



on the move for equality

Newsletter Friday 21 January

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

Women's World Conference: Strengthening IE Women's Networks

The pre-World Women's Conference meetings of the regional women's networks generated passionate discussions on the relevant issues in each region which will be followed up over the next three days in sessions of the Conference itself.

In the opening speech to the first IE World Women's Conference, IE General Secretary Fred van Leeuwen, acknowledged that "IE has been on the move for equality since its creation in 1993."

He said "equity is not just a gender issue. Achieving gender equality is a first step towards full equity with no space left for racism, islamophobia, homophobia, and all these social evils, most of which are rooted in ignorance. Quality public education is our main weapon to defeat it."

The Thai Minister of Education, the Honourable Mr. Chinnaworn Bunyakiat, said that for his government, "the promotion of gen-

der equality was recognised as helping the economic and social status of women." He said that because of the importance which the Thai Government ascribed to education, 20% of the total public expenditure was spent on it in Thailand. He added that "by educating young people on gender equality, we widen career options and opportunities to all of them."

In the name of all Thai IE affiliates, Boopun Sanbho from NTU then warmly welcomed the participants.



IE President Susan Hopgood, speaking to the opening session, emphasised that "teacher trade unions believing in social justice and solidarity have a role to play to achieve gender equality". She said that "engaging boys and men is essential to our progress," and praised the "effectiveness of women's networks."

The opening finished with a video message from the Head of UN-Women, Michelle Bachelet, who reminded participants that education was a human right and a tool to achieve equality and peace." She also said that the forthcoming session of the UN Commission on the status of women would consider, as a priority theme, the access and participation of women and girls in education, training, science and technology.

IE Welcomes UN Women

On 1 January, the new United Nations agency, UN Women, officially began its work led by Michelle Bachelet, former Chilean President. Established by the UN in July 2010, this entity for gender equality and the empowerment of women will focus on violence against women, peace and security, leadership and participation, economic empowerment, human rights and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). IE welcomes its creation and its leadership, and looks forward to a close cooperation.

Conceived by UNESCO, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was adopted by the UN in 1979. It recognises gender discrimination as the root of violence against women. The 1993 UN Conference on Human Rights recognised women's rights as human rights, and violence against women as an abuse of these rights.

The Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action, the Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, and the MDGs, are important landmarks. Regional treaties, such as the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa, and many legal gains provide better policies and norms for interactions between governments and civil society, including education unions.



Michelle Bachelet

Programme

Friday 21 January

- 08:45 *Participants gather in Grand Ballroom*
- 09:00 *Welcome, Irene Duncan Adanusa, IE Vice President Africa*
Conference Programme, Jan Eastman, IE Deputy General Secretary
Keynote address, Susan Hopgood, IE President
- 09:45 *Panel discussion, Sylvia Borren, co-chair of Global Campaign Against Poverty*
- 10:30 *Refreshment break*
- 11:00 *Panel discussion continues*
- 12:30 *Lunch*
- 14:00 *Choice Workshop Session I*
- 15:30 *Refreshment break*
- 16:00 *Choice Workshop Session II*
- 19:00 *Drinks reception and dinner*

Participant of the day

Helena Awurusa

General Secretary of Africa Women in Education Network (AWEN) and Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT)



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

Establishing a 'Gender Desk' which has launched many activities on gender equality, such as formulating and implementing a GNAT gender policy, institutionalising women's roundtables, and organising leadership workshops, has been a success. Some constitutional provisions in the Union also aim to bring more women into the structures by increasing the number of women members on the GNAT Executive. We are now 12 out of 35 members of the Executive.

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

At a union level, the main challenges are entrenched union organisational rules and policies coupled with the disproportionate burden of family responsibilities that women bear, and inadequate funding for GNAT activities. At national country-level, the high illiteracy and school drop-out rates among women; the specific cultural practices; poverty; and the government's unwillingness to implement gender equity policies are significant impediments and challenges we are addressing.

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

GNAT will raise awareness of the professional code of conduct and gender-based violence in schools at district level. There will be a gathering in one of our regions where the most cases of students' sexual abuse is recorded. We will also be advocating for employers to provide working mothers with childcare facilities.

Quiz of the day

- 1) Women perform 66 per cent of the world's work, but how much property do they own?
a. 1 per cent b. 15 per cent c. 5 per cent
- 2) What is the average global percentage of women in national parliaments?
a. 17 per cent b. 19 per cent c. 18 per cent
- 3) What percentage of people living with HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa are women?
a. 46 per cent b. 66 per cent c. 56 per cent

Yesterday's answers: 1) b, 2) c, 3) b
Send your name and answers to: claudette@ei-ie.org. The randomly chosen winning entry will receive a box of chocolates

Campaign of the day

A future for girls: education, not child labour

(www.ei-ie.org/childlabour)

Worldwide, over 200 million children are forced to work in fields, factories and as domestics. Children's rights are denied by all forms of child labour, which damage their health, threaten their education, and may lead to further exploitation and abuse.

Although today there are more girls in school than ever before, girls still account for 56% of the total number of children out of school.

Increasingly teacher organisations undertake effective and visible actions in partnership with Governments, intergovernmental agencies and with other trade unions and civil society organisations to eliminate child labour, through policies to provide free, compulsory and accessible public education. In every campaign the importance of encouraging girls'



education is highlighted.

Whether in Morocco, Ghana, Uganda or Brazil, Nicaragua, Dominican Republic; or India, Indonesia, Fiji, or Albania, Bulgaria, teacher unions build anti child labour activities with the gender approach as a cross-cutting issue. Unions in the Netherlands, USA and Canada have shown tremendous support for such campaigns, high-light of which is the World Day against Child Labour celebrated on 12 June 2011.

Interview of the day

Juçara Maria Dutra Vieira

El Vice President and co-Chair of EI's Status of Women Committee

What are the priorities for gender equity in Latin America?

Latin America faces typical issues belonging to under developed countries, such as economies based on commodity export; marginal benefit from profits because of capitalist systems; education provision below the need of citizens, and social inequality. This is an unfavorable context for sections of the population, especially children, women and elderly.

A women's agenda should include: creating more and better jobs through public policies; fighting illiteracy and encouraging higher levels of education; setting up the means to tackle violence against women, and



encouraging women's political and trade union participation.

What success has been achieved through the EI Women's Networks?

EI's Women's Networks are essential to include a considerable contingent of women in national and international debates about the current political and economical situation, as well as gender-related themes. They also allow women to be more proficient in the use of information and communication tools, and develop cooperation among organisations and share campaigns and union information.

What benefits will this Conference bring to EI's gender activities?

The conference will contribute to a high-level debate on gender-related issues by creating discussion opportunities that can be returned to after the event.