

EDUCATION INTERNATIONAL

ASIA PACIFIC NEWSLETTER

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Facing the Challenges of a Globalised Society

The Asia Pacific Regional Conference under the theme “Challenges to Education and Teachers’ Organisations in a Globalised Society” was held in Kaohsiung, Taiwan from 10 – 12 December 2003.

About 250 delegates and observers from the EI member organizations in the Asia Pacific region attended the Conference.

On 10 December, the Minister of Education of the Republic of Taiwan, the Mayor of the Kaoshiung city opened the Conference.

The President of National Teachers’ Association, Taiwan and the President of the Kaohsiung Branch of the NTA welcomed the participants to the Conference.

The Chairperson of the EIAPR Committee Mr. Nagakaju Sakakibara of the Japan Teachers’ Union, Mr. Bob Harris, Consultant to the EI General Secretary and EI General Secretary Mr. Fred van Leeuwen addressed the Conference on the third day discussing the challenges faced by workers including teachers around the world due to effects of globalisation.

One Voice for Teachers

In April and July 2002, the Executive Board of Education International and the World Congress of the World Council of Teachers approved a Declaration containing six aims and principles to which both are committed and declaring to work together towards integrated structures, which will enable them to speak with one voice on behalf of teachers and education employees worldwide.

In the declaration both organizations have committed in promoting the cause of teachers and other educational employees, improving their working and living conditions and defending and developing their organizations and defending and promoting trade union rights.

One Voice for Teachers contd

The declaration made by EI and the WCT states the belief that the right to education is a fundamental human rights and that education is a powerful force for building communities based on tolerance, understanding of diversity and respect for human dignity, rejection of all forms of discrimination, independence from government or authorities of any kind be they political or religious and support for democracy and social justice, the ideals of UN charters and Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The World Council of Teachers is the second largest group of teachers and educational employees after the Education International and is represented in intergovernmental organizations along side with the EI. The decision of the EI and WCT is expected to contribute greatly to the international unity among teachers and education employees in many countries. The representatives of the two organizations are now discussing the structures and technical matters such as finance and staffing.

Moving ahead in difficulties: Afghanistan

The EI Executive Board in its 21st meeting from 21-23 October 2003 has decided to affiliate the Afghanistan Teachers’ Support Association after receiving its application in August this year. The decision comes as a great support to the fledgling new organisation operating in difficult circumstances.

The ATSA was initially established as the Afghanistan Teachers' Association during the inaugural congress of ATA held from 18-25 May 2003. The organisation changed its name to register with the government of Afghanistan. The ATSA represents about 1,000 teachers mostly in and around Kabul.

The ATSA faces tremendous challenges in organizing in a multi ethnic country with hardly any past experience of independent teachers' organizations.

To make matters worse teachers salaries are very low and are not paid on time and teachers are being dismissed and schools closed due to the lack of funds. Early this year, in one province 4,000 teachers were dismissed and 130 schools were closed. These schools were merged with other schools creating big class sizes and difficult learning environment.

EI in cooperation with the Novib (Oxfam of the Netherlands) assisted the ATSA in developing a teachers training program and in cooperation with the Lararforbundet of the Sweden has developed union training program. These programs are expected to help the ATSA in contributing to improve the quality of education in the country and better organize teachers. EI has decided to place an external coordinator to assist the ATSA in its activities. The ATSA office was established in August 2003.

Role of Teachers in a Market Economy

Education International in cooperation with the National Trade Union of Education & Scientific Workers of Uzbekistan held a seminar on the role of teachers' in a Market Economy and trade union leadership in Tashkent, Uzbekistan from 20-21 October 2003.

28 Top Leaders of National Trade Union of Education & Scientific Workers of Uzbekistan and representative of EI attended the seminar. The national seminar discussed on 2 main themes, namely: The Role of Teachers' Union in the Market Economy and Trade Union Leadership.

The seminar discussed the roles of teachers in a market economy, basic concepts and skills on strategic planning, leadership and decision-making and real life experiences under a market economy. The seminar was in consensus that a teachers' union has a crucial role to play in a market economy and recommended that capacity and strength of trade unions are vital in influencing policies and decisions of the government.

EIAPR Conference: Facing the challenges of a globalised society

Four roundtables on "Education for All – Progress, obstacles and future actions", WTO/GATS and its effects of Education", Education for Global Progress" and "Role of teachers' organizations in a Globalised Society" were held during the Conference. The roundtables made recommendations, which were adopted by the Conference.

In addition to the recommendations of the roundtables the Conference adopted resolutions during the plenary on Rights of Teachers and Students, Sexual Orientation, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Education of Indigenous People, Landless Nationals in Fiji, Tamil Nadu, EI Asia Pacific Regional Office, Working Languages in EIAPR Structures, HIV AIDS and endorsed the resolution on Sexual Harassment at Workplace and Trafficking in Women.

The Conference elected an EIAPR Committee comprising of Chairperson from the Japan Teachers Union, Vice Chairpersons from Australian Education Union and the All India Primary Teachers' Federation.

The Committee also comprises of 12 members from the member organizations in all the sub-regions of the Asia Pacific region.

The Conference made recommendations for the amendment to the by-laws of the EI Asia Pacific Region to enable inclusion of member organizations in the Central Asian States. The recommendations and necessary amendments to incorporate the recommendations are being drafted and would be sent to the EI Brussels for adoption by the EI Executive Board.

A number of social and entertainment activities were organised during the Conference, including a musical performance by school students during the opening ceremony.

The Newly Elected EIAPR Committee meets:

The newly Elected Education International Asia Pacific Regional Committee met immediately after the conclusion of the 4th EIAPR Conference and decided to hold its next meeting in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Among those attending the meeting were the EIAPR Committee President Mr. Yuzuru Nakamura, of the Japan Teachers' Union, Vice Presidents Ms Susan Hopgood of the Australian Education Union and Mr. Ram Pal Singh of the All India Primary Teachers' Federation.

The Committee members Ms. Angela Wijeshighe of the All Cylone Union of Teachers, Sri Lanka, Ms. Lok Yim Pheng of National Union of Teaching Profession, Malaysia, Ms. Epenesa Esera of Western Samoa National Teachers Association, Western Samoa, Ms. D. Tungalag of Mongolian Enlightenment Federation of Teachers' Union, Mongolia, Mr. S Thandayutha Pani of Ceylone Tamil Teachers' Union, Sri Lanka, Mr. Mike Thiruman of the Singapore Teachers' Union, Singapore, Mr. Penehuro Hauma of Tuvalu Teachers' Association, Mr. Hee Ju Cho of Korean Teachers' and Education Workers' Union, South Korea, Mr. Bal Ram, Fiji Teachers' Union, Fiji, Ms. Flora Arellano of the Alliance of Concerned Teachers, the Philippines, Mr. Perianan Ramanathan of Malaysian Education Association, Malaysia, Ms Hui Shan Chang of National Teachers' Association, Taiwan were present in the meeting. EI Board members S Eswaran of the All India Primary Teachers' Federation and Ms. Kim Jee Yee of the Korean Teachers and Educational Workers' Union, Korea were also present.

Education for All and Trade Unionism

Education International in Cooperation with the National Trade Union of Education & Scientific Workers of Uzbekistan held a Round Table on Education for All for Member Organizations in Central Asia from 16-18 October 2003.

Education for All remains high priority for the countries in the sub-region, which are undergoing tremendous social and economical changes and crumbling social structures. The EI round table was attended by 4 Top Leaders of National Trade Union of Education & Scientific Workers of Kazakhstan, 3 Top Leaders of National Trade Union of Education & Scientific Workers of Kyrgystan, 2 Top Leaders of National Trade Union of Education & Scientific Workers of Tajikistan, 10 Top Leaders of National Trade Union of Education & Scientific Workers of Uzbekistan, representatives of the UNESCO, the Ministry of Education, Uzbekistan and Education International

The round table held to exchange information regarding the status of implementation of the national plans on Education for All in the Central Asian countries, consider the responses of the governments specially on teachers' status and professionalism, develop Teachers' Union national action plans to respond to the challenges faced by the education sector, discussed issues and challenges faced in the implementation of the Dakar Framework of Action, with emphasis on the Teachers' Status and Professionalism and highlighted the success and engagement of the teachers' organizations.

The states in Central Asia are slowly implementing structural reforms including market economy and democratic processes and have substantial impact on education sector where salaries are very low (USD 7 a month, Tajikistan) and the role of teachers' organizations have not changed significantly since the Soviet era.

PGRI Board Stops the Popular EI Consortium Activities

The PGRI Board abruptly decided to stop the EI Consortium activities aimed at assisting the PGRI develop into a union from an association with democratic structures and constitution. The decision of the board just prior to the PGRI Congress in July 2003 came as a surprise to all Consortium partners and the Provincial Leadership of the PGRI, which were participating in the activities.

The activities over the last three years were held in eleven provinces where the leaders had recommended constitutional changes including those to strengthen good governance and transparency.

The PGRI/EI/Consortium Project National Evaluation and planning meeting was held in Bali Indonesia from 9 – 11 October 2003 in good hope to revive the stopped project activities. The meeting participated by representatives of the PGRI Board, PGRI Provincial Leaders and representatives of the EI, Lararforbundet, NL of Norway and AEU held discussion in a difficult environment due to the events prior to the activity.

The meeting aimed to evaluate the implementation and impacts of the Project for the year 2003, revisit the challenges encountered and collectively formulate solutions, reach an understanding for 2004 programme and plan the activities, discuss the possible expansion of the project. The meeting also sought to understand the reasons for stopping the activities. However the

meeting remained inconclusive due to the unceremonious absence of the President and the General Secretary of the PGRI on the second day of the meeting

The possibility of restarting the consortium project lies in the hands of the PGRI Board which stopped the project. EI and the Consortium partners although sad have expressed their willingness to continue supporting the Project activities because of some positive developments in the last three years and the impact of the project on the provincial leadership.

World Social Forum

EI participated as part of the Global Unions Federation delegation in the World Social Forum (WSF), which was held in Mumbai, India, from 16-21 Jan 2004. Union leaders addressed the audience on the 15th January, before the Opening Plenary. More than a dozen trade union-related events were held during the Forum, among which seminars on sustainable development (17 Jan), WTO (18 Jan) and the negative impact of globalisation (19 Jan).

A guise to keep tab on the trade union activities

EI member organisation in South Korea, the Korean Teachers Union protested against the inclusion of sensitive data on students under the Education Information System in Korea after the government failed to abide by the agreement. The KTU claims that the Education Information System can be used as a method to keep a tab on trade union activities in the education sector.

In strange turn of events the protesting KTU leaders were requested to go the police station. Responding to the request seven KTU leaders went to the station and found out that six of them were charged by the Ministry of Justice under the Criminal Code of "Obstruction to Business". The leaders were detained.

EI issued action appeals and wrote to the President of the Republic strongly supporting the KTU action and urging to immediately release detained leaders and begin process of dialogue. The leaders were later released in bail but the case is yet to finalize.

Teachers in Aceh suffer: EI demands negotiations

In Aceh, Indonesia thousands of children and teachers continue to suffer as they are killed, displaced, their schools and homes burnt in the conflict between the Free Aceh Movement and the Indonesian Army, which intensified early this year.

In response to the violence the EI in October 2003 urged the President of Indonesia, Ms Megawati Sukarnoputri to arrive at a negotiated solution to the Aceh conflict and take immediate action to stop all kinds of violence against teachers and school children.

During the 1988 and 1998 Military operation 27 teachers were killed, 15 kidnapped, 36 permanently disabled and 18 teachers' houses burnt. Five years since 1998 and mostly in the present Army offensive against the FAM 44 teachers died, 39 teachers were robbed of their vehicles, 2 kidnapped, 44 permanently disabled, 106 teachers' houses destroyed or burnt and 26 teachers with psychological trauma.

About 40,000 troops and police are said to be confronting an estimated 5,000 Free Aceh Movement members. The conflict has taken lives of hundreds of civilians and displaced more than 35,000 people. This number is expected to rise to over 100,000 in a couple of months. Many schools were burnt and both sides are accusing each other for the arson. Thousands of children are out of school. The teachers who were posted to Aceh have also left their posts fearing reprisal from the Free Aceh Movement.

World Teachers Day Celebrations;

The World Teachers' Day was celebrated on Saturday, 5 October 2003. The day marks the day of signing the ILO-UNESCO Recommendations on the Status of Teachers in 1966. The theme for this year's celebrations was "Teachers – Opening Doors to a Better World".

The day was uniquely used by the EI and the member organizations to attract public attention on challenges that teachers face as well as questions related to the financing of education. Affiliates held numerous activities viz. interactive programs with various civil society, students, education and political partners; public meetings; publication and/or distribution of WTD materials.

Many organizations tapped the collaboration of the media highlighting the key role of teachers, both in the classroom and in the community at large and illustrating how teachers are the pillars of education helping pupils develop critical skills, impart core values, open up perspectives, possibilities and hope.

Biggest lobby ever on Children missing Education

The Global Campaign for Education (GCE), of which EI is a partner, will be organising its 5th Global Action Week (GAW) on 19-25 April 2004. The theme of this year's action week is "*Children Missing an Education*". Last year's GAW attracted 1.5 million participants from around the world in the largest lesson ever, to raise awareness on the 2005 deadline of gender parity in education. This year, the GCE consortium is organising the "*biggest lobby ever*".

The GCE consortium is made up of various international NGOs, in order to press governments around the world to achieve the 2015 Education For All goal set in Dakar. - 14 January 2004. Preparations for Global Action Week 2004 are well underway. Members are requested to send in their registration forms to take part in the World's Largest Lobby.

EI and World Bank develop Consultation Mechanism

On 12 Jan, EI representatives and World Bank's Senior Vice-President and Head of the Bank's Human Development Network, Jean-Louis Sarbib, met to set up an EI-WB working group. This is part of the consultation mechanism agreed upon by leaders of the two organisations in a meeting earlier on 16 Dec in Washington DC.

The working group will facilitate communication between the two organisations on education policy issues and on education programmes funded by the Bank, Issues to be discussed in-depth are the criterias of the EFA Fast Track Initiative (notably the fixing of teacher salary at 3.5 times the GDP per capita), the recruitment of voluntary teachers, the school fees and the anti-union attitude of some WB officials.

Indigenous Forum:

The EI Asia-Pacific Regional Office has organised a 4-day conference on Indigenous Peoples' Education from 4-7 December, at the Suva Motor Inn in Suva, Fiji. 6 papers will be presented on the issue and EI affiliates from 12 organisations attending the conference.

SAARC Teachers' Federation Plans to Integrate

An Integration Workshop was held in Colombo, Sri Lanka from 9 – 10 September 2003 to discuss the integration of the STF into EI. Key office bearers of the SAARC Teachers' Federation, from the EI member organizations in India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka participated in the meeting.

The SAARC Teachers Federation (STF) is a grouping of the EI member organizations in the SAARC countries that includes Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The STF met and organized a conference in Nepal during the SAARC summit and has affiliated with the SAARC sub-regional structure.

The workshop also discussed future programme and activities, assessed the situation of Education For All in the sub-region. Discussions were held on amendments to the STF constitution and bylaws, EI-STF integration including the administrative and financial aspects. The proposal for the STF Integration into EI has so far received a positive response from all concerned.

FES-GUF Consultation meeting;

EI regional office participated in the FES-GUF consultation meeting held in Singapore from 13-14 November 2003. The meeting was participated by the representatives of the FES, IMF, PSI, UNI, IFBWW, IUUF, TAWRO, ITF, ILO, ACILS, LO-

TCO and ICFTU-APRO. The meeting aimed at coordinating activities in the region. The meeting discussed cooperation in many countries including Burma, China and Afghanistan, effects of the WTO Cancun meeting on the trade unions in the region and the upcoming World Social Forum in Mumbai in January 2004.

Concerns were raised over the failures of the WTO mechanism especially the Cancun meeting and the need for trade union organizations to address the issues at the national levels. Failure of the All Chinese Federation of Trade Unions to independently represent workers in the country especially the workers in the private sectors and migrating workers and the influence of the Communist Party of China were highlighted. Plans were made to participate in the World Social Forum in New Delhi.

Trafficking of Women and Children and Sexual Harassment

Colombo Sri Lanka 5 – 7 September 2003, female and male leaders from India, Nepal and Sri Lanka gathered to discuss role of teachers in dealing with the problems of social abuse which is hindrance in achieving Education for all. The Round Table organized by Education International also discussed the problem of Sexual Harassment of women at the workplace and reviewed the social aspects of the problem including the legal measures.

The Roundtable was instrumental in enhancing the understanding of the participants about the “trafficking” and “sexual harassment” and review the SAARC treaty on the issues. It formulated strategies and an action plans for awareness campaigns and adopted recommendations and resolution for future guidance.

EI and PSI recruitment campaign

Membership of EI in the region has grown to 68 member organizations in 34 countries representing 9 million teachers. World wide the EI represents more than 26 million members through 315 member organizations in 161 countries and territories. There are a number of teachers’ organizations, which are not affiliated to the EI. There are a number of countries where EI has no affiliates.

With a view to organize the unorganized teachers, the EI and the PSI have drawn a recruitment plan, which would enable both organizations to work together on a strategic approach to gain more affiliates and to help existing affiliates to grow. A list of the priority countries in each region has been developed and a detailed profile on each country is being developed. Further information on the trade union and teachers’ situation in each country is being gathered to establish priorities for a joint recruitment campaign. In order to increase membership, EI is encouraging joint action and merger between the member organizations and efforts are also being made to simplify the EI recruitment process.

Human and Trade Union Rights Network

The Education International and the Public Services International in cooperation with the ILO and LO-Norway have decided to continue activities under the human and trade union rights network among the teachers and human rights activists from the member organizations of EI and PSI in the ASEAN sub-region.

Presently there are on-going national campaigns pursued by 28 EI and PSI member organizations in Thailand, Malaysia, Philippines and Indonesia. The Network has been updating participating EI and PSI members on the trade union rights situation in the region with special focus on the education and public services for them to take necessary actions in improving the situation.

Tamil Nadu; Struggle against unilateral cut in pension;

More than a million state government employees and teachers in Tamil Nadu went on indefinite strike after the collapse of the talks with the state’s minister on 27 June 2003. The mass action was in protest of unilateral cuts in their pensions and also to demand the restoration of bonus and leave payments. Following the demonstrations the government dismissed over 200,000 teachers and government employees and detained 2,400 including 14 senior trade union leaders. The teachers and the government servants filed application for revocation of the punishment, but the Supreme Court verdict said teachers and civil servants are not allowed to strike.

In response to the government action the EI wrote to the Chief Minister of State of Tamil Nadu reminding her of the nation's commitments under ILO Conventions and to take immediate action to reach a negotiated solution to the conflict. After interventions from the EI, PSI and the ILO the government took steps to reinstate many of the dismissed workers however many remained charged under criminal act.

The EIAP Regional Committee meeting on 16-17 September 2003 in Kuala Lumpur Malaysia adopted a resolution deploring the blatant violation of trade union rights and dismissal of more than 4,000 workers and called reinstating the remaining 7,000 dismissed workers and teachers, restoration of the recognition of teachers and public sector unions and benefits.

Teachers being harassed

The government authorities in Cambodia are bent to harass teachers who have joined the Cambodian Independent Teachers Association, an EI affiliate in the country. The CITA since its inception in 2000 has been demanding increase in salary from 25 USD to 100 USD. The authorities view this as a threat and take every opportunity to threaten teachers willing to join the CITA. In a number of occasions CITA was not allowed to hold its activities like trainings and planning meetings.

Despite the harassments and threats the CITA held a number of activities this year including three trainings of branch leaders from 29th October to 6th November and has planned a number of training and recruitment campaigns in cooperation with the Lararforbundet and EI in 2004.

A planning meeting held in August proposed a series of recruitment campaigns to increase membership and form provincial branches. The membership of CITA in the last two years has increased five folds, mostly because of the dissatisfaction of majority of teachers over the government stand not to increase teachers' salaries, which is the lowest in the country and because of the ongoing cooperation between the CITA, Lararforbundet and EI.

Earlier in February 2003 the authorities threatened teachers of grave consequences if they joined demonstrations to demand more salaries. In June police stormed the venue of the CITA – Lararforbundet training activity in Pursat and did not allow participants to reconvene. In August the police in Kompong Channag barred CITA leaders to hold a planning meeting under the EI-Lararforbundet project in the scheduled premises and forced the meeting in a public restaurant with a few policemen observing the full duration of the proceedings.

Union Skills vital for Women

Eighteen women leaders from the Bihar and Uttaranchal state affiliates of the All India Primary Teachers Federation met in New Delhi from 18-21 May 2003 during a Women's Union Skills Development Workshop held in cooperation with the Australian Education Union.

The Workshop aimed at developing leadership skills and providing information on unionism and working of unions. The women leaders discussed lower representation of women in union's activities and decision-making levels. Concerns were raised on the ignorance of most women members on the constitution and by-laws of the union and its' working. The workshop developed strategies to improve awareness on issues such as union finance, communication, decision making, negotiation procedure, representations, elections, meetings etc. Discussion was held on the service conditions of the teachers and the issues viz, child labour and girl child education, contract teachers including the extra teaching duties assigned to the teachers. Views were shared on EFA and related issues especially in the interior and remote areas of the participating states from North India.

The workshop recommended strategies for the state and national organizations on the issues discussed and prepared state wise action-plans at district and grass-root levels.

EI/ ILO agrees to continue Child Labour activity

After the EI-ILO IPEC Child Labour Activities in Bangladesh, the EI member organizations have decided to continue jointly on future ILO time bound programs on Child Labour. An agreement was signed between the EI regional office and the ILO Dhaka office to facilitate the implementation of the activities.

A year long project agreed will train teachers, raise awareness of students and of the communities around the schools on child rights and monitor child labour issues.

EI Congress; “Education for Global Progress”

The 4th World Congress of Education International will be held in Porto Alegre, Brazil from 22 to 26 July 2004. The capital of the Brazillian state of Rio Grande do Súl is known for having hosted sessions of the World Social Forum and the World Education Forum. What better venue than Porto Alegre to discuss "Education for Global Progress", which will be the main theme of the EI Congress?

Education International and the Confederaçao Nacional dos Trabalhadores em Educaçao (CNTE/Brazil) are very pleased to extend an invitation to all EI member organisations to attend the EI Congress. The first Congress mailing has now been sent by regular mail to all EI affiliates. EI invites its member unions to register quickly for the Congress.

Organisations qualifying for Congress Assistance are also requested to apply as soon as possible. Please note that all Congress materials are now available for download on the EI website. Your organisation may even register for Congress through this website!

The pre-Congress activities include the Higher Education Caucus and the Indigenous Peoples' Forum. During the Congress round tables would be held on the following sub-themes, Education: Public Service or Commodity, The Right to Teach: The Right to Learn, Recruitment and Retention of Qualified Teachers.

ABOUT EI AND ADDRESSES