



# on the move for equality

Newsletter Sunday 23 January 2011

[www.ei-ie.org/women](http://www.ei-ie.org/women) - Bangkok, Thailand, 20-23 January 2011

## The challenge of our Era: Empowering women and girls through education

EI's first World Women's Conference continued into its second day as women unionists around the world debate ways to empower girls and women through education.

UNESCO's Director for Gender Equality, Saniye Gülser Corat, delivered an impressive keynote, stating that education strengthens the position of women in both family and social spheres. "Good quality education has definitely empowered me as a woman," she said. "Otherwise I would not be here today." With girls representing 54% of out-of-school children and women two-third of all illiterate adults, all of us have to act to confront the broken promise by governments to have gender parity in primary education by 2005.

Carolyn Hannan, former Director of the UN Division for the Advancement of Women, commented that after primary education, the focus should shift to secondary education because it is at that level that women

are empowered to move from informal to decent work. Hannan also remarked that gender stereotypes should not be perpetuated through education.

Chair of the Global Campaign for Education and EI's chief regional co-ordinator for the African region, Assibi Napoe, presented the work of the campaign especially the global campaign to get girls into school. Focusing specifically on Africa, Napoe lamented the widespread exploitation of women and girls as sex workers or domestic workers, often resulting in girls being trafficked across borders and nations. This of course prevents them from attending school.

The next panellist, Maki Hagashikawa, spoke about the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative. As a conglomeration of partners, its strategy to empower girls is multi-sectoral, working through network partnerships and collective advocacy. "To confront the obstacles to girls' access to

education, we need to be more effective at the national level," she said.

Stella Maldonado, General Secretary of CTERA an EI member organisation in Argentina, described the situation in Latin America. Worsened by the lack of political will of governments and the neo-liberal agenda, the economies in the region suffer and as job opportunities decline, girls have to quit school to engage in informal work to contribute to family income.



Saniye Gülser Corat

## Global Action Week to advocate for women and girls education

([www.globalactionweek.org](http://www.globalactionweek.org))

Following on the morning's plenary discussion, teacher women union leaders from Australia, Burundi, Congo, Gambia, Japan, Niger, Senegal, Spain, Sri Lanka, and Togo debated in a workshop about the great opportunity the 2011 Global Action Week (GAW) will provide to advance the issue of women and girls education.

They will work closely with their partners within the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) on issues such as security, appropriate sanitation, and raising parents' awareness on the importance of sending their daughters to school. They agreed that parents should be financially publically supported in that regard.

Salimata Doumbia, EI Executive Board member, and SNEPPCI, Ivory Coast, talked about the situation in her conflict-struck country, Ivory Coast. She stressed the importance of

this year's theme, since after 10 years of civil war, girls' school dropout rates are high in her country.

Sulabha Donde, from AIPTE, India, took stock of women and girls' education in Asia-Pacific, then in India specifically. She said the four Indian EI affiliates are members of their GCE national coalition. She highlighted different issues to be raised during GAW. The first one being making girls education compulsory, convincing parents of the importance of sending girls to school.

Monique Fouilhoux, EI Deputy General Secretary and moderator of the workshop, said GAW will provide a great opportunity to emphasize and advance the agenda on girls and women's education, but this issue requires permanent efforts.

## Programme

Sunday 23 January

- 08:45** Participants gather in the Grand Ballroom  
*El slideshow: On the Move for Equality*
- 09:00** Welcome, Haldis Holst, EI Vice President Europe
- 09:15** Report on conference outcomes, Teopista Birungi, EI Africa Executive Board
- 10:00** Plenary discussion on outcomes, alliances, actions and processes
- 11:00** Refreshment break
- 11:30** Plenary discussion continues
- 12:30** Closing remarks: A Step Closer to Equality, Susan Hopgood, EI President
- 13:00** Lunch and departure

## Participant of the day

# Sulabha DONDE

South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Women's Network and All India Primary Teachers' Federation (AIPTF)



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

The AIPTF has 2.3 million members, of which one million are women. The Union's most successful project on gender equality has been the Women's Network Project funded by the Australian Education Union (AEU). Forteen years this project has raised awareness among women about their rights. Women now show a keen interest in union activities and have greatly increased their presence at membership and decision-making levels within my union.

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

The dominance of men in family life and society ensures women's subordinate status across much of India. It feeds various discriminatory practices against women such as bride burning, illiteracy, female foeticide, dowry death etc. Deficient legislation, high poverty levels, political exclusion and insecurity, as well as religious and cultural beliefs and climate change are among the main obstacles to gender parity in education across many countries in the region.

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

The AIPTF celebrates International Women's Day at state and national level. In 2011, we want to make female teachers aware of the Code of Professional Ethics because there is an increasing trend towards feminisation of the teaching workforce at the primary and upper primary levels.

## Quiz of the day

- 1) What is the theme of International Women's Day (IWD celebrated on 8 March) 2011?  
a. Women in unions b. 50 years of IWD c. 100 years of IWD
- 2) Which ILO Conventions are most relevant to gender equality?  
a. 100 (Equal Remuneration)  
b. 156 (Workers with Family Responsibilities)  
c. 183 (Maternity Protection)
- 3) Who was recently appointed head of the UN Women?  
a. Cristina Kirchner b. Dilma Rousseff c. Michelle Bachelet

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

## Campaign of the day

# Maternity protection is key to gender equality at work

Protecting maternity is a priority for many teacher unions to improve health of mother and child and ensure women's equality of opportunity and treatment in the workplace. Safeguarding women's employment and income security during and after maternity promotes gender equality and women empowerment and contributes to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and the union's "Decent work, Decent lives for women" campaign.

It was in 1919, during the first International Labour Conference that the first Convention on maternity protection (Convention 3) was adopted. It was followed by Convention 103 in 1952 and Convention 183 in 2000 to ensure that women's reproductive roles do not compromise their economic and employment security. 63 countries have ratified at least one of the maternity protection conventions.

Over the years, virtually all countries have adopted some measures of maternity protection. However, unions deplore a lack of implementation of existing legislation, underscoring the importance of social dialogue; monitoring and inspection mechanisms.

In 2009, the ILO was requested to promote the ratification and application of Convention 183 and to compile and disseminate good practices on parental leave and paternity and maternity leave and benefits, and provide technical support to governments to develop effective laws and policies.

In 2010, the EI affiliates in Nepal, through their participation in the EI women's network joined a national coalition with the trade union centers and civil society organizations for improved Maternity Protection Benefits in Nepal.

## Interview of the day Teopista Birungi Mayanja

EI Executive Board and EI Women's Conference Rapporteur

### How do teacher unions fight child labour, especially girls' labour?

Unions carry out a complementary service to their governments by ensuring access to quality education for all. A major obstacle to education access in developing countries is child labour. Teacher unions fight this scourge by working in coalition with civil society groups to develop a response; carrying out research; developing awareness campaigns, and supporting campaigns such as World Day Against Child Labour on 12 June.



### How can sport education contribute to gender equity?

Through sport education learners get social, physical, emotional and cognitive benefits. Physical activities can develop life skills, self-fulfilment, self-esteem, self-management, empowerment, and enable women to manage peer pressures. Through sport girls and women develop leadership skills and other skills necessary for gender equity.

### Which gender equity projects are African women networks currently working on?

We are working on educating the girl-child, maternity protection, ITC, leadership, financial and self-management skills. These projects enable women to participate and take up leadership roles in unions, education and society at large.