



on the move for equality

Newsletter Saturday 22 January 2011

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

Main speakers on Gender stocktaking ignited lively discussions



"We are in a position to stimulate change, to achieve transformation," El President Susan Hopgood said at the first day of the Conference. "We are in the right area of work: Education; and we are in the right organisational framework: trade unions. It is our mission to fight for the quality of our education systems in policy and practice, for the strength of our unions – and for gender justice within education for all."

Christine Nathan from the ILO's office in Bangkok shared with the participants how gender equality in rights and at work go hand in hand, and how the ILO Decent Work agenda promotes the implementation of key gender standards.

The next panellist, Fatima Da Silva, Vice President of El regional committee in Latin America and from the CNTE, Brazil, elaborated on how women should play an increasing leadership role.

The third panellist was Gemma Adaba, former representative of the International Trade Union Confederation to the United Nations. She looked at the question of financing the gender equality agenda, and the importance of women unionists to be at the forefront of those discussions.

El Deputy General Secretary Jan Eastman next introduced the key findings of El's survey on the status of women in education unions. She highlighted the correlation between the scope of legal framework and the presence of union policy on gender equality, and the big gap between legal provision and actual implementation of gender policies, including imbalance of women leadership when they make up to 50-80% of union membership.

Joyce Powell, from the NEA, USA, traced the NEA's century-long work on progressing the rights of women and showcased various women who made it to leadership positions today, including the present El President Susan Hopgood and the founding El President and former NEA President Mary Hatwood Futrell.

Women in unions

A large gap still exists between commitments and policies on gender equality on the one hand, and their implementation on the other. This is confirmed by the findings of the most recent El Report on the Status of Women in Unions, Education and Society, which is based on data from a survey to which 138 El affiliates from 95 different countries responded.

The Report recognises that progress has undoubtedly been made concerning women in leadership positions in unions, but it is slow and inconsistent. Despite mechanisms for promoting gender equality in many education unions, women are underrepresented in the leadership of unions. Similarly, despite the inclusion of gender equality in school curricula, gender stereotypes often still determine subject choice and teaching materials, and, despite laws promoting gender equality in the labour market, women face discrimination in recruitment, promotion and pay.

The Report also indicates that, when it comes to the contribution which education unions' make to equality between women and men, committees and networks for gender equality are the places where initiatives are generated leading to activities and campaigns supporting women's rights.

So let's use this conference to find ways, working together, to strengthen these bodies and their roles within unions! Let's make sure women's issues are considered a priority in the unions' daily work, and women gain access to union leadership positions!



Programme Day 3

Saturday 22 January

- 08:45 *Participants gather in Grand Ballroom*
- 09:00 *Welcome, Lok Yim Pheng, El Asia Pacific Executive Board*
- 09:10 *Keynote address, Saniye Gülser Corat, UNESCO Director for Gender Equality*
- 09:30 *Panel discussion, Monique Fouilhoux, El Deputy General Secretary*
- 11:00 *Refreshment break*
- 11:30 *Panel discussion continues*
- 12:30 *Lunch*
- 14:00 *Choice Workshop Session III*
- 15:30 *Refreshment break*
- 16:00 *Choice Workshop Session IV*

Participant of the day

Trudy Kerperien

ETUCE Women Committee and
AOB, Netherlands



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

Big steps were made for more women in decision-making posts within the union between 1970 and 1980 when the Dutch economic system was based on an assumption that men worked and women stayed at home. In the late 1970s an economic crisis led to severe budget cuts in the public sector. In education, even local union sections agreed that the main wage earners should keep their jobs and women should be dismissed first. Angry women claimed their own place and voice within the union, leading to the establishment of a Women's Group and the adoption of a union resolution against discrimination of women in 1979.

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

In 2009, the AOB Women's Group ceased to exist in the way it worked for 30 years. Younger women's concerns are their work as education professionals, not the women's perspective. We are trying to establish a network of women active in the union and support their professional development. In 2008, we established the AOB Academy, a training course for 'high potential' candidates. Our first concern is to keep these women active in the union as the training can open up other career perspectives.

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

For the last 30 years, the Women's Group has organised a conference around the event. This always attracts women of all ages and education sectors. In 2011, we will join an event organised by our confederation to add the education perspective to the general theme and provide workshops.

Quiz of the day

- 1) Globally, women represent 88 per cent of early childhood teachers. How many women teach in tertiary education?
a. 28 per cent b. 38 per cent c. 48 per cent
- 2) How many countries still have fewer than 90 girls per 100 boys in primary school?
a. 28 per cent b. 34 per cent c. 42 per cent
- 3) What do EI member unions identify as one of the major barriers to education?
a. Child labour b. Gender roles c. Poverty

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

Campaign of the day

Reclaim the Night! – NUT and NASWUT, United Kingdom

(www.reclaimthenight.org)

The National Union of Teachers (NUT) and the National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (NASWUT) are active in the Reclaim the Night! campaign.

Reclaim The Night! marches began in the UK in November 1977, when hundreds of women took back their cities and marched during the night with lit torches through town centres and back streets. They made the point that women should be able to walk anywhere and not be blamed or restricted because of men's violence. They were inspired by news of coordinated women-only 'Take Back the Night' marches

against sexual harassment in West Germany earlier that year. Over the years, the marches have focused on rape and male violence.

Today, women continue to be blamed for violence against them. An Amnesty International poll in 2005, found that more than 33 per cent of the British public believe women were partly or wholly to blame if they were raped. There are an estimated 47,000 rapes and 300,000 sexual assaults in the UK each year but conviction rates are among the lowest in Europe. This means more rapists were convicted in the 1970s when Reclaim The Night marches began than they are now.



Interview of the day

Yim Pheng Lok

EI Executive Board; Association of South East Asian Nations Women's Network (ASEAN) and National Union of the Teaching Profession Malaysia

What are EI Asia-Pacific's priorities for gender equity?

The priorities are reflected in the Millennium Development Goals: quality education; productive and decent employment; good health; fighting poverty and hunger; and sustainable environment. Gender equality is fundamental to the full enjoyment of human rights by women and men. Women's empowerment needs to be at the core of the global development agenda.



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

The Conference will lead to stronger networking across regions as a synergy force to advocate for gender equality at national level. It will enable the sharing of best practices from the Conference, and motivate women leaders to continue promoting a gender equality agenda in all activities.

What challenges do women leaders face compared to men?

As a head teacher I had to work very hard to gain the confidence of my community and society. The perception and cultural influence of society is that men make better school leaders. However, women are very capable and to some extent out-perform male colleagues.