



## Quality Education for Girls and Women is Progress for All

International Women's Day is as much a rallying point for women's movements as for trade union movements, since its commemoration first emerged from labour movement activities in North America and across Europe at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The affiliates of Education International (EI), representing some 30 million teachers and education employees in approximately 400 organisations in 171 countries and territories across the globe, view this day as central to their work towards the transformative changes required in all societies to achieve gender equality, and secure and promote women's rights.

Education is not only public good and a human right, it enables the realisation of all other rights, and it empowers girls and women. However, the right to education is denied to many because of a lack of political commitment, the under-financing of education and the impact of inequality. The intersection of gender with other social identities (such as ethnicity, religion, race, economic status, sexuality, or disability) often means that the most marginalised groups of girls or women are also least likely to have access to quality education.

### Uniting for Quality Education

Because the quality of current education provision is under attack in many countries throughout the world, EI affiliates are focusing their efforts on mobilising in their countries and at the international level to demand that governments and policy-makers act to raise the quality of education, and guarantee that it is freely available and accessible to all.

EI's current global campaign, *Unite for Quality Education*, aims to ensure that the provision of a quality education for all remains at the top of the agenda for a sustainable, peaceful and prosperous future. EI's definition of quality education comprises three key elements: **quality teaching; modern quality tools for teaching and learning; and quality teaching and learning environments.**

Quality education provides people with the critical abilities needed to participate and succeed locally and globally, and the 2013 GMR shows that education actively contributes to the sustainable and democratic human development of society.

### Education as an Enabling Right for Gender Equality and Women's Rights

Having access to free quality education is especially significant for girls and women, not only because education facilitates the realisation of other human rights, but also because the educational achievements of women can have a direct impact within the family and across society.

The amount and quality of parents' education is linked to their children's educational accomplishments. A mother's education often has more influence on her children's life chances because it contributes to improved education for the next generation. An educated woman is in a stronger position to bargain within her family and negotiate with her husband, which may enable her to secure more resources for her children (UNFPA, 2013), and recent research shows that she will also participate in a wider range of decision-making in the home than an uneducated woman.

Educated girls and women understand the importance of healthcare: the lives of 2, 1 million children under the age of 5 were saved because of improvements in girls' education between 1990 and 2009 (GMR, 2013). An additional 3, 9 million lives could be saved if all women had access to both primary and secondary education.

Although we recognise education's unrivalled potential as an enabling right, as a global community of teachers and education employees who are in the classroom with students every day, we are also keenly aware that access to education can be instrumentalised in ways that further entrench



El's Second World Women's Conference "Women in Trade Unions and in Education: from Words to Action" will take place in April 2014, in Dublin, with a focus on achieving gender equality in education and unions.

gender inequalities and violate the rights of women and girls. In societies that are characterised by extreme forms of gender inequality and the role of women is defined in purely reproductive terms, girls are allowed to become literate only so they can become better wives and mothers. The right to education, therefore, must be conceptualised and operationalised in the broadest possible terms, beyond literacy, to increase girls' and women's options for earning a living that is not restricted to poorly paid, casual jobs on the margins of the labour market.

## More Women Teachers as Leaders in Education Trade Unions

As the voices of teachers' and education employees' worldwide, El's affiliates do not only stand united to call for quality education for all, we also remain determined to address the issue of gender equality and women's rights and empowerment within our own trade union and organisational structures.

The second El World Women's Conference will take place in Dublin, Republic of Ireland - April 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> 2014. The conference theme is *Women in Trade Unions and in Education: from Words to Action*.

The conference programme takes up key topics regarding women's organising and leadership within education trade unions, and women's and girls' participation in, and successful completion of, quality education. Conference participants will, therefore, address four areas that El affiliates have highlighted as crucial for the realisation of women's and girls' rights in education and in teachers' trade unions and organisations:

1. Women's leadership is an unfinished agenda in education trade unions – it's time to move from rhetoric to change: El affiliates want to increase their efforts to organise more women teachers and to have more women in leadership roles within their unions and organisations.
2. 'Education transforms lives'; (the statistics in the new GMR show this time and again). But for that transformation to be sustainable, quality education must be free of content that discriminates or stereotypes people on the basis of gender, religion, sexuality, disability, ethnicity or any other social position or identity. El affiliates want to increase their efforts to free educational content from stereotypes and discrimination.
3. Violence against teachers and students is increasingly visible, both within and outside of schools, in all corners of the world. El affiliates want to take the lead, as teachers' unions and organisations, in ensuring that every effort is made at international, national and local levels to guarantee that schools remain safe sanctuaries for teachers and learners alike.
4. Quality education means education that is equally accessible to *all*: girls *and* boys, majority *and* minority groups, rich *and* poor. El affiliates call on the world to unite for quality education, and to ensure that equality remains central to the quality education agenda that will be adopted in the post-2015 sustainable development framework.

Fred van Leeuwen  
General Secretary



UNITE FOR QUALITY EDUCATION  
Better education for a better world

Unite for Quality Education is Education International's flagship global education campaign

For more information:  
[www.unite4education.org](http://www.unite4education.org)