



On the move for Equality

First World Women's Conference

Objectif Egalité

Première conférence mondiale des femmes

En camino hacia la igualdad

Primera Conferencia Mundial de la Mujer

EI Regional and Sub-Regional Women's Networks



Education International
Internationale de l'Éducation
Internacional de la Educación

Foreword

The EI regional and sub-regional women's networks have contributed fundamentally to promoting women's empowerment and leadership. Their work is supported through provisions in the EI Programme and Budget, through development cooperation projects (CTF/FCE, UEN, Lärarförbundet, AEU, NEA, FE.CC.OO, FETE UGT), and other means available. EI currently has 10 sub-regional or regional networks running: 1 Pan-African and 5 sub-regional; 1 regional and 3 sub-regional in Latin America; 3 sub-regional in Asia-Pacific; 1 European and 1 Caribbean.

One of the main aims of EI's First World Women's Conference – On the Move for Equality – is to connect the EI Women's Networks through their past and future strategies, and create a global EI Women's Network. In this brief compilation you will find descriptions of these networks: Their history, their objectives, challenges and achievements, as well as future strategies and priority issues.

We hope that this Conference will support the regional and sub-regional EI Women's Networks in their development, and that in all corners of the globe, EI moves forward with a powerful voice.

We wish you an inspiring Conference!

Contents

Africa: The African Women in Education Network (AWEN)	4
Specific Objectives of AWEN.....	4
Main challenges of AWEN.....	4
Activities.....	4
Achievements.....	5
Asia-Pacific: SAARC Women’s Network	6
Impact of the programme.....	6
Challenges.....	6
Future Strategies.....	7
Asia-Pacific: ASEAN Women’s Network.....	7
Impact of the programme.....	7
Challenges.....	8
Future Strategies.....	8
Asia-Pacific: Council of Pacific Education.....	8
Impact of the programmes	8
Caribbean: Status of Women’s Committee/ Women’s Network	9
Objectives.....	9
Our Partners.....	9
Programmes and Activities	10
Achievements.....	10
Europe: ETUCE Women’s Network.....	11
Statutory equality bodies.....	11
Aims of the ETUCE Women’s Network	11
The online platform of the Women’s Network.....	12
Priority themes.....	12
Latin America: Education Workers Women’s Network	13
Objectives.....	13
Advances	14
New challenges	14
Future strategy.....	15

Africa: The African Women in Education Network (AWEN)

The African Women in education Network (AWEN) is a network of women in education in Africa. It comprises of ninety eight (98) organizations in forty seven (47) countries. This network is an initiative of Education International which is being supported by partners like the Canadian Teachers Federation (CTF), Lararforbundet of Sweden and the Union of Education, Norway (UEN).

The Overall objective is to achieve gender equality in unions in order to strengthen unions and to contribute to the achievement of Quality Education for All.

Specific Objectives of AWEN

- To reduce the obstacles to the access to the women to the decision-making positions
- To build women capacities in leadership and communication
- To guarantee an effective interaction between the sub regional networks in Africa
- To make sure the gender approach is integrated in the unions' policies.

AWEN intends to achieve the access of more women to decision- making positions at all levels of trade unions, the profession and in the society for a Quality Education for All.

It shall allow in the long term to correct social inequalities and reduce the gap between men and women in education.

Main challenges of AWEN

- The lack of political will from some union leaders which results in the low participation of women in union activities and their absence at the decision- making positions in the unions and society
- The limited training opportunity for women is another challenge that has to be overcome to ensure that women are promoted.
- The lack of communication has impaired the visibility of women activities at the national and sub regional levels
- Insufficient specific training related to gender and women also needs to be addressed to change the culture of the unions.

Activities

In order to fulfil its objectives, the network implements various activities.

Research: In order to have reliable data for targeted actions for unions, AWEN has carried out a data collection on the situation of women from 39 unions.

Training: Since its launching in May 2008, AWEN helped unions build the capacities of members, both male and female. More than three hundred union members have been trained in Gender mainstreaming within unions, women's leadership, union management, Information and communication technology, advocacy and lobbying, resource mobilisation, etc.

More than twenty women have been granted bursaries to allow them undertake further studies Science, mathematics, social studies, early childhood development, gender and development studies, etc.

Advocacy: Advocacy and lobbying are strategies used by AWEN to win the support of union leaders and members for women. Funds allocation for women's specific activities , women's involvement in all union activities and structures, promoting women at decision-making positions, including women's specific needs in unions' claims, are the main issues advocated or lobbied for. Advocacy and lobbying have produced positive results in Mozambique, Nigeria and Ghana.

Awareness campaigns: Campaigns to raise awareness on gender issues, girl child education, violence at school, women's rights such as maternity leave, female genital mutilations, women 's reproductive health, salary equity, ... have been successfully conducted by networks at national level in Ghana, Niger, Gabon and others countries.

Publications: The women's Newsletter" Women Promo is issued twice a year. It is a very power communication tool that enables women's networks in the five sub regions to share information and experiences of best practices; it published in two languages: French and English. Other materials meant for sensitization such as Brochures on the Girl child education, HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis B, and Cholesterol, are also produced and distributed to members.

Round tables: AWEN has recently organised prior to the EI pa African Conference, a round table which brought together about seventy participants from twenty nine countries do discuss women's issues within teacher unions, education and society. Women's conferences/round table have also been organised by networks in Ghana, South Africa, Tanzania, etc.

Achievements

Though AWEN faces some difficulties like insufficient human and financial resources, the language barrier, insufficient political support from union leaders, some positive results can be mentioned: women networks exist at national and sub regional levels, solidarity between women is now a reality; many Women are head of unions or members of the unions' executives.

Asia-Pacific: SAARC Women's Network

The EI regional office assists the EI member organizations in the SAARC Women's Network to conduct their activities in cooperation with the Australian Education Union, Canadian Teachers' Federation, Union of Education Norway and Lararförbundet of Sweden. Since the inception of the Women's Network more than 5,000 women leaders were trained in India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

The SAARC women's network activities focused on increasing women's recruitment and leadership in unions and on the issues related to violence against women, legal rights, HIV/AIDS, maternity protection and discriminatory practices against the girl child. A number of trainings, workshops, meetings and seminars were held. A number of surveys were conducted, advocacy campaigns were run and numerous publications were made. A number of committees formed to undertake specific responsibilities like implementing the programme, producing the newsletter, developing and updating the website etc.

Impact of the programme

Many member organizations in SAARC have taken necessary constitutional measures to ensure higher representation of women in the decision making bodies. The AIFTO India (50%) and the NTA, NNTA Nepal (33%) are among the recent organizations to make the constitutional amendments.

Participation of women in union and union activities has improved. About 15,000 women participated in the women's caucus and triennial conference of AIPTF last year. Women in big numbers participated in the mass agitation on the "Right to Education Act and implementation of the recommendations of the 6th Pay Commission". In Sri Lanka the ACUT, ACUT (G) and USLTS have achieved 62%, 54% and 53% women's participation at the decision making levels. The AIFTO unit in Kerala is working to increase women's participation at the decision making levels.

Women's network committees are becoming part of their respective unions and are growing in stature inside the unions. The members of the women's network and women office bearers of the state affiliates are now permanent invitees to the AISTF Executive Committee. The AISTF women's committees in West Bengal, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh are in the process of forming a core group of women at the district level. The AIPTF women cells are functioning in 15 states. Two AIFTO units funded 70% of the costs incurred for women's activities. This year the AIFTO Rajasthan unit is focused on recruiting more women.

Women's networks have become active in building national coalitions for women's cause. The NTA and NNTA Joint women's network committee is part of the national coalition with the trade union centers and civil society organizations for improved Maternity Protection Benefits in Nepal.

Challenges

Recruiting young women teachers and ensuring their active participation in union's activities is still among the major challenges faced by the teacher organisations in the region.

Despite the constitutional measures very few women are holding the key positions at the national and state levels of the organizations, and only a very few women are holding the key positions at the district and unit levels.

Future Strategies

There is a need to improve participation of young women in the union, union decision making bodies and union activities. The networks have decided to continue to commit in continuously working towards improving the situation.

The EI women's network activities on the issues related to violence against women, legal rights, HIV/AIDS, maternity protection and discriminatory practices against the girl child have been effective in galvanizing women teachers in favour of unionism and the activities will be continued.

Asia-Pacific: ASEAN Women's Network

The EI regional office assists the EI member organizations in Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand and Malaysia to conduct the ASEAN Women's Network activities in cooperation with the Canadian Teachers' Federation, Lararforbundet of Sweden and FES. EI affiliates in Cambodia, Singapore and East Timor have not yet joined the network.

Since the inception of the Women's Network hundreds of women leaders were trained on women's rights and Millennium Development goals, a number of publications were distributed and a website for women's network was created. The Women's Rights Kit was produced on women's rights and the ways to end common discriminations in the participating countries.

The main objective of the network is to improve women's participation in unions and empower women by providing information on human rights and equity issues. Building network helps create solidarity among women teachers and enhances women's participation in the union activities.

Impact of the programme

Women leaders hold vital leadership positions in four EI member organizations at the national levels whose efforts to strengthen women's leadership at all levels is facilitated by the network programmes. The number of women holding leadership positions at different levels of the organizations has increased.

Many upcoming women leaders in men dominated organizations feel encouraged and are motivated by the exchanges with the top women leaders of other organizations in the network. Organisations like NUTP, SMP-NATOW take up some responsibilities in coordinating network activities contributing their resources. Involvement of women leaders at the sub- regional level has helped them to take up leadership positions at the international level.

PGRI amended its constitution enabling 30% leadership position to women on the recommendation of the PGRI women's network and women's caucus prior to the PGRI Congress. Lärarförbundet decided to cooperate with the EI members in the Philippines for the women's network activities.

Challenges

The number of women leaders at all levels of the organization is still very low. Women's participation in union activity has to be increased. There are number of equity issues that unions are unable to address at the national level. Women's issues are not priority issues for almost all organizations in the ASEAN region. Gender for many organizations is not a cross cutting issue.

Women in the ASEAN region continue to be discriminated against. Unions are not part of the national policy makers on gender and equity and have hardly been able to question discriminatory practices based on socio-cultural and religious traditions.

EI is looking at the possibilities of obtaining assistance for network activities in Indonesia and Thailand from 2011.

Future Strategies

Developing networks within organizations to enable women at all levels to participate in the union activities

Focusing on policy matters and building union capacity in influencing national debates on women's rights.

Asia-Pacific: Council of Pacific Education

EI member organizations in Australia namely AEU, IEU, and NZPPTA and NZEI of New Zealand form a consortium within the COPE to cooperate with the EI member organizations in Vanuatu, Tonga, Solomon Island, Cook Islands, Samoa, Kiribati and Tuvalu, and Fiji. A number of trade union education programmes are held every year on recruitment and negotiating skills, financial management, awareness on Human and trade union rights issues, CEDAW and Gender Equality and issues related to national labor laws and promulgations.

Impact of the programmes

There is improved representation and contribution in the union meetings and in the meetings with Ministry of Education and other stakeholders. Leaders have greater awareness on Status of Teachers and their Rights. There is increase in the participation of young teachers and women leaders.

The SINTA, VTU and SINTA have shown improved negotiation skills and achieved better working conditions. Improvements in planning, organizing and recruitment skills can be observed and more organisations are trying to operate within the provisions of the constitutions.

Caribbean: Status of Women's Committee/ Women's Network

The initiative to develop gender awareness among teachers started in 1993 when the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF) provided support for union leaders in the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) to engage in training. It was further strengthened after the UN 4th World Conference in Beijing China in 1995 after the EI Regional Coordinator participated in the conference and was inspired to make greater effort to promote gender equality among teachers in the unions. There were few women in the top leadership positions in most of the teachers unions in the Caribbean and consequently there was need to create a greater awareness among Teachers.

The Caribbean Union of Teachers (CUT) came into being on August 21, 1935, at its inaugural meeting in Trinidad and Tobago as the West Indies Teachers' Association, at a time in the Caribbean history when the working people were intensifying their effort to dismantle the colonials' apparatus, in their increasing struggle to better their living conditions. On August 11, 1999 the Caribbean Union of Teachers, amended its constitution and entered into an agreement with Education International, under which the CUT became an autonomous body within the structure of the Education International and its recognized representative body within the Caribbean. It was at this 29th biennial conference that the women teachers in the Caribbean met and managed to get the leadership of the CUT to establish a Status of Women's Committee (SOWC).

Objectives

The main objectives of the SOWC are:

- (i) To improve and enhance the leadership capacity of the female members of the Caribbean Union of Teachers. (CUT)
- (ii) To strengthen Women Leadership and gender equity in Teachers' Unions through training
- (iii) To consider and make representations to appropriate authorities on matters of common interest of its members.
- (iv) To develop a cadre of women leaders within the Caribbean Union of Teachers.
- (v) To sensitize both men and women in teachers' union on gender issues particularly as they relate to education and their impact on women and girls
- (vi) To unite teacher organizations at the Regional level and to provide the framework for co-operation and the exchange of knowledge and experience among teachers.

Our Partners

The CUT Status of Women's Committee is the same as the Caribbean Women's Network and works closely with the EI Regional Coordinator who is an exofficio member of the Committee .The EI Regional office of the Caribbean continues to access financial and human resources support from CTF/ FCE Canada to implement programmes of the SOWC. We partner with other NGO's to assist with specific projects based on our programme and activities.

Over the years our main funding has been provided through the Canadian Teachers Federation Thrust Fund (CTF) and Education International Programme and Budget. The funds have been used to provide five bursaries annually to needy female teachers pursuing studies in Education. We have also held several workshops and Training sessions to strengthen women leadership in Teachers' Unions.

The SOWC presents a strategic plan for the network and enters into a contract with CTF every three years. The last agreement presented for 2008-2011 was signed on the 3rd December 2008 and will end in March 2011. We are now in the process of preparation a contract for the next three years (April 2011- March 2014).

Programmes and Activities

As part of its efforts to achieve the objectives of gender equity and empowerment of leaders, the SOWC develops a two-year programme of activities at the beginning of each biennium. Included in this programme are activities that are planned, organized and implemented at the Regional, Sub-regional and national levels to promote the status of Women's Committee as a regional women's network in the Caribbean.

The programme continues to encourage establishment of SOWC in member Unions across the Caribbean where they do not exist, and to strengthen those that are already established. Of the 22 Teachers' Unions in the Region, 18 have already established committees which are working jointly with the CUT Status of Women's Committee and the EI Regional Office.

The Committee meets at least once per year whenever there is an organized activity by the committee and sub committee meetings whenever CUT Executive meetings are called with members present. Our programmes and activities are generally focused on four major areas of activity: Research and Publication, Leadership Skills Training, Professional Development, and Trade Union Education.

Over the years, we have implemented several Regional workshops. We have performed research on Boys Under Achievement and Women Pioneers in Education. **Publications include the** CARIWOT Magazines and Quarterly News Letters.

Problems Encountered: Due to the geographical location of the Caribbean islands, it is difficult to administer to the needs of all CUT member unions within specific time frame. In addition, the cost of air travel and the unavailability of ferry service to all islands has significantly added to this challenge. Limited funds has also been an issue for the Status of Women Committee over the years. This has hindered support of plans and programs and has limited the participation of committee members in accessing training and other opportunities that will avail itself.

Achievements

The presence of the committee has created high level of visibility for women teachers at the regional level and in 2007 women achieved gender equity at the CUT Officers level with the President, 1st Vice-president, General Secretary and a Trustee as males while the 2nd, Vice President, 3rd Vice President, Deputy General Secretary and a Trustee as female. In 2009 we lost the position of 3rd Vice President.

Of the 22 national Presidents, 11 are female. A number of our female teachers have been recognized by their national association and or governments for their outstanding leadership qualities.

Europe: ETUCE Women's Network

The necessity to coordinate union policies and activities on a regional level is highly evident in Europe, considering the existence of significant EU directives on gender equality and the ongoing process of incorporation of new Member States. At the same time, globalisation demands coherent responses articulated on behalf of all members of trade unions, including women.

Women education workers request and need spaces to be open at regional and sub-regional level to meet other women colleagues, to debate and decide joint ways of action, and to plan and implement responses to common concerns and problems.

These actions boost their visibility, and their ability to intervene in trade unions and in civil society matters. They will also help both to consolidate the roles that EI member organisations must play at regional level, and confirm the position of education trade unions as legitimate representatives of the profession before governments and civil society.

Another key objective of the ETUCE Women's Network is the joint development of strategies to "mainstream" gender issues in trade union work at sub-regional and regional level.

Statutory equality bodies

The ETUCE Women's Network was launched as PEWN (Pan European Women's Network) on 8 March 2007. It was created as an informal addition to the statutory equality bodies that exist in the region, and is designed to be participatory and uncomplicated.

ETUCE Equality Committee:

This Committee is a Standing Committee to the Regional Committee. All EI member organisations in Europe are entitled to send one representative to the Pan European Equality Committee which meets once a year. The recommendations of the Equality Committee are submitted to the Regional Committee for adoption.

A working group, composed of 9 members of the Equality Committee, is to facilitate the discussions and activities of the Equality Committee.

ETUCE Status of Women Committee:

The Status of Women Committee was founded in 2008. It is composed of the female members of the Regional Committee. One of its main tasks is to monitor the provisions for representation of women within the Pan-European Structure.

ETUCE Equality Caucus:

The first meeting of the Caucus was convened prior to the Regional Conference in November 2006. The Caucus is open to all, both female and male, representatives to the regional conference.

Aims of the ETUCE Women's Network

The ETUCE Women's Network was created:

- To provide women members with a source of peer support, encouragement, motivation and professional recognition.
- To facilitate the exchange of information, skills, knowledge, materials, which serve to increase the overall competence of women members.
- To lead to less duplication of work and efforts, faster progress and wider overall impact.
- To provide the critical mass needed for national, regional and international advocacy, action and policy change on women's issues or gender equality.

The online platform of the Women's Network

PEWN online was launched in March 2010: The online platform of the Pan European Women's Network, now ETUCE Women's Network. It is an online community with over 150 subscribers. It currently contains over 200 posts and over 150 documents on different issues, such as equality in the unions, women and the economic crisis, work-life balance, violence against women, pay equity and LGBT rights. The members can keep track of European Equality meetings by browsing through the library which contains minutes and documents of events since 1998.

The purpose of this online platform is to allow quick and uncomplicated information and coordination, and to create an archive of important documents, which is accessible to all members at all times.

Priority themes

The members of the ETUCE Women's Network get together once a year at the annual meetings of the ETUCE Equality Committee, where they discuss priority issues in breakout sessions and with European policy makers and experts. The online platform of the Women's Network enables information exchange and discussion between these meetings.

The priority themes in 2010 were:

- Violence against women
- Pay equity
- Gender stereotypes and prejudices
- Pensions and the gender dimension of pension reforms
- Equality in the union leadership

The Network plays a key role in shaping the equality agenda and programme of work, and has strongly contributed to increasing joint equality initiatives on the European level.

Latin America: Education Workers Women's Network

The Latin American experience with women in the realm of education furnishes figures worth considering. Approximately 70% of the labor force is female, but this percentage shrinks for those in positions of authority. This should be taken into consideration when preparing an analysis for building strategies and for developing actions to defend public education as a social right.

Objectives

Latin American Women Education Workers Network seeks to sensitize, coordinate, train, inform and share ideas, reaching the greatest number of education workers. This network is guided by the strong belief that generating mechanisms and elements for facilitating the active participation of women in representative positions encourages democratization of the organizations and, without question, strengthens union structures.

The first level of participation in the network is that of coordination; here the group of women in charge of the gender issue in each organization communicate with each other by means of email and meet regionally and sub regionally. The moderator for Network sharing is the coordinator for gender matters at the EI's Regional Office for Latin America.

The second level is that of information. This is a mass space comprised by all the national networks that have been formed in each organization. Here information is sent and electronic versions of publications are distributed, and the thematic seminars conducted regionally or sub regionally are replicated nationally.

A process was initiated that takes up the "networking" idea again as a working strategy, since networks are fruitful encounter opportunities for the different experiences in such dissimilar sub regions—something that also occurs in other places in the world.

The networking strategy was chosen because of its functionality and the horizontal ties it fosters, allowing for the sharing and coordinating of efforts without a permanent physical presence; this facilitates an innumerable number of orderly, coordinated initiatives, saving efforts and resources.

Given this framework, we proposed to carry out studies and educational events aimed at accentuating gender specificity. In addition, we decided that the research would be geared toward uncovering the sexist nature of personal and institutional relationships that affect mainly women education workers. The results should make it easier for organizations to address the problem institutionally.

Latin American Women Education Workers Network has become an opportunity for setting up the debate within organizations in each country. Also we look forward to:

- encourage the active participation of women in the leadership of EI member organizations and sister organizations in the region for the purpose of strengthening union structures
- promote a broad alliance with other worker organizations in Latin America that will enable development of gender equality, avoiding the scattering of initiatives in the region
- fostering connected efforts and foster strategic actions for standardizing gender equality policy in each of the EI member organizations and sister organizations in Latin America.

Advances

After 4 years of working with the network we see important advances:

- There is a will to continue the discussion on gender matters. Women have strengthened their leadership. Their growth as leaders is evident.
- Women have increased empowerment for participation and analysis (individual).
- In spite of the lack of a strategy in some unions, the organizations have given continuity to activities for women or gender activities.
- The organizations have nuclei of women formed within the organizations.
- The project is progressively developing a transition from gender theory to politicization of the discussion of more general matters, though always from a gender perspective (economy, public policies, human rights for minorities, etc)
- Greater membership and participation of young women
- Systematic training for women
- Progress had been made on using the language of gender in the documents of some of the organizations.
- Progress has been made on creating new secretariats for women in the national organizations. Others have formed informal structures to address these issues.
- Involvement of women in important structures for political tasks of the union such as negotiation commissions, pedagogic proposal bodies, unions schools coordination, etc.
- Unions have started researches about the different realities of women participation inside their unions (data collecting, statistics, etc)
- Involvement of higher education organizations
- In countries where there are more than one EI member, there is bigger coordination among member unions
- There is a new culture of communicating and celebrating women achievements in their unions and among the network.
- The Network has strengthened effective international solidarity among the organizations.
- The work has generated confidence for making critical analyses and more honest self-criticism.
- The creation of the Inter-institutional Committee is changing the way cooperation is done to a more horizontal manner.

Reaching these goals has depended on the commitment and systematic work that each, from its specificity and particular situation, has been capable of implementing in its union structure for strengthening and transforming it into a much more democratic, inclusive space with a respect for diversity.

Somehow the work of women who are part of the women network is also linked other items equally urgent for education sector, such as prevention of HIV-AIDS, the defence of the right to sexual education with gender perspective, defence of human rights and also the fight against all other types of discrimination due to gender, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, etc.

New challenges

We also face new challenges that come along with these advances:

- Unions need to have their own gender policy and equity work plan. Equality should be a priority for education unions.
- The interinstitutional committee should have closer accompaniment at the sub regional level

- The region should produce a publication of their own that works as a tool for training, dissemination, exchange and real involvement.
- We need to generate indicators that enable unions to measure the advances regarding equality inside the structures and also in the education sector.
- Every time there are elections in a union and a new Executive board comes along, we must work in order to engage executive committees.
- But also to assure institutional policies on equality, that remain stable regardless of the changing of executive board.
- To strengthen women politization and training processes.
- To work harder for inclusive education policies with gender equity perspective.
- To impact public policies from a education union point of view and with gender perspective.
- Insist on the struggle for sexual and reproductive rights of women
- Increasing demand and dissemination of laws against women violence
- Disseminate more rights and laws protecting rights of working women
- Go into greater depth in the discussion of gender matters in the organizations.
- Make progress on building a gender policy and create a body for facilitating gender work in the organizations that still don't have one.
- Provide more direct accompaniment with national work by the Regional Committee and Regional Office.
- Improve the percentages of women's participation in national leadership.

Future strategy

For the 2010-2012 work period, the strategy will be to continue supporting organizations in promoting changes in their structures to allow for the active incorporation of women and men, in order to face with strengthened organizations the challenges posed by the educational system's current development model.

Institutionalization implies that the policies will be assumed and carried out at all union levels, even to the point of adapting the legal structure if necessary. It will be important at this stage to reinforce coordinated gender equality work at the different levels—national, sub regional and regional—to achieve a standard policy behaviour base.

Education International Latin America, together with the Regional Committee and the Women Workers Network, has determined that the work on gender equality should aim at consolidating the education union strengthening and changes so that institutionalization and regional coordination of the policies and strategies can begin.