

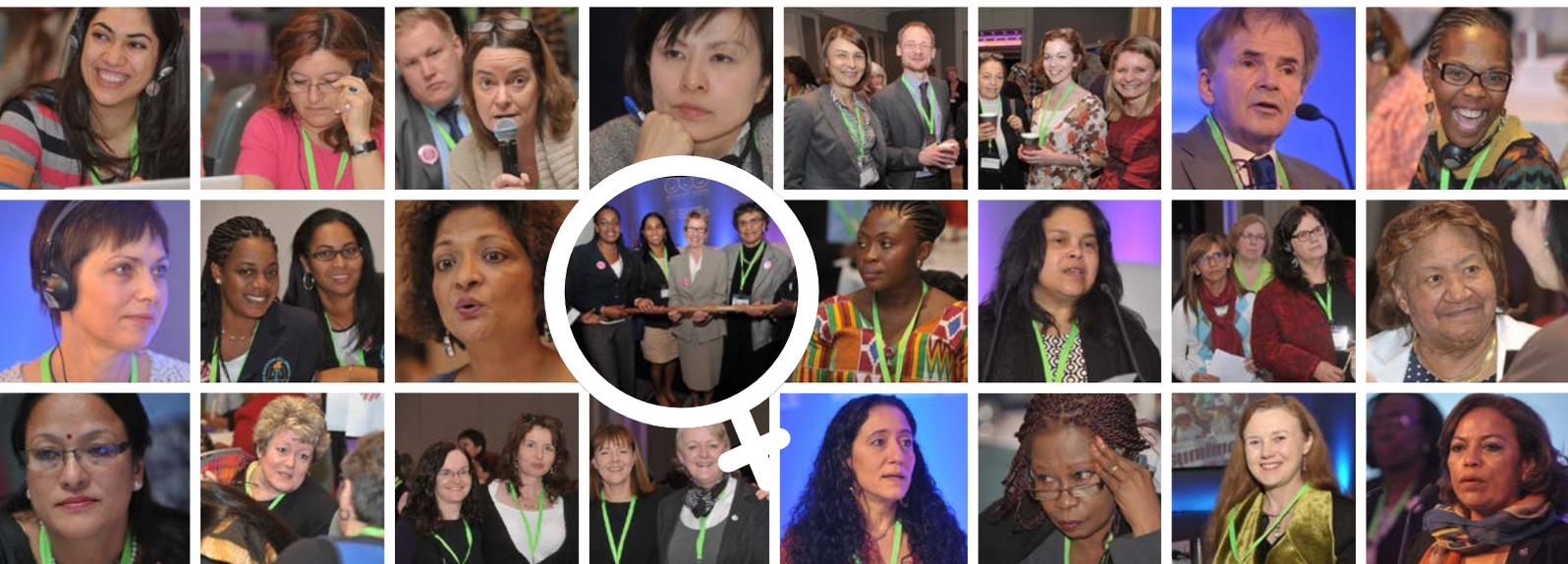


Women in Trade Unions and in Education *From Words to Action*

Dublin, 7-9 April 2014



Conference Report



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1. Women in Trade Unions and in Education: From Words to Action

Education International (EI) is the voice of teachers and other education support personnel across the globe; a global federation of some 400 education unions and organisations in more than 170 countries and territories. EI represents 30 million teachers and education employees at all levels from early childhood learning to higher education. Working to achieve gender equality within trade unions, in education and in society has been a principal aim and a major priority since EI was founded in 1993. However, in spite of the many advances made to secure women's human rights, reduce gender inequalities and secure gender justice, progress is slow and uneven, and many issues remain critical.

One out of every three girls born today will be beaten, forced to have sex or suffer some other type of abuse from an intimate partner during her lifetime; when it comes to representation in political life, a *2011 UN General Assembly Resolution* noted that 'women in every part of the world continue to be largely marginalized from the political sphere, often as a result of discriminatory laws, practices, attitudes and gender stereotypes, low levels of education, lack of access to health care and the disproportionate effect of poverty on women'. Girls and women in many countries are also deprived of their full sexual and reproductive health and rights, and globally, the gender pay gap is estimated to be 22.9% (sectorial, occupational and other variations notwithstanding). According to the *International Labour Organisation* (ILO), at the current rate of progress it will take 75 years for the gender pay gap to be fully closed.

In the field of education, *17% of the world's population is illiterate* – two-thirds of them are women – 31 million primary school girls are out of school today, and 17 million of them will never enter a classroom. There are also 34 million adolescent girls currently missing out on any type of education.

When it comes to trade unions, not only do women join in lower numbers than men, but the women who do actively participate in their union seldom occupy leadership or decision-making roles. *A number of factors* account for this phenomenon, which exists even in sectors, such as education, where women outnumber men in the unions. These factors include gender-based prejudice, the rigidity of some trade union rules of procedure, women's own lack of confidence to put themselves forward for leadership positions, as well as the unequal division of responsibilities between women and men within the home.

The second EI world women's conference – On the Move to Equality II: 'Women in Trade Unions and in Education – From Words to Action' – took place in Dublin, Republic of Ireland April 7th-9th 2014, and focused on some of these issues that negatively affect women within education trade unions, and women and girls within education systems and in societies across the world.

This report outlines the discussions and outcomes of the conference, which took place in Dublin, Republic of Ireland April 7th-9th 2014.

Purpose of the Conference

The purpose of the second EI world women's conference was to provide a space and the opportunity for EI affiliates to share, analyse, and provide feedback on good union practices that contribute towards improving equality for women and men, in unions and in education.

The conference programme took 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. During plenaries and workshop sessions over the two and a half days of the conference, participants addressed four areas that EI affiliates, through the EI Status of Women Committee, 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** - an unfinished agenda in education trade unions, there is a pressing need to translate union policies on gender equality into a tangible reality, to make the shift 'from words to action'. EI affiliates are keen to increase efforts to organise more women teachers and to have more women in leadership roles within their unions and organisations.
2. **Stereotyping and discrimination within education** - the statistics in the 2014 Education for All (EFA) *Global Monitoring Report* show time and again that education can be transformational. However, in order 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. EI affiliates are keen to increase 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. EI affiliates are keen to catalyse action, as education unions and organisations, in ensuring that every effort is made at international, national and local levels to guarantee that education buildings remain safe sanctuaries for teachers and students alike.
4. **Equity and inclusion within education** - quality education should be equally accessible to, and inclusive of all: girls and boys, majority and minority groups, rich and poor. EI affiliates have been working hard during 2013/14 to ensure that equality and inclusion remain central within the quality education goal and targets in the new framework for sustainable development that will be adopted by UN member states in September 2015.

Participants, Speakers, Moderators & Panellists

Participants

A total of 315 people attended the conference: this includes 34 guests who were not representatives of EI member organisations as well 35 male participants and 32 women participants under the age of 35 (this fell short of the ambitious target of 30% participation by women under the age of 35). The participants came from all of the regions in which EI has affiliates:

Region	No. of Participants	No. of Countries
Africa	55	18
Asia Pacific	36	14
Europe	119	26
Latin America	24	10
MENA	5	5
North America & Caribbean	42	11
GUESTS	34	
Total	315	84

Keynote Speakers

Three keynote speakers inspired participants during the conference; they were (from left to right): **President Tarja Halonen** (11th President of the Republic of Finland and co-Chairperson of the UN Secretary General’s High Level Panel on Global Sustainability and of the UN High Level Task Force for the International Conference on Population and Development, ICPD) on day 1 of the conference, **Professor Mary Metcalfe** (Chairperson of the Open Society Foundations’ Education Advisory Board; former Head of the School of Education, University of Witwatersrand, South Africa) on day 2, and **Professor Mary Hatwood Futrell** (founding President, EI; former President, National Education Association NEA, USA) on day 3.



Panellists & Moderators



Women and Leadership in Trade Unions – Monday April 7th 2014

The panel on day 1 -Women and Leadership in Trade Unions- was moderated by **Haldis Holst** (Deputy General Secretary, Education International):

The panellists were (left to right): **Ms Christine Blower** (General Secretary, the National Union of Teachers - NUT, UK; President, European Trade Union Committee for Education - ETUCE), **Dr Habiba Mizouni** (General Secretary, National Union of University College Doctors, Pharmacists and Dentists – SNMDPHU, Tunisia) and **Ms Sheila Nunan** (General Secretary, Irish National Teachers' Organisation – INTO, Republic of Ireland):



Equitable Education for an Equitable World – Tuesday April 8th 2014

The panel on day 2 -Equitable Education for an Equitable World- was moderated by **Ms Monique Fouilhoux** (Chairperson, Board of the Global Campaign for Education; former EI Deputy General Secretary):

The panellists were (below, left to right): **Dr Lorretta Johnson** (Secretary Treasurer, American Federation of Teachers, AFT, USA), **Professor Marina Milenkovic** (President, Gender Committee, Teachers' Union of Serbia), and **Ms Eva-Lis Sirén** (President, Lärarförbundet, the Swedish Teachers' Union; EI Executive Board member):





From Words to Action – Wednesday April 9th 2014

The panel on day 3 –From Words to Action- was moderated by **Professor Yamile Socolovsky** (Director, Federación Nacional de Docentes Universitarios, CONADU, Argentina):

The panellists were (below, left to right): **Ms Lily Eskelsen García** (Vice President – National Education Association, USA), **Ms Milagros Ogalinda** (General Secretary, National Alliance of Teachers and Office Workers, SMP, Philippines) and **Ms Dianne Woloschuk** (President, Canadian Teachers' Federation – CTF-FCE):



2. Conference Outcomes & Recommendations

The key note addresses, panel discussions and parallel workshops on each day of the conference addressed the three sub-topics that made up the conference theme. These were Women and Leadership in Trade Unions on day 1; Equitable Education for an Equitable World on day 2; and From Words to Action on day 3.

On the morning of the third day of the conference, EI Deputy General Secretary, Haldis Holst, shared a brief outline of the key conference outcomes that emerged from the parallel workshop sessions during the first two days of the conference. Participants in each of the twelve workshops were asked to identify and agree on three key priorities during their discussions; these are presented in detail in the sections below.

The following key conference recommendations are based on the recurring priorities identified by conference participants. These recommendations will be discussed by the EI Status of Women Committee, which will make its recommendations for taking the conference outcomes forward to the 43rd EI Executive Board (meeting in October 2014):

Recommendations

1. **On the EI Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP 2012-2015)**: participants called for the GEAP to be monitored and evaluated, and amended (to include references to women in higher education, vocational education and training, research, and the recruitment of 'hard-to-reach' women teachers). The GEAP should also be used to map and monitor women's participation in education trade unions and organisations across all EI regions.
2. Participants called for an increase in **EI's and member organisations' focus on the recruitment and retention of young teachers, especially young women teachers**, in union activities and events at all levels of the union. Participants were particularly keen to see an increase in the number of young women participating in EI activities.
3. Participants called for a **renewed commitment to and rejuvenation of the 2004 EI Declaration on Professional Ethics**. Participants specifically called for the Declaration to be reviewed through a 'gender lens' and for annexes to be developed that include explicit references to inclusion (especially of LGBT students and teachers), and to the promotion of safe schools (with reference to the eradication of school-related gender-based violence targeting girls). Participants also emphasised the need for a tool or guide on how EI affiliates can use the Declaration on Professional Ethics, especially with regard to equality issues.



4. Participants emphasised the need for **all EI campaigns to have gender issues at the front and centre**, and for campaign-aims and objectives to contribute, as far as possible to implementing the GEAP.
5. Participants called for an increase in the number of **women with voting rights at the EI Congress** to 50%.

3. Conference Proceedings

Opening Ceremony

EI President, Susan Hopgood (Federal Secretary of the Australian Education Union, AEU), welcomed participants to the second EI world women's conference by reminding them of the significance of the location of the conference: Dublin is commonly thought of as 'a union town', in part due to the



notoriety of the largest labour conflict in the history of Ireland – the Dublin walkout – in 1913. In her welcoming remarks, Ms Hopgood also evoked the memory of the many women who have played a significant role in the development of the trade union movement all over the world, but who all too often, are left out of the history books. She called on the conference participants to keep the past in mind during the conference, as they came together to discuss how best their unions and Education International can contribute to the achievement of gender equality in unions and in education. In closing, Ms Hopgood

pointed out that the conference theme (*Women in Trade Unions and in Education: from Words to Action*) highlights the dual role of teacher trade unionists: as educators and activists. She said: ***"We are mobilisers, we are organisers, we are disciplined disrupters of any status quo that is satisfied with inadequate teacher quality, education resources or learning environments"***.

Following Ms Hopgood's welcome, **Mr Ruairi Quinn TD – Minister for Education and Skills, Republic of Ireland** – officially opened the conference. Noting the continuing underrepresentation of women



in education management and in public life more generally, Mr Quinn congratulated the local Irish EI affiliates (ASTI, IFUT, INTO and TUI) for co-hosting such an auspicious event, and reminded participants of the importance of the issues that would be covered over the three days of the conference. Quoting Mary Robinson, the first woman President of the Republic of Ireland, Mr Quinn said: ***"In a society where the rights and potential of women are constrained, no man can be truly free; he may have power, but he will not have freedom"***.

Women and Leadership in Trade Unions

Monday April 7th 2014

The International Labour Organisation ([ILO, 2008](#)¹) considers the underrepresentation of women in trade unions to be a global phenomenon. In the education sector, women make

up the majority of union membership (*up to 60%²*), yet they are underrepresented in *leadership positions³*. The findings of the last EI quadrennial survey on the status of women in unions, education and society (2009-2010) reflected this trend, showing that the higher the decision-making body, the lower the percentage of women in union leadership. Recent research on this issue shows that there are a number of barriers to women's full participation in union leadership. These include: union cultures generally valuing the participation of men and discouraging the participation of women; negative stereotypes of women; women's lack of confidence in their leadership abilities and lack of knowledge about union decision-making structures; union structures replicating *women's disadvantaged labour market positions³*.

Keynote Address



In her keynote address on the first day of the conference, **President Tarja Halonen** pointed out that Finland's high level of educational achievement and success is in no small measure due to the strength of the country's education trade union (EI affiliate *Opetusalan Ammattijärjestö, OAJ*). Introduced by the EI General Secretary Fred van Leeuwen, President Halonen's speech was based on her own experiences of having been a woman leader at the highest echelons of power in her home country, and still today on the global stage (she is currently co-chairperson of the

UN Secretary General's High Level Panel on Global Sustainability and of the UN High Level Task Force for the International Conference on Population and Development, ICPD).

Having travelled the world, President Halonen assured participants that: "**All nations have their own traditions, and gender stereotypes [are] part of [that]. But it is good to remember that these traditions are made by people, and they can be reformed by people**". And she highlighted teachers as key actors in the unmaking of the harmful traditions of inequality.

However, the President also recognised that in very many countries, teachers have a low status. She suggested a two-pronged approach to address this issue: teachers must continue to be organised and they must work hard within their unions and organisations to push for political respect. This is *due respect* because politicians the world over know that in a modern society, especially in relation to sustainable development, the key words are 'education, education, education'.

Speaking directly to the audience and to EI affiliates everywhere, President Halonen declared: "**You teachers, you are the guardians of this resource, the human capital; you are those who really [make] the future, but you have to be active in[side] and outside of schools**".

Turning her attention to the business of teaching itself, President Halonen emphasised the need to improve the quality of literacy, numeracy and other traditional subjects, for comprehensive sexuality education (as part of the solution for reducing early childhood pregnancies and marriage), and for students to be taught about their political rights in school.

The President also highlighted the importance of the school environment, pointing out that lack of suitable toilets and sanitation can prevent many girls from attending school. She suggested that the high ethical standards of teachers and all employees within schools, behoves them to ensure that girls especially, can go to school without fearing sexual harassment. She called on teacher unionists to work hard to ensure that schools are safe for girls and boys.

Finally, President Halonen echoed the central tenets of the EI Unite for Quality Education campaign in calling for a central role for education within the post-2015 sustainable development agenda. She also insisted on increasing the focus on vocational education because girls and boys increasingly need such skills in the labour market.

President Halonen closed her speech by commending EI and EI affiliates, urging them to continue their good work because, as she put it so succinctly: *"The future will be made in classrooms"*.

Plenary Panel 1

EI Deputy General Secretary, **Haldis Holst** moderated the panel on 'Women and Leadership in Trade Unions'. Ms Holst opened the discussion by reminding the audience of a tool developed by Norwegian academic Professor Berit Ås, which can be used by women and other oppressed groups to identify what is happening in everyday experiences of oppression. Professor Ås' referred to five 'master suppression techniques':

- o **Making someone invisible**
 (for example, by ignoring them when they speak during meetings)
- o **Ridiculing**
- o **Withholding information**
- o **Double punishment**
 (damned if you do, damned if you don't – your mere presence is 'wrong')
- o **Heaping blame and putting to shame**



Ms Holst explained that in theory, such techniques are used on all suppressed groups, however, as Professor Ås argued, they are used in particular combinations and situations with regard to women because in patriarchal societies, women continue to be positioned as objects or property.

Ms Holst opened the discussion by asking each of the panellists, who are currently General Secretaries of their unions, to share their professional stories with the audience. She then asked what measures the panellists thought are or could be most effective for increasing the numbers of women in leadership roles within education trade unions: through quotas or by establishing women's committees, or something else.

Christine Blower (General Secretary, National Union of Teachers, NUT, UK; President, European Trade Union Committee on Education, ETUCE) responded that she has never been a fan of quotas; she has rather preferred to focus on providing space to develop the skills of women. Ms Blower also shared a Welsh expression, ‘To be a leader, you have to be a bridge’, which she told the conference indicated that there are at least two different approaches to leadership: **“There is the lone hero/leader model which is more characterised by men. Being a bridge, leading together is more the style of women. But, generally, you see the lone hero style”**.

In contrast, **Sheila Nunan** (General Secretary, Irish National Teachers’ Organisation, INTO) and **Habiba Mizouni** (General Secretary, National Union of University College Doctors, Pharmacists and Dentists, SNMDPHU, Tunisia) both explained that the experiences in unions have shown that quotas have been successful for ensuring that women are represented in decision-making bodies.



On the question of how to ensure that young people are recruited into teachers’ trade unions and organisations, each of the panellists shared their unions’ recent activities. At the NUT, efforts are made to encourage young members to not only use the union for career progression, but to also seriously consider their progression within the union. 50% of the current membership of INTO is currently under the age of 35, but this is not reflected in the union’s leadership, so the focus is on how to capture young members’ imaginations and attention through

the use of social media, and an internship programme, which enables young members to be seconded to work in INTO’s offices for a period of time.

Habiba Mizouni stated: **“We have tried to look for young people. We work with students and people undergoing training. We encourage them to come to the union and to training sessions. As students, they become union members – we talk to them about reforms and defence of civil rights. And...I have met someone who has already asked about applying for my position! We need to train young people to participate”**.

Equitable Education for an Equitable World

Tuesday April 8th 2014

When it comes to the status of women and girls in education, the evidence is overwhelming: [two thirds of the 775 million illiterate adults are women](#)⁴, and of the 61 million children out of school across the world, 53% are girls. Girls and women continue to face discrimination and exclusion in the acquisition of skills in education and the work environment, which have serious implication for the development of communities as well as countries. Neither the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) to achieve universal primary education, nor the Goal to promote gender equality and empower women (MDGs 2 and 3, respectively) will be met by 2015.

In considering the nature of gender discrimination in education, EI affiliates have also highlighted the key issue of securing gender equality and equity *within* education. This includes ensuring curricula and educational materials are gender-sensitive, that the use of gender-sensitive language is consistently promoted in the classroom, that teachers are gender-aware and can address gender-stereotyping in the classroom as well as in teaching materials, and that schools are safe learning environments for male and female learners, as well as for their teachers, to name a few key areas.



The second day of the conference opened with some welcoming words from **Mike Jennings** (General Secretary, Irish Federation of University Teachers, IFUT) on behalf of all four EI affiliates in the Republic of Ireland (Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland, ASTI; Irish National Teachers' Organisation, INTO; Teachers' Union of Ireland, TUI).

Mr Jennings noted that equality is a core value for all of the Irish education trade unions, all of whom sent representatives to the first EI world women's conference in Bangkok, Thailand in 2011. He also expressed his own delight and that of his colleagues in the other Irish unions, that the second EI world women's conference was being held in Dublin.

Mr Jennings' key message on the issue of women's rights was that it is an issue for everyone in society, not only women. He put it in these terms: ***"We wouldn't dream of leaving the fight against poverty to the poor themselves; we don't regard the battle against racism to be a matter for victims only; we don't think that we should leave it to the Jewish people to fight anti-Semitism, and we don't think that we should leave it to the Palestinians to be alone in their struggle for national rights. And so it is with the emancipation of women: because as long as we have a situation where half of the population of the world is discriminated against...so long as that disadvantage exists [to quote the former President of Ireland, Mary Robinson] – we men can never be free either. This is our joint struggle; it's the struggle of all progressive people"***.

Keynote Address

In her keynote address on the second day of the conference, **Professor Mary Metcalfe** (Chairperson, Open Society Foundations' Education Advisory Board; former Head, School of Education, University of Witwatersrand, South Africa) shared some personal reflections on the moments that have shaped her thinking, her passion as an educator, and her activism.



Professor Metcalfe began by telling the audience about coming to the realisation that although she was able to work and socialise in spaces in which she did not have to 'fight' to make herself heard and acknowledged (as a professional woman), in 1980s South Africa and still today, many, many, *many* women continue to battle against racialised and class-based

inequalities, in addition to gender discrimination and injustice. This is because **“race, class and status all conspire to position women very differently ...and the struggles that we each have to be understood within that context, and there are other components of the context”**



Therefore, as activists, it is important for us to acknowledge that struggles are not the same, and to realise that we cannot take it for granted that rights are universal; they are won through hard struggle on the ground. This is why it is so important to be aware of our own and other people's context: **“We need to be able to start looking at the particular locations of ourselves, of our members, of our colleagues; of the people we seek to serve and to understand the context of people's struggles.”**

Understanding the intersectionality of inequalities is, therefore, central to understanding differences within and between social groups. In addition, the way we understand the individual context and its challenges has strong implications for strategy and tactics (mechanisms and enablers). As Professor Metcalfe put it, **“Some strategies are correct for particular spaces and time, and other strategies are correct for other people. We must develop different strategies for different times and for different contexts”**. In addition, we also need to listen much more closely to people on the ground in different spaces, to ensure that their experiences are what inform strategy.

At the start of her 40-year in education, Professor Metcalfe thought a great deal about whether education can be an instrument for social change. In her quest to find an answer to this big question, Professor Metcalfe read and was influenced by a 1970 article written by Basil Bernstein, in which he argued that 'Education cannot compensate for society'. However, some of the findings



of the controversial 1966 Coleman Report (*Equality of Educational Opportunity*, commissioned by the US government) showed not only that education was of critical importance, but also that quality teachers are central to the educational achievements of students, as well as students' own individual agency. Professor Metcalfe noted that the same findings are reflected in more recent research that has analysed the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)'s Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results of countries such as Finland and the United Kingdom.

Education can compensate for society, and it must do so: but it must be an equitable education, which firstly: reaches out to the most marginalised and makes adjustments in the resources so that they are focused on the needy; secondly, it must be a quality education that nurtures critical thinking (it should enable children to not only read the **word**, they must also be able to read the **world**); thirdly, education must also be embedded in a broader struggle and organisation for social justice. As Professor Metcalfe told the conference:

“As educators, the more we are able to provide an equitable and quality education that nurtures critical thinking, the more we are able to contribute for the struggle for social justice; and the more the struggle for social justice succeeds, the more we are able to do our work.”

Plenary Panel 2

The plenary panel on day 2 of the conference was moderated by **Ms Monique Fouilhoux** (Chairperson, Board of the Global Campaign for Education; former EI Deputy General Secretary). Ms Fouilhoux opened the discussion by pointing to the continuing gender gaps within education; she stated: ***“Undeniable progress has been made in achieving gender equality. But girls and women continue to have their rights denied around education, access, learning, and their experience in schools. It’s about making education more acceptable for girls. That means making the curriculum and classroom relevant and safe. School safety is a huge issue. At best, school can provide girls with safety from abuse and violence; at worst, school can be a site of abuse”***.



Given her long experience of organising para professionals within the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) Ms Fouilhoux asked **Dr Lorretta Johnson** (Secretary Treasurer, American Federation of Teachers, AFT) to say something about the ways in which para-professionals’ work can be seen in relation to the promotion of gender equality and diversity in the American public school system.

In her response, Dr Johnson highlighted the link between education and poverty: ***“In the US, we still have the problem of poverty in urban schools. Education is the most important thing for our kids in those [] schools. Paraprofessionals make sure kids are safe, we feed them, we bring them to schools. They need safe and strong schools. Our work may be hidden, but the impact of it is [to] create equitable learning and opportunities for our students”***.



Dr Johnson also agreed with Professor Metcalfe’s point about the importance of context, pointing out that when we talk about inequalities in America, we must also talk about race, because African-Americans are disproportionately poor. Dr Johnson briefly mentioned the AFT *Reclaim the Promise* campaign; this is a campaign that calls on the American people to reclaim the promise of public education (as well as other public services) because inequalities can only be eradicated through the provision of quality public education.

For her part, **Professor Marina Milenkovic** (President, Gender Committee, Teachers’ Union of Serbia) spoke about the difficulties of challenging gender stereotyping, which she said is pervasive in her home country (Serbia):

“There is a history of gender stereotyping rooted in my society. The success of some girls in education is not converted in terms of future educational opportunities. This is reflected in the domestic responsibilities of women and their underrepresentation in professional work. Gender stereotyping contributes to this.

In schools, teachers must promote gender equality, so it is essential to train teachers in gender equality issues. Parents must also socialise change in this and challenge gender stereotyping”.

The progress made in Sweden, when it comes to gender equality, is definitely real, as **Eva-Lis Sirén** (President, Lärarförbundet, the Swedish Teachers' Union; EI Executive Board member) confirmed. However, she made it clear that no-one in Sweden who cares about equality can afford to rest on their laurels, stating: "***We always have to win new generations for this issue***".

Echoing Mary Metcalfe's main point in her keynote address, Ms Sirén briefly outlined the specific remaining challenges that Sweden faces when it comes to gender equality in education. As she put it: "***We have come a long way in Lärarförbundet, but we have to fight for it, we have to fight for it in Sweden.***

And we see in Sweden that we have these problems: we have boys lagging behind girls and I'm sure that this will affect society. It will affect family life, it will affect education. We have [such] widening gaps between girls and boys that we have to have very, very sharp gender lenses on.

We all, as individuals, we have to put on the gender lens...and we have to keep this gender lens on our own organisations...never take it for granted. Even if we are proud of what we have achieved in Sweden, we have to remain critical of the traditional norms".



Ms Sirén also emphasised the point that achieving gender equality depends very much on women and men working together, stating: "***That is the next step we have to take, this is not an issue only for women; we have to work together, if we want to improve the world***".

From Words to Action



Wednesday April 9th 2014

One of the main conclusions of the first EI world women's conference in 2011 was that education trade unions should reflect their principles and policies of equality, diversity and empowerment in their own actions. Accordingly, the theme for this second conference (From Words to Action) called for a focus on EI affiliates' existing good practices that have demonstrably contributed to improving equality for women and men in unions, in education and in society.

Plenary Panel 3

The panel was moderated by **Professor Vamile Socolovsky**, Director of Argentina's Federación Nacional de Docentes Universitarios (CONADU). Professor opened the discussion by stating: "***I want to start with words, but it's not just about words; we want to act, we want to change the world***".



In her opening comment, **Ms Lily Eskelsen García** (Vice President – National Education Association, USA) suggested that for there to be real change in teachers' trade unions and organisations, it is not enough to increase the numbers of women participating at all levels of the union; as she put it:

“The word ‘transformative’ keeps coming up. In my own union, the NEA, we have worked so hard to transform our structures. But it occurs to me that you cannot transform an organisation or structures. You can only transform people.”

You can restructure an organisation so that it has 50% women and 50% men on the board. But if the men and women act as they always did, you haven't changed anything, just the chairs. We have to find ways of transforming who we are inside and how we look at our work”.

Ms Eskelsen García also called on EI to further complement its wealth of information and examples of good practice within unions, and in relation to education policy-making and implementation, with research and evidence from other sectors, including the corporate sector.

Professor Socolovsky then raised the issue of women's networking within the EI family, and asked **Ms Milagros Ogalinda** (General Secretary, National Alliance of Teachers and Office Workers – SMP, Philippines) about the experiences of the EI women's networks within the Asia Pacific region.

Ms Ogalinda emphasised the need for the women's networks to continue, with the support of EI and development cooperation partners within the EI family. She stated that EI affiliates have long recognised that transformation is not something that a single union can achieve on its own; the wider global union federation is key, and within that, the women's networks remain the primary vehicle for equality work in the Asia Pacific region. As she put it:

“EI's leadership is serving as a bridge, or a nucleus wherein all efforts are gearing towards one direction. For countries like the Philippines, it has been important to have something to look up to, that could really push the issues globally, while we are doing it nationally.”



Professor Socolovsky then turned to **Ms Dianne Woloschuk** (President, Canadian Teachers' Federation – CTF-FCE), to ask her how the different categories of difference be articulated in the classroom around exclusion and the lack of recognition of rights.

In her response, Ms Woloschuk centralised the needs of children, and suggested the test of how far countries have come in providing quality education for all children, remains the extent to which the needs of each individual child are being met. She said:

“The value we want to realise is equality; the means for achieving it is equity.

Promoting equity means understanding, valuing and responding to diversity and difference throughout the school and throughout the community. It's the recognition that different children

have different needs. It's not about sameness, it's about responsiveness: how do we respond to these children?

We need a highly contextual approach that takes into account the needs of the community, of the school, the needs of each child”.

The panel closed with each panellist stating what role EI should be playing to make the internal shift, as well as pushing for the external shift from words to action:



Dianne Woloschuk: *“When it comes to equality issues, the three pillars of the Unite campaign (quality teachers, quality tools, quality environments) offer us a framework for moving ‘from words to action’. So, the quality tools that we advocate for must be appropriate and suited to the realities of diverse classrooms; we must advocate for quality learning environments that are inclusive and for continuous teacher training and development that equips teachers with the skill and capacity to be able to challenge stereotypes wherever they emerge in the learning process or relationship”.*

Lily Eskelsen García: *“It’s powerful to talk to a politician in terms of cold hard evidence. Studies have shown that as a corporate board got closer to 50% men and 50% women, profits went up. Studies show that when you increase the number of women in areas that were all men, they come up with new ideas. So, when you speak to groups, if EI had that kind of research [to] share with us to make the case to politicians, they would start to listen to us in a different way. The evidence is there that equity is not cynical or politically correct”.*

Milogros Ogalinda: *“EI should continue to make an effort to bridge the gap, continue cooperating with women networks within the EI family because it’s very helpful considering we’re working and living in hostile conditions”.*

Closing Keynote Address

Professor Mary Hatwood Futrell (founding President of EI and former President of the National Education Association – NEA, USA) met the challenge of closing the conference: participants were moved and inspired by her words; Professor Futrell was given a long standing ovation after she closed her speech.



The main message that Professor Futrell conveyed in her speech aptly exemplified the type of collective, bridge-building leadership that Christine Blower had referred to on the first day of the conference. Professor Futrell argued that nothing was ever accomplished through individual action because: *“We build on foundations we did not lay. We drink from wells we did not dig, we profit from persons we did not know. And we stand on the shoulders of those who pioneered, paved the way, and laboured for all that we enjoy today.”*

Accordingly, Professor Futrell views the EI family as critical, if we are to ever truly secure quality education for all. As she put it:

“Guaranteeing students are taught by effective teachers is the most influential, the most powerful factor in assuring quality education for all children. It also means that all teachers are respected and supported. It means making sure all children attend schools where they have a well-defined curriculum and where the schools have the resources necessary to implement it effectively. And, yes, it means assuring that schools are safe; including something as basic as safe, separate sanitation facilities. It means that every girl’s and every boy’s right to be educated is honoured not just today, but forever”.

However, the potentially vast reach of the EI family notwithstanding, we must continue to petition and lobby our governments; after all, they are the ones with the power to make the changes we seek. Therefore, Professor Futrell urged EI and its affiliates to continue the crucial advocacy for quality education:

“As the 21st century continues to evolve, it is becoming more obvious that those nations that invest in education will not only survive, but thrive. Our politicians need to be educated to understand that by investing in quality education for all of their children — not 50% or 75%, but 100%; not just males, but females as well; not just the rich, but also the poor communities...”

Lastly, Professor Futrell emphasised the point that the shift ‘from words to action’ is as much internal to EI and its affiliates, as it is external (all levels of government and political decision-making):

“We cannot say that we support equity, but then turn our backs when we see inequalities regarding working conditions within our own school systems and/or organizations. For example, as we reflect on the future of EI and its global network of organizations, we must open our doors and encourage more young educators and educational support personnel, especially women, to become members, but equally important, to become leaders within our schools and our unions. In other words, we must make sure we mirror what we are advocating. As we say in the United States: You can’t just talk the talk, you must walk the walk!”



4. Uniting for Quality Education



EI President Susan Hopgood brought the conference full circle by outlining the main purpose for the ongoing EI Unite for Quality Education campaign (October 2013-October 2014):

“... Education International is leading and participating in forums across the world, rallying organizations, nations, NGOs to the Unite for Quality Education banner; to ensure that education remains at the top of the development agenda as the world turns to the next stage Millennium Development Goals. Not simply education as an issue of access, but education infused with the requirements of quality. Governments and global inter-governmental institutions have paid too little attention to education as a human right”.

“Tuition fees and the indirect costs of education still form the single biggest barrier to equitable access to quality education. A renewed commitment to free quality education for all is urgently needed”.

“Being a public good and a basic right, education must be publicly financed. No child should be excluded from quality education because of cost”.

“We aren’t going anywhere. I want to make that clear. Instead, we will take advantage of every opportunity to state the facts about the critical importance of teachers in education and of public education as a public good and a right for every student”.



5. PARALLEL WORKSHOPS

PARALLEL WORKSHOPS

MONDAY APRIL 7TH 2014

The following are the key priorities identified by participants during the conference workshops:

1/ Tackling the Glass Ceiling: Women's Leadership in Education Trade Unions

Using their own union experiences, participants in this workshop were invited to identify and discuss which education trade union cultural processes, positions and patterns hinder, and which enable, women's (and other marginalised groups') access to and practice of leadership.

- » Participants pointed out that women have to smash through the glass ceiling themselves through effective networking, and by learning how to manoeuvre around or through existing union structures that hinder progress on gender equality, especially women's ability to participate in decision-making and leadership of their unions. Participants also called for increased mentoring between women in education trade unions, especially across generations.



- » Participants called for women trade unionists to receive adequate training, especially on collective bargaining issues and social policy, to enable them to participate as men's equals within education trade unions.
- » On the question of whether quotas are an effective tool for progress, participants emphasised the point that quotas cannot be successful on their own; they should be accompanied by training and leadership skills development for women, and opportunities for networking and supportive mentoring structures.
- » Participants emphasised the need for a more strategic approach for ensuring that gender issues are always included in the substance of trade union policies *and* as a key component of all bargaining. Such an approach means gender would be viewed as a cross-cutting issue in all union policy-making, and women's marginalisation from power and influence within education



trade unions would be more likely to decrease when gender issues are made central rather than peripheral to trade union business. This approach also debunks the (often unspoken) assumption that gender issues are the sole concern of women trade unionists.

- » Participants noted the fact that the pressure that we are seeing right now on trade unions, where the right to working in trade unions is being more and more restricted, and people have to do their trade union activities outside of working hours, actually has a heavy and negative impact on what we are trying to do with work/life balance to increase gender equality. Indeed, it makes it *even more* difficult for women to become leaders.
- » Participants called for a 50% increase in the number of women with voting rights at the EI world Congress, continued support for the regional women's networks, and an increase in opportunities for the networks to work with each other cross-regionally.

2/ Creating an Inclusive Environment within Education Trade Unions & in the Classroom

Participants discussed the day-to-day practicalities, as well as the necessary ideological shifts, to ensure that education trade unions are accessible and beneficial to LGBT teachers. Participants also reflected on the types of advocacy strategies that are most suitable and effective in their respective regions, for challenging the exclusion or marginalisation of LGBT students from the classroom.

Participants called on education trade unions to be at the forefront of work to create inclusive environments in unions and the classroom by:

- » Ensuring that education trade unions' professional codes of conduct and the [*EI Declaration on Professional Ethics*](#) include the principle of non-discrimination and promote progressive approaches to LGBT issues.
- » Working to create open and safe spaces for dialogue about tolerance and acceptance among members, in schools and in communities.
- » Building strategic alliances with other civil society groups, NGOs, parents and wider communities to campaign for education for all that is truly inclusive, tolerant and accepting of difference.
- » Promoting inclusive curricula and advocating for teachers' initial training and continued professional development programmes to include progressive and non-discriminatory pedagogical methods related to LGBT issues.

3/ Recruiting 'hard-to-reach' Women Teachers

In this workshop, participants shared their own unions' good practices in relation to identifying and understanding the needs of women teachers in rural areas and young women teachers, and their unions' strategies for mobilising and organising them.

Participants highlighted the following priorities:

- » The EI gender equality action plan (GEAP) should be amended to include the recruitment of hard-to-reach women teachers.
- » Research should be conducted among EI members to investigate current policy and activities around the recruitment of hard-to-reach women teachers, and to gather evidence of the most promising practices among member organisations.

4/ How do (or How should) Women Organise within Education Unions?



Participants in this workshop considered the impact that increasing precariousness of employment and the scaling back of quality public service provision, including educational services, has on organising women teachers. The focus was on women's current organising methods and strategies within education trade unions, taking into consideration local, national and regional specificities, with a view to exchanging ideas about effective ways of mobilising within teacher trade unions.

Participants highlighted the following priorities:

- » Education trade unions should facilitate new inter-generational conversations about organising, adopt new strategies for organising (using different methods including using social media such as twitter and Facebook), and empower younger women members to develop their own ways of organising.
- » Face-to-face meetings, workshops and conferences remain important, so women in education trade unions can 'see' and 'experience' that there is support from sisters in other countries and regions, and that other women face similar challenges.
- » Organise activities specifically aimed at non-unionist women, to inform them of the value of trade union membership and of working within trade unions

5/ Education trade unions Taking the Lead in Addressing School-related Gender-based Violence (SRGBV)

Participants in this workshop were invited to share and examine their trade unions' strategies for addressing SRGBV, especially in cases where teachers are or are perceived to be the perpetrators of such violence.

Participants highlighted the following priorities:

- » The EI Declaration on Professional Ethics must be revamped to include explicit reference to structural and sexual violence within schools; the Declaration should be made accessible and available to all teachers.
- » EI member organisations must advocate for gender-based violence to be addressed within national curricula.
- » EI should undertake research on prevalence and forms of SRGBV and the role of teachers in combatting SRGBV in all regions; the research should also include current education union best practices with regard to SRGBV and should disseminate examples of successful local & community practices and initiatives for ensuring that girls remain in school.

6/ Organising and Recruiting Education Support Personnel (ESPs)

Participants in this workshop considered their own union's policies regarding the inclusion or exclusion of education support personnel and highlighted the following priorities:

- » Workers within education who are not teachers should be involved in education unions, as they play a crucial role in ensuring the provision of quality education; these workers need specialised training adapted to the education/school systems that they work in.
- » EI member organisations should include to education support professionals in all campaigns – for example, by focusing on their lack of access to permanent positions, the need to improve their working conditions and status, and to ensure they can access training and (lifelong) skills development.
- » Important to work that very often, education support personnel are made up of a majority of women.

PARALLEL WORKSHOPS

TUESDAY APRIL 8TH 2014

1/ Girls' Education: Increasing Participation, Retention and Completion



Participants in this workshop reflected on what education trade unions can do to contribute to local, national, regional and international efforts to guarantee girls' right to a quality education, but without losing sight of the intrinsic value of educating girls.

Participants highlighted the following priorities:

- » Girls are still considered (and too often consider themselves) to be responsible for caring for family members. The fact that girls are not attending school is very often linked to a cultural, ethnic, age, religious, social class issues. EI policy and trade union action, therefore, needs to address all of these strands in combination.
- » It is important to train teachers about how to address and manage the difficulties faced by girls who leave school early due to poverty, caring responsibilities, etc.
- » EI member organisations urgently need to make the link between child labour and girls' lack of access to education, highlighting and taking action to address the gendered aspects of child labour, as they emerge differently in different contexts.



2/ Women in Higher Education and Research

Participants in this workshop reflected on the different barriers that women face in obtaining and sustaining an academic career in different parts of the world, and highlighted these priorities:

- » It is an uphill task to convince academics to join unions, therefore, education unions must work hard to demonstrate their appeal to higher education and research workers (including employment protection and the strength of collective voice and action).
- » The EI gender equality action plan (GEAP) should be amended to include women and gender issues in higher education within priority 2 (especially regarding access to participation in higher education and vocational education & training and research on women, girls and education and priority 3 (careers and job security within higher education and research, financial support for students and research on women, girls and economic empowerment).
- » The language and terminology within the GEAP should be reviewed: for example, references to 'school' should be replaced by 'educational institution' to ensure that higher education institutions are included.
- » EI should include women in higher education in all campaigns addressing precariousness, low pay and low status within the teaching profession.

3/ Gender and Vocational Education and Training (VET)

Participants in this workshop reflected on the gender dimensions in VET, and considered the extent to which gender stereotypes also permeate this sector; the following priorities were highlighted:

- » EI and its affiliates must continue to advocate for initial teacher training and continuous professional development programmes that include raising teachers' awareness about, and providing them with the tools and materials to challenge the stereotypical assumptions that determine which students are encouraged to pursue technical (boys) or non-technical (girls) education, depending on their gender.

- » EI should conduct regional campaigns and work in partnership with education ministries to challenge the stigma attached to vocational education and training (VET), and to break down the gendered stereotypes on which it is so often based. The EI Taskforce on VET should report back on work done so far to affiliates, and present an equalities-focused report to the Women's Caucus at the 7th EI World Congress in 2015.



4/ Gender Equality in Teacher Training and Professional Development

Participants in this workshop shared experiences regarding tools and methods for transforming teacher classroom practice and ensuring it promotes gender equality. Participants also considered how gender stereotypes intersect with other stereotypes based on real or perceived difference (on the grounds of class, race, ethnicity or sexuality, for example). The following priorities were highlighted:

- » EI and its member organisations should ensure, as far as possible, that the issue of gender stereotyping (especially within teaching materials) is consistently highlighted and challenged. It should also be included in education trade unions' 'social dialogue tool-kit'.
- » EI member organisations should provide training to their members on how to recognise and address gender-based stereotypes within teaching materials; addressing their own gender biases should also be included in initial teacher training and continuous professional development programmes
- » Continue to lobby and advocate for education employees to receive gender-sensitive and non-discriminatory training and skills development as part of their initial training and within continuous development programmes.

5/ Gendering the Unite for Quality Education Campaign & Future EI Campaigns

Participants in this workshop reflected on how to ensure that gender and other equality issues remain central to the Unite campaign. Participants also brainstormed on regional strategies for embedding equality issues within this and future EI campaigns, and highlighted the following priorities:

- » As far as possible, all EI campaigns need to deliver on the objectives of the EI gender equality action plan (GEAP), including the Unite campaign.
- » Gender and equality issues should be 'front and centre' of all EI campaigns, and fully integrated into campaign demands and expected outcomes.

- » Advocacy around the three pillars of the Unite for Quality Education Campaign should include a focus on gender: quality education is education that is non-discriminatory and free of stereotypes; quality teachers should be well trained to address gender differences and inequalities in the classroom, using gender-sensitive, non-discriminatory and stereotype-free teaching tools and materials; classrooms and education institution's buildings should be safe and secure learning and teaching environments, in which teachers and students are empowered to address and eradicate internal conflicts and violence (including school-related gender-based violence - SRGBV), and are protected from external violence and attacks.
- » Inclusive language should be used in the Unite for Education campaign and all EI campaigns (this particularly applies in Spanish). There should also be a gender balance in campaign promotional materials including videos and articles.

6/ Promoting the Use of Gender-sensitive Teaching Materials and Pedagogy

Participants in this workshop shared information on the good practices in their unions that are aimed at eradicating gender stereotyping in education (in educational tools and materials as much as in teaching), and highlighted the following priorities:

- » EI affiliates should ensure that all training provided for their members include training on challenging gender-based and other stereotypes, which will enable them to develop their own and students' critical perspectives.
- » EI affiliates should work towards becoming involved in the development of gender-sensitive textbooks and teaching materials with publishing companies; affiliates should also review and audit their own materials and publications to ensure they are gender-sensitive and free of stereotypes.
- » EI affiliates should educate their members to recognise and challenge patriarchal systems that are at the heart of gender inequality and other forms of discrimination; education' unions and organisations should involve parents in such discussions.



6. Conference Side & Social Events

Film Night



The documentary film *Las Maestras de la República* (*Women Teachers in the Spanish Republic*), was shown on the first evening of the conference. The film was promoted by EI affiliate Federación de Trabajadores de la Enseñanza de la UGT (FETE-UGT, Spain) and Transit Productions, and was a flyaway success that won a prestigious Spanish film – GOYA – award for 2014.

The film tells the story of the brave and committed Republican women teachers who participated in the struggle for women's rights and the modernisation of education, during the period of the Second Spanish Republic (1931-39). The documentary combines interviews with family members and history teachers, with unpublished archival footage.

Some 40 conference participants attended a screening of the documentary during a session organised by FETE-UGT.

Educating Girls, Eradicating Child Labour

The aim of the side event on girls' education and child labour was to:

- » Look at the factors that affect girls in child labour and deprive them of their right to education;
- » Provide an overview of education trade unions' good practices in this area;
- » Give participants the opportunity to further discuss gender-sensitive initiatives that education trade unions can promote to eradicate child labour.

Participants shared examples of good practices in their countries, such as Namibia, where primary education is currently free for all, with plans to extend this to secondary schooling in 2016. Punitive measures against those who employ children have also been put in place.

However, in other countries, such as Tanzania, participants heard that there is an ongoing debate about what constitutes 'a child'. Existing legislation is contradictory, since a person can marry at 17, but does not become 'an adult' until they reach 18. Child labour remains common in Tanzania - even teachers employ children – and the government is yet to act.

Participants also noted that child labour exists in so-called developed countries, where migrant or undocumented children are employed in hidden forms of child labour. Participants identified a

number of ways that education trade unions can contribute towards making girls in hidden forms of child labour more visible, and increase the numbers of girls attending school:

- » Use media to raise awareness about all forms of child labour
- » Work at attitude building
- » Advocate for free education and compliance to laws
- » Use the bargaining process, for example, to convince the government of economic and human benefits of education
- » Research and monitor government budget spending
- » Advocate for incentives for girls, such as transport (e.g. bicycles for girls in India)
- » Seek cooperation with other organisations (such as Plan International, which has a strong focus on girls)

Joint Initiative on School Related Gender-Based Violence

School-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) is a serious obstacle that prevents girls especially, from enjoying their full right to education and undermines their experience of school as a safe space for learning. Although both girls and boys can be targets of SRGBV, girls are the most vulnerable. An increasing number of development partners are currently focusing their efforts on the issue of SRGBV through research, advocacy and programming.

During this side event, participants were informed about a proposed joint initiative on SRGBV (EI in partnership with the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative, UNGEI) that is currently in the planning stages. The aim of the side event was to:

- » Gathering participants' opinions and experiences about what advances and what prevents meaningful action to eliminate SRGBV in their local and national contexts;
- » Initiating plans for action at national, regional and global levels

The participants at this side event (from all EI regions) already had ongoing programmes that addressed SRGBV in their unions, or were keen to be involved in the proposed joint EI/UNGEI initiative because of the high prevalence of SRGBV in their country. In addition to the almost universal need for further context-specific research and financial resources to implement new or extend existing SRGBV programs on the issue, participants also highlighted the following as some challenges unions may face when they start to work on SRGBV:

- » Some legislators and policy-makers are slow to act on this issue; unions may, therefore perceive there to be a lack of support from the relevant ministries
- » Victims' lack of empowerment coupled with the stigma attached to SRGBV issues, many students are unable to make a complaint when they have been subjected to SRGBV ('culture of silence')
- » Some unions do not have a code of conduct that addresses SRGBV explicitly, so members may not consider SRGBV to fall under 'union business'

- » It can be challenging to mobilise communities (especially parents) to participate in activities/ events to increase awareness about and eradicate SRGBV;
- » It can be difficult to get different government departments (e.g. ministries of education & of health) to work together on this issue.

Youth Breakfast Meeting

A 'Youth Breakfast Meeting' was organised on the second day of the conference, to allow the young women (35 years of age or younger) who attended the conference to begin identifying some of the issues faced by young members within EI affiliated unions, which EI should be addressed in EI policy on the recruitment, retention and participation of young members. EI does not currently have such a policy, and the young participants were convened in the hope that they could 'get the ball rolling' on this issue.

Twenty young participants enjoyed breakfast together; they came from Anguilla, Argentina, Australia, Botswana, Ghana, Japan, France, India, Norway, the Netherlands, Spain and Zambia.

During their informal discussions the young participants expressed their disappointment that there were so few young women at the conference (32 in total – far short of the 30% objective of the conference). They also highlighted the following challenges that are faced by younger members who wish to be more involved and active in their unions:

- » The difficulty in securing permanent teaching jobs in a number of countries, means that many young members are very preoccupied with union activities around this issue, and do not tend to view the union as a site in which they could individually and collectively become involved as 'agents of change'/activists
- » Work/life balance – many young trade unionists would need some guidance and training on how best to balance their professional, domestic and union lives – especially when being active in the union necessitates extensive travel around the country and young teachers have to balance this with their teaching workload. Inability to manage work/life balance discourages many young teachers from joining a union, and makes existing young members reluctant to participate actively in the union
- » Young members often find that they are not taken seriously by more senior members; they are not often seen as being ready to play a bigger role in decision-making in their union; if there are efforts to develop young members, they are often inconsistent with little follow-up
- » Some EI affiliates have no formal policy on recruiting, retaining and developing young members
- » Young members have little access to funding to be able to participate more regularly (and at all levels) in their unions' activities & events – especially training activities
- » The low status of the teaching profession in many countries means that many young teachers leave the profession about approximately 5 years – this is not favourable to long-term youth participation & involvement in the union

Social Evening

The four local EI affiliates (ASTI, IFUT, INTO and TUI) jointly hosted a reception for conference participants, which took place at Dublin City Hall on the second evening. Participants were addressed by Mary O'Shea, Vice-Chairperson of Dublin City Council, and entertained by young local musicians from two secondary schools in Dublin: Coláiste Eoin and Coláiste Íosagáin.



7. Evaluation of the Conference

The conference aimed to be participatory and to include the diversity of EI's membership – it succeeded in that aim. Feedback received from the participants, speakers and guests was positive throughout and following the conference, including the responses received on the conference evaluation form.

The evaluation form included questions about participants' level of satisfaction (satisfied or very satisfied; dissatisfied or very dissatisfied) regarding:

1. Conference logistics: organisation of the conference & the registration process
2. Conference content: plenary & workshop sessions; conference materials
3. The beneficial aspects of the conference
4. Additional comments and suggestions for a future EI world women's conference

Every evaluation that was returned to the EI conference team was either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the conference content and logistics. The very positive additional comments that participants wrote on the form or subsequently emailed to EI staff members included the following:

The small group discussions were very informative and interactive, as we shared our ideas and best practices.

[Anetta Alexander, ABUT, Antigua & Barbuda]

Sharing experiences with other unions helps with improving in your country. I take one message from the EI President, who said in opening this conference that "We are disciplined disrupters of the status quo".

[Dorcus Sekabate, SADTU, South Africa]

The commitment and energy from women union leaders is contagious. I understood our power to bring about social change through the unions. We must not rest. I am impressed by the power of education to transform() people and individual attitudes, and challenging culture and behaviour; how to teach a child to become a critical thinker.

[Dhawan Manisha, AIPTF, India]

The chance to hear from women directly – you can't beat the direct voice.

[Max Hyde, NUT, UK]

Listening to knowledgeable and experienced women leaders from over the world helped me learn a lot about the intersectionality of the specific components of the disadvantaged groups and how gender issues can be better integrated in union policies and activities.

[Julia Ondina Ortiz Matamoros, PRICPHMA, Honduras]

Exchanging with other women unionists made me change our perspective: in Georgia, a majority of teachers are women and we think we are strong, while in fact teaching is not attractive and teachers are not adequately supported. Stereotypes about women are still dominant in school text books. I will work towards establishing an Equality Committee as well as create a Women Teachers Network across the country to advocate both the teaching profession and women issues. Our union will also strengthen its lobbying to contribute amendments to the legislative wave of changes regarding women rights: equal pay, women discrimination, maternity leave, and other aspects.

[Maia Kobakhidze, ESFTUG, Georgia]

Firstly I want to thank you for your supporting during the conference ...it was a very important experience to me ... I got a magnificent idea about women roles and rights in the unions and how much the woman can be effective in making decisions ... and I draw a new [approach to] life...in my mind, to be [come] more active in GUPT or any other areas in my life. And if I have a chance to participate in other conferences, I plan to prepare a good paper that will be contain the differences in women's participation in the union actions before and after the EI Second World Women 's Conference...

[By email from Ohood BARGHOUTI, GUPT, Palestine]

Listening to knowledgeable, excellent speakers and thinkers. To network with people from all over the world and realise that no matter how diverse, we are all working for the children. Powerful message.

[Alison Sherratt, ATL, UK]

Learning with & from other women education unionists – from our common interests, the environment enabled talk [about] harder issues.

[Jennie Rea, NTEU, New Zealand]

There were many benefits for me...and I am grateful to have been included. Of most benefit to me have been networking opportunities (in sessions, breaks & side meetings) and learning from other women (about their contexts, organisations & work).

[Cassie Hallett Da Silva, CTF-FCE, Canada]

The workshops were informative and challenging. The interaction was dynamic and it was wonderful to witness such commitment and energy from women teacher unionists.

[Tili Afamasaga, SNTA, Samoa]

Many benefits to me. Statements and informal discussions have inspired me and I will network with female union leaders and activists to bring about change in education and union culture. I have a much clearer understanding of my role as a trade unionist.

[Lucy Njura Barimbui, KNUT, Kenya]



Endnotes

1. Breneman-Pennas & Rueda Catry (2008) 'Women's Participation in Social Dialogue Institutions at the National Level' -
<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/dialogue/download/womenparticipation.pdf>
2. See the EI Quadrennial Report on the Status of Women in Unions, Education and Society 2011 -
<http://download.ei-ie.org/Docs/WebDepot/SurveyReport%20EN.pdf>
3. Women's participation at the annual International Labour Conference (ILC) over the last three years was not higher than 26% of delegates, substitute delegates and advisers): 21.7% in 2013; 22.3% in 2012, 23.3% in 2011 and 25.9% in 2010. See
http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms_222669.pdf
and
http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms_143359.pdf
4. See Jane Pillinger's ETUC presentation on advancing women in trade unions:
<http://www.etuc.org/a/8271>
5. EFA Global Monitoring Report 2012 – 'Youth and Skills: Putting Education to Work' -
<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/efareport/reports/2012-skills/>