wide ranging group of committed women and men, education trade unionists from so many parts of the world. The presence of women from EI networks, education union leaders, UN agencies and global unions, as well as advocates for gender equality, represents a truly international effort to be part of the solution. Taking joint actions to accel-

erate the progress will move us forward to that solution.

Over 350 participants from member organisations in 90 countries are convening in Bangkok for the First EI World Women's Conference. Our aims are to connect and strengthen EI's women's networks; take stock of the status of women; and advance and empower girls and women through education. We will exchange experience, and learn from each other in order to make gender equality a reality in our unions, schools and society.

EI acknowledges the participants' efforts to be here. We value the participation of voices from all regions, a real celebration of our diversity.

EI wishes you all a successful conference and to continue building on the momentum generated to date, leading up to the 6th EI World Congress in July 2011.

Susan Hopgood,
EI President



Educators tackle gender equality using multimedia

A new video produced by EI's Communicators' Network (ComNet) follows the inspiring President of the Dominican Association of Teachers, Maria Teresa Cabrera, who was elected despite an historic under-representation of women in her Union's leadership.

The video project, entitled 'On the Move for Gender Equality', was produced by EI's USA affiliate, National Education Association, who followed Cabrera over three days as she visited schools, ran union meetings, conducted media interviews, and engaged the wider community.

The video includes Cabrera's perspective on gender equity in leadership training programmes, as well as the voice of school children who are learning to become the next generation of leaders. You can watch it



Maria Teresa Cabrera

on www.neatoday.org/video-gallery.

To increase audiovisual resources for equality in unions, the Latin America Women's Network has also developed its own video. It shows the strategies used over the last decade to implement policies that ensure stronger women's participation and representation in unions. It includes testimonies of many sisters participating in the network, and will be shown at conference on Friday 21 January.

Programme

Thursday 20 January

09:00 *Pre-Conference for Women's Networks*

Conference opens

18:45 *Participants gather in Grand Ballroom*

19:00 *Welcome and opening address, Fred van Leeuwen, EI General Secretary with dignitaries*

20:00 *Drinks reception*

Participant of the day

Basundra Kumar

Council of Pacific Education (COPE) Network and Fiji Teachers' Union (FTU)



What is your union's most successful project on gender equality?

My union has 5,240 members of which 60 per cent are women. The FTU comprises 16 branches and each of them has its own women's wing. Our union funds annual workshops on women's empowerment, while selected women are offered opportunities to attend events relating to women's issues. Once a year female teachers also meet in a huge number to talk about issues affecting women and girls. Teachers are now focussing on organising unorganised women and assisting them with projects like micro-enterprising.

What are the main challenges to achieving gender equality in your country?

The challenges in Fiji are broad and varied. We have organised women's groups to educate and empower women to move towards equality. The issues are almost the same for all women: they must do the housework; look after children and elders, and act as caregivers outside of work.

There are social dogmas and stigmas that prevent women from undertaking leadership roles while gender discrimination is prevalent.

Preaching that 'women should be given a chance' is normal business for many leaders, however, when the opportunity arises to actually devolve power, those same male leaders will hold on to their positions and push women aside, arguing that it is 'not a woman's job'.

What will you do on International Women's Day 2011?

I will join my Union's usual practice on International Women's Day. We will raise awareness through radio interviews, various celebrations, panel discussions, and the pink ribbon campaign, as well as rewarding women with treats.

Quiz of the day

- 1) What is the average percentage of women across EI's affiliate members?
a. 45 per cent b. 60 per cent c. 85 per cent
- 2) How many EI affiliates have structures that ensure women are represented on the highest decision making bodies?
a. 30 per cent b. 40 per cent c. 50 per cent
- 3) How many EI affiliates organise campaigns for gender equality?
a. 55 per cent b. 56 per cent c. 57 per cent

Send your name and answers to: clauide@ei-ie.org before 9pm. The randomly chosen winning entry will receive a box of chocolates.

Campaign of the day

EI Pay Equity Campaign (www.ei-ie.org/payequitynow)

With the Pay Equity Now! Campaign, EI aims to reaffirm the right of all workers to equitable wages, and help education unions overcome gender discrimination in employment.

Pay equity is a fundamental matter of equality and fairness. Sadly, millions of women continue to be disadvantaged on the pay roll. Trade unions have a key role to play at national level to demand the adoption and enforcement of adequate legislation to guarantee decent work and pay for all.

The number of female teachers is higher in early childhood (EC) and primary education in most parts of the world. In secondary and higher education, there are far fewer female teachers. EC teachers are often paid less than primary teachers, who in turn are often paid

less than secondary teachers, who in turn receive less than teachers in higher education. In higher education, despite the same level of academic attainment as male colleagues, women are more likely to work part-time and without tenure or decision-making posts.

Pay equity is a basic human right affecting both women and men. It enhances the value of work in general. Therefore, men as well as women profit from efforts to end pay inequity. Employers' efforts to drive down wages impose pressure on the workforce as a whole. Pay equity also leads to a sustainable economic development and is a poverty reduction tool. Raising female workers' wages increases the purchasing power and leads to positive effects for the whole economy.

Teacher Unions
fight for fairness!

EI Women's Networks

The EI regional and sub-regional women's networks have fundamentally contributed to promoting women's empowerment and leadership. EI currently has 10 very active sub-regional or regional networks running across all five of EI's regions.

The activities of EI's women's networks have focused on increasing women's recruitment and leadership in unions and on issues related to violence against women; legal rights; HIV/AIDS; pay equity; maternity protection and discriminatory practices against girl children. Recruiting young women teachers and ensuring their active participation in union activities remains among the major challenges faced by many teacher unions.

In 2007, EI decided to help strengthen and democratise unions in the Middle East and North Africa. Even though this area is not a region in the formal structures of EI, the representation of women in unions and gender equality is problematic across the region, largely for cultural and religious reasons.

In order to strengthen existing networks and build a global support network to enable discussion about common issues, and share good practices and action plans, women's network representatives are representing 40 per cent of participants at this EI Women's Conference.