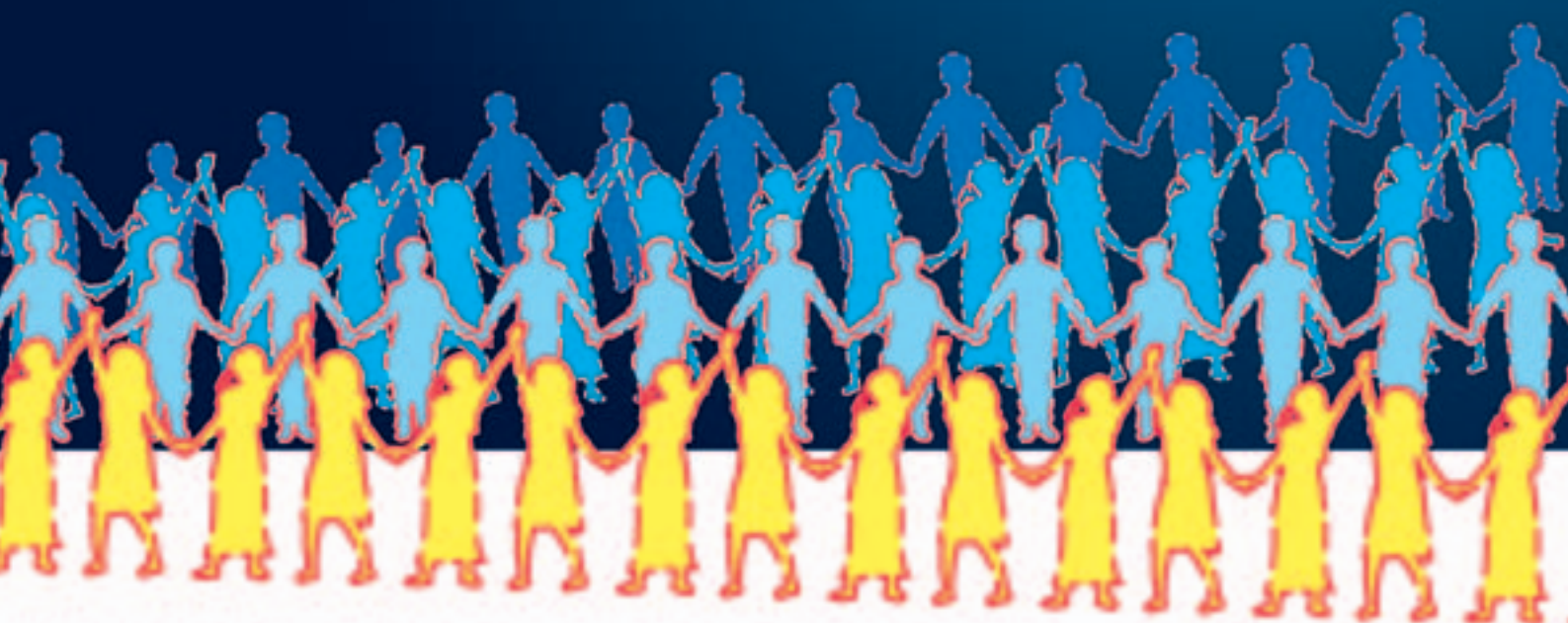


JOIN UP

education rights now!

*"If all the world's children join together
they can be more powerful than any government."*

– Nelson Mandela



Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 – Article 26.(1):
Everyone has the right to education.

**Global Action Week
23 – 29 April 2007**



Education International
Internationale de l'Éducation
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EDUCATION
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Education International
5 Boulevard du Roi Albert II
1210, Brussels, Belgium
Phone : + 32 2 224 0611
Fax : + 32 2 224 0606
Email : headoffice@ei-ie.org

Editor responsible at law:
Fred van Leeuwen,
General Secretary
Editor:
Nancy Knickerbocker



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WOMEN'S RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS



Women's rights are human rights

Did you know it was as late as 1993 that the World Congress on Human Rights agreed for the first time that women's rights are indeed human rights? Certainly much has been accomplished since then, but much remains to be improved before millions of women and girls worldwide will truly experience equity in society.



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Every year EI takes our message of equal access to quality public education to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. We work with others in the global labour movement to persuade governments to ratify and commit to implement all of the ILO conventions relevant to women. We try to ensure that women's voices are heard in UN planning and policy development, and we always insist that trade unions be included along with other civil society reps and NGOs. After all, unions represent the greatest number of women of all organizations in the world. As EI, we put an emphasis on the right of girls and women to education, including appropriate sexual health education. In the knowledge society, recruitment and retention of highly qualified female teachers as role models for girls is clearly increasingly important. We also advocate for improved recognition of the plight of women living with HIV and AIDS. No one knows the precise proportion of women in the worldwide teaching force. But we do know that women are the majority of teachers and education workers, especially in early childhood and primary education, where the rates of pay and working conditions often are inferior to those in secondary and higher education. As the feminization of the teaching force continues, EI will continue to advocate for the rights of female colleagues and students.

Fred van Leeuwen
General Secretary

> Special report

Trade union women

Women and girls from around the world landed in New York in the final week of February to make their voices heard at the 51st session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, the key global policy-making body.

Every year, representatives of Member States meet at the

Jan Eastman, Deputy General Secretary of EI, participated in an event on "Breaking the Cycle of Violence Against Girls: From Child Labour to Education."

"Double and even triple jeopardy faced by girls is an issue. They labour long and hard alongside boys, including in the most hazardous forms of child labour such as agriculture and mining, but their work day

not a business. Neither is it a charity. It is a right, and the right is to a quality education for all, not first class for some and second class for others."

"Discrimination, violence, trafficking and forced labour including sexual exploitation, particularly for girls, is not an issue only for developing countries; these are major issues in developed countries also.



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Trade union women discuss lobby strategy.

UN in New York to assess the progress made on the Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and other key international instruments. Women trade unionists and other advocates come to help urge countries to chart a future course in which the dream of gender equality can become a reality.

The theme of this year's session was: "The elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child." Clearly, teachers have a lot to say on that topic.

does not finish. They continue to have domestic duties as the girl child in the family over and beyond their labour in the field or the mine," Eastman noted. "Furthermore girls are even more vulnerable to discrimination especially in the form of rape, violence and sexual exploitation. HIV/AIDS both affects and infects – young women are now the most vulnerable group."

Eastman reminded participants that children have a right to quality education and that childhood is for school, not work. She stated: "Education is

Teachers and their unions have a central role to play in achieving gender equality, and therefore a life for all children that includes quality education, dignity and hope for a worthwhile life," Eastman said.

While the situation overall is dire, Eastman points to optimism in that there is growing consensus in the world that child labour can and must be eliminated. "Together we do make a difference."

Marilies Rettig, chair of the EI Status of Women Committee, also spoke at a session organized by EI, Public Service

Cover photo: Bangladeshi women and girls demonstrate on International Women's Day.

Speak up at UN

International and the International Trade Union Confederation.

"It is unfathomable that today, there are still over 100 million children throughout the world who have no access to education, two-thirds of them girls who will never walk into a school or through a classroom door as my students do," Rettig said.

She said "education is the single most important vehicle that will allow girls to reach their full potential, to be empowered to escape their lives of poverty, illness and violence."

Rettig said that since the Dakar goals were proclaimed, much

has been accomplished to improve girls' access to education. However, many obstacles still exist and much more remains to be done.

"What can we do to confront the many impediments, those which are systemic, deeply embedded in culture and tradition, those which are supported by international governing bodies such as the World Bank and the IMF?" Among the steps Rettig proposed on the way forward were:

> Support the restructuring of the UN to effectively address issues affecting girls and women, and provide the nec-

essary funding, resources and programmes

> Maximize opportunities for work between governments, NGO's and the trade union movement.

> Insist that research be conducted at the international level, particularly in the area of hidden child labour where so many girls are forced into domestic labour, are trafficked and become sexual slaves.

> Provide the much-needed financial support to those countries seeking to meet the EFA goals for all children, particularly girls.

> Promote programmes and curriculum that are gender-sensitive.

> Eliminate school fees.

> Address the issue of teacher training, both in terms of the looming shortage of 15 million teachers required to achieve EFA, and in terms of quality training to teach about issues such as violence, HIV and AIDS and gender equality.

IWD: A colourful history

By Daphne Davies

International Women's Day is the story of ordinary women who make history. This thread runs from the sexual strike in Ancient Greece, led by Lysistrata, a woman annoyed with her husband who went off to war, through Louise Michel, a leader of the Paris Commune in 1971, who stood in front of the soldiers' rifles, to the millions of women workers today who fight for their rights.

On March 8 1857, women garment and textile workers in New York demonstrated for improved working conditions, a ten-hour day and equal rights. The women formed their own union in March 1860.

Half a century later, on March 8 1908, 15,000 women in New York's "needle trades" called for legislation to outlaw child

labour, and for women's suffrage.

Two years later the first international women's conference was held in Copenhagen in 1910, where German socialist Clara Zetkin called for an 'International Women's Day' to honour working women. The German Kaiser called her "the most dangerous sorceress in the Empire."

The following year, International Women's Day was marked by more than 1 million people in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland. Women and men attended rallies demanding women's right to vote, to hold public office, the right to work, for vocational training and an end to discrimination at work.

On the eve of the First World War, women across Europe and in Russia held peace rallies on March 8 1913. In 1917 female Russian textile workers really started the revolution. Despite opposition from political leaders of the time, these women went on strike for 'bread and peace' on the last Sunday in February, March 8 according to the Gregorian calendar.

After the revolution, Bolshevik feminist Alexandra Kollantai persuaded Lenin to make March 8 an official holiday, but it was only 50 years later in 1965 that it became a 'non-working day' in the Soviet Union.

In China women demonstrated on March 8 1924 when the National Congress denied women the vote.

Later the significance of March 8 dwindled but was rediscovered during the rise of the women's liberation movement in Europe and the United States in the 1970s and revised as a feminist holiday.

The ICFTU and WCL mark International Women's Day every year, and it has been the launch pad for the "Unions for Women, Women for Unions" Campaign to increase female trade union membership, in particular among women in the Export Processing Zones, the informal economy, migrant workers and young people.

Reprinted with permission from "Making a World of Difference: Global Unions at Work," edited by Aidan White, published by the International Federation of Journalists, 2006.



African union leaders reflect on IWD

By Wouter van der Schaaf

“Many challenges we faced 20 or 30 years ago have been addressed, but our daughters still have to fight new battles to achieve real gender equity. International Women’s Day has lost none of its meaning. On the contrary, we teachers’ unions have to broaden the message and reach out to all women, especially the most vulnerable on our continent.”

This was the message from four women, all of them African teacher trade union leaders, during a round table discussion on the relevance of International Women’s Day. It was a Sunday afternoon in Cairo, on the eve of the 6th EI African Conference, and the women unanimously concluded that although important legal and social changes have been won, women still have a

long way to go before there will be true equality.

“Our daughters now have equal parental authority,” says Mariame Sakho of SYPROS, Senegal. “But there is still no equal payment due to fiscal rules in my country.”

“In Zimbabwe, a pregnant teacher had to resign from the teaching service and after coming back she had to start

her career all over again,” adds Tendai Chikowore, president of ZIMTA, Zimbabwe.

“Due to union pressure laws were changed for the better,” said Helena Awurusa of GNAT, Ghana. “At long last women in Ghana can have control over resources. That means they can own property and are no longer dependent upon their husbands. So, financially and in legal matters, progress has been made.”

“We in Uganda see International Women’s Day as a day to recognise the contribution of women to the development of our country and our continent,” adds Margaret Rwabushija, president of UNATU, Uganda. “But we have not yet reached the far corners of our countries. A lot of sensitization is still to be done. On International Women’s Day, I think most of all of the women

in the rural areas – those deprived of progress, those who are most vulnerable and those who have received hardly any education at all.”

All four women confirm the direct link between IWD and education. “Through education women learn self-appreciation. Education not only helps women make economic progress. Education is also important to gain self confidence, to learn to stand up for your rights,” Awurusa adds. “And we are role models for all the girls and young women in our country. So in my view, International Women’s Day is very much focused on future generations.”

All four leaders point out that their unions have made progress towards gender equity. Whether through the quota system or other measures, all four unions have shown a

Women fight for bread and roses too

By Veronica Rankin

“To fight, to struggle, to right the wrong”

This was the motto of the National Federation of Women Workers, set up in the UK in 1906. Its founder, Mary McArthur, was born in Glasgow, then the major industrial city of Scotland.

McArthur and women like her sought to address profound wrongs including dreadful working conditions, low pay, exploitation, long hours and the evils of the sweated industries. The NFWW was just one

of many trade unions representing women in Great Britain, and their courageous story is repeated in the history of women in trade unions the world over. Indeed, it is on the shoulders of women trade unionists like Mary McArthur that we stand today.

As a former history teacher, I know the importance not only of reclaiming women’s past but of re-evaluating it. Too often our history, work and con-

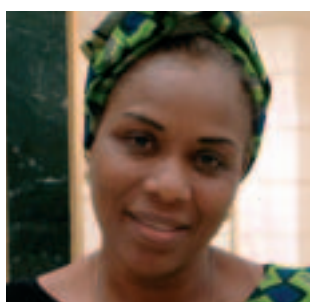
tributions to society have been sidelined, belittled, or ignored.

Bread and roses have become the iconic symbols of women’s trade unionism world wide, and are central to the celebrations every year on International Women’s Day. There is much to celebrate, but still many struggles remain to right the persistent wrongs.

As educators working within Education International, we

should be conscious of the necessity to educate women and young girls. It is the single most effective tool of empowerment.

One of the break-out sessions at this year’s World Congress in Berlin will address the participation of girls in education. The real challenge, it suggests, is not only getting girls to school, but keeping them there. Actions and laws which demean women and girls, and impede their



Mariame Sakho,
SYPROS, Senegal



Tendai Chikowore,
ZIMTA, Zimbabwe



Helena Awurusa,
GNAT, Ghana



Margaret Rwabushija,
UNATU, Uganda

sharp increase of women in leadership. "That is definitely progress," says Rwabushija, "because it brings the gender agenda to the forefront."

All four unions organise events on International Women's Day in cooperation with NGOs or as part of national campaigns with government. The women agree that the impact of International Women's Day is felt most at the local level, and that it should not be limited to one day. "That is why we in Senegal have a two-week campaign following IWD," says Sakho, "to make sure that we reach out to all corners of the country. So again, teachers'

unions can play a unique role since we have members in even the smallest village."

The four women fully support the UN's theme for International Women's Day 2007: "Ending impunity on violence against women."

Chikowore said: "We now have legislation on domestic violence. That is surely progress. But it is high time that this type of legislation is enforced - not only in my country, but all over the African continent."

"In Ghana such legislation has been in Parliament for over five years, and it just drags on and on," confirms Awurusa. She

said domestic violence and marital rape are major concerns. "We must sensitize and protect our daughters. And it is important they have role models in school."

In Uganda a minister stepped forward and openly spoke about her struggles as a victim of domestic violence. "That helped others in my country to step forward," Rwabushija said. "It is a sensitive issue, but we as unions have to take initiative and join campaigns focused on school related gender-based violence. Our current code of conduct does not address this issue adequately, and we must change that."

She added that the link between achieving Education For All and the goals of International Women's Day can not be underestimated. In all four countries the unions are campaigning to ensure that girls not only go to school, but stay in school. "They should not automatically become the caretakers in the household when parents are hit by the HIV pandemic," says Chikowore.

Four women - teachers, leaders, mothers, activists in moving forward gender equity in Africa. For them, International Women's Day is a day for reflection but, more importantly, a day for action.

access to education, also demean and impoverish the society in which they live.

At one time in Scotland, and indeed most of Europe and North America, major parts of the curriculum were denied to girls or boys, reflecting the old gender-based norms of society. Girls were encouraged in domestic pursuits to make them good mothers and housekeepers, and to achieve such qualifications as may provide them with a living after bringing up children. Boys were encouraged in pursuits that

would make them good family providers.

A curriculum that is relevant and challenges stereotypes, that empowers girls and provides them with the opportunity to grow into confident women is essential. For that to happen, we need teachers who are committed to equality rights, knowledgeable about women's history, and confident to advocate for and deliver such a curriculum.

In many countries, women have achieved equality -- at least on paper. However, they

still suffer oppression through sexual harassment, violence and domestic abuse, both physical and mental. Abuses experienced by women are borne of ignorance, superstition and culture; of societal 'norms' which assume inferiority of females.

The work of Education International in its many projects worldwide is proof that education empowers women and girls. These projects provide clear evidence of women challenging society and insisting on an equal role in it. Throughout history there are many

examples of women coming together to serve their interests and prevent exploitation. It has been for the social good.

International Women's Day is a time to reflect on the struggle of women throughout the world for equality and justice. And it is a time to remember the importance of education in that struggle.

Veronica Rankin is National Officer (Education and Equality) with the Educational Institute of Scotland and Chair of the Ei Pan-European Women's Committee.

Global Action Week launched at European Parliament

“Why shouldn’t Tony Blair talk to kids? They’re important too!”

That was the response from Vince Doherty, a teacher at Langdon School in the UK, to a question posed by a journalist about the role of students in campaigning.

Doherty, a longstanding member of EI affiliate the NA-SUWT, joined up with other teachers and students from 10 different countries to play a central role in kick-starting this year’s Global Action Week campaign at a colourful event in the European Parliament.

Global Action Week takes place each year at the end of April and aims at putting pressure on world leaders to make and especially to keep their commitments to helping achieve Education for All by 2015. The week is not meant as a once-off lobby event. Rather, it is the culmination of education campaigning efforts that take place on an ongoing basis throughout the year.

To open the 2007 campaign, a motivated group of campaigners including students and teachers, representatives of trade union organisations and NGOs all travelled to Brussels to put questions to Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) about guaranteeing children the right to education.

At the event, which was hosted by MEP and former teacher Glenys Kinnock, students from Argentina, Senegal, the UK, Ireland, Germany, the



Students holding hands for Education for All at the European Parliament.

CEI

Netherlands, Denmark, Spain, France and Greece all urged their representatives to push for the education rights of the 80 million children who still do not have access to school.

With “Education Rights Now” as their slogan, the group succeeded in convincing the MEPs of the need to lobby both the European Commission, as a key donor of aid to education, and their national administrations about the importance of delivering substantial funds to achieve Education for All by 2015.

The event culminated with a show of joined-up hands around the room which saw students linked with teachers and MEPs in a strong display of solidarity for the education cause. EI urges its affiliates to organise similar ‘Join Up’ events at the local and national level in their countries.

Global Action Week makes a difference!

Last year the efforts of students, teachers and their unions during Global Action Week reaped concrete results

for public education in many countries around the world.

In Malawi, for example, the Minister of Education announced that as of May 2006 each primary school would receive US\$ 200 a month for teachers and the provision of materials.

In Taiwan, the National Teachers’ Association had waged a 10-year campaign to reduce class sizes. Last year during Global Action Week, the Taiwanese Minister of Education finally made the pledge to cut class sizes from 40 to 35 students by 2007 – a major step forward in improving quality of education.

Elsewhere Global Action Week campaigns were more oriented towards international solidarity. In many cases, these efforts resulted in governments allocating more aid to basic

education in developing countries as well as other measures to bring about quality Education for All.

In the Netherlands, where the government already spends 15% of its development aid on education, the Minister for Development Cooperation promised to press other countries to follow suit.

In Spain, children stood before the President of the Parliament, Manuel Marin, as he signed a pledge to act to provide every child in the world with a teacher.

Finally in the US, Congressman Spencer Bachus stressed the fact that, despite being the largest economy in the world, the US has continually failed to increase EFA funding, and he pledged to do every thing possible to improve this situation.

To find out more about how you can get involved, please visit the EI website on Global Action Week:

www.ei-ie.org/globalactionweek

Or visit the Global Campaign for Education:

www.campaignforeducation.org/joinup/index.php

You can also email us at **globalactionweek@ei-ie.org**.

Teachers give child labourers a second chance

The photos are deeply disturbing: children picking through garbage, selling cheap little trinkets, cleaning grave-stones in the cemetery. In one picture, a child begs for spare change from a passing motorist. He is so small he can barely reach the window of the car.

"Look, the tragedy of child labour is not only in Asia or Africa. It's in Europe too," says Stavri Liko, Executive Secretary of the Trade Union Federation of Education and Science of Albania, and coordinator of the child labour prevention program run cooperatively by both national teacher unions, FSASH and SPASH.

The unions estimate that 10,000 Albanian children are working as street vendors, 3,000 are labouring in the informal construction industry, and 4,000 are reduced to picking over garbage. Liko is emotional about the problem and passionate about the need for solutions.

"When you see children working on the streets like this, something moves you inside," he says. Liko believes it's everyone's obligation as a human being to care about children who are denied access to education and forced to work – often in exploitive conditions. As well, it's every teacher's professional duty to try to keep students in school and maximize their life potential.

Thanks to support and solidarity from the Dutch teachers' union AOb and the Netherlands labour centre FNV, the Albanian teachers have succeeded in creating an innovative program to pre-



Stavri Liko, Executive Secretary of the Trade Union Federation of Education and Science of Albania, in front of the photo exhibition on child labour.

vent and eliminate child labour by keeping children in school. For the past two years, the Albanian unions have worked in collaboration with their Dutch colleagues, as well as the ILO and IPEC. Their slogan is "No turning back" in the teacher unions' engagement on child labour.

Andre Dumont, international secretary of AOb, says the child labour prevention program has had substantial success. A key strategy is to train teachers in ways to support children who are at risk of dropping out of school, and help them successfully intervene to prevent dropouts, he said. All of this work is carried out in the context of the Education for All goals, he added.

Today, 60 schools in four districts are involved and 1,000 teachers volunteer in the program on top of their regular

classroom jobs. They monitor the children who are absent, offer informal classes to children at home, educate parents about the importance of keeping their children in school, and cooperate with parents and community members to make school attractive and meaningful in children's lives through setting up clubs and sports.

They also offer a program called "Second Chance" for children who have been in the work force but would like to re-enter school. Many adolescents who have not had access to education are reluctant to come to school because they are much older than primary classmates. But through the Second Chance program, they can take their primary studies with peers closer in age.

The good news is that about 1,400 students who were

labouring on the streets, in factories, as domestic servants, and in a variety of other ways have now been re-integrated into school.

To highlight the problem of child labour in Albania and the dedication of teachers work together to help prevent it, EI commissioned a photo exhibit which was mounted at an education trade fair in Utrecht. The photos won a prize for most innovative project.

Plans for the future involve working not only with the teachers' unions, but with those representing industrial workers, construction, garment industry, shoe manufacturing, agriculture – sectors where large numbers of children are labouring.

"We want to lobby these employers not to hire children, to keep them in school," he explained.

War and floods hit Somali schools

Somali teachers and students are suffering the effects not only of war, but natural disaster as well.

The latest casualty is prominent teacher activist Ahmed Mohamed Ali, who was brutally assassinated by unknown gunmen on 24 February. Days later SNUT President Osman Mahmoud Ahmed publicly condemned Ali's murder and called for those responsible to be brought to justice. Since then, repeated death threats have forced him into hiding.



SNUT President Osman Mahmoud Ahmed.

According to data collected by the Somali National Union of Teachers, 16 teachers and 24 students are known to be among the casualties of war between the Islamic Courts Union and the interim government, which is backed by Ethiopian forces. Another 12 teachers have had a family member killed, and at least 46 teachers and students have been wounded with varying degrees of severity. The SNUT further reports that flooding in southern Somalia has taken the lives of eight teachers and 15 students, and another 18 teachers lost family members.

"It is difficult to get accurate statistics of casualties and damages as the flood waters



Refugees students are forced to use wooden boards instead of notebooks.

have made communication impossible and the fighting is still raging in some parts of the country," Ahmed said. "Most of the schools in those [southern] regions have either been destroyed or severely damaged as most of the schools in small towns and villages are made of straw and mud."

Ahmed said hundreds of teachers, students and their families are among the thousands of internally displaced people forced to flee their homes by the floods and/or the fighting. They now are living in makeshift shelters that cannot provide protection from the elements, let alone shells and bullets. The children need counselling to help them cope with deep psychological trauma, and the teachers need further training to face these challenges.

"The dangerous thing is that schools are being used as recruiting posts for the warring sides where students and teachers were asked to take part in the war as a 'religious or national duty,'" said Ahmed. "SNUT is

against politicizing children and education workers, and forcibly recruiting children as soldiers. We expressed our stance on these issues on many occasions, and will always do so."

Despite severe financial constraints, the SNUT has worked to help affected teachers by collecting contributions from other teachers, local charitable organizations and individuals. SNUT members distributed food and blankets to displaced teachers and their families in camps. They also helped organize makeshift schools so that education for refugee children continues.

In a society where war, famine, drought and floods are the harsh reality, teachers struggle to affirm the value of education, said SNUT Vice-President Abdurrahman Warsameh.

"Man-made or natural disasters have been part of life since the collapse of the national government in 1991, but when these misfortunes become worse, Somali teachers have stood up

to help one another by bringing together their meager resources," Warsameh said. Many Somali educators must work for free "to educate their community despite the difficulties and hardships that make education less of a priority to people as they have to fight for their survival."

Social upheaval has decimated public education in Somalia. Some school buildings have become waste dumps, while others have been settled by squatters. Nearly 80 per cent of Somali children do not or cannot go to school.

The SNUT leaders appealed to teachers abroad to assist their colleagues and the school system of Somalia through awareness-raising and humanitarian assistance. Education International is considering ways to provide humanitarian support for teachers and their families most affected by the war and/or the floods. EI is also trying to liaise up with the few international aid agencies still working inside the country.

Students tour new schools in tsunami-stricken Aceh

By Phuoc Huynh, Hue Huynh & Glenn Hokin

The authors were among a group 12 students and four teachers from Australia, Canada, Japan, Netherlands and the United Kingdom who recently participated in a tour of EI's school reconstruction project in Banda Aceh, Indonesia.

The level of destruction which struck Banda Aceh and the surrounding villages on 26 December 2004 was overwhelming. At least 220,000 people died in Aceh, more than 20,000 being children. Approximately 2,300 teachers were killed and 1,662 schools were damaged.

After the tsunami more than one thousand non-governmental organisations set up in Banda Aceh, but most of these NGOs have since left. Whilst the world's lens may have changed focus, Education International remains committed to helping the children and improving education. This is something all member organisations can be proud of.

Education International is building 28 public primary schools at a cost of \$150,000 US each.

Fifteen schools will be built in Banda Aceh and 13 in other areas. It is heartening that EI's helping hand stretches so far and helps so many. It is estimated that all the schools will be completed by spring 2007.

EI-constructed schools are acknowledged as being the model for other organisations. These schools are student-friendly. Each has six classrooms, a library, prayer room, staffroom, and principal's office and is completely equipped with furniture and computers. Each school is built to withstand earthquakes.

EI's focus on rebuilding government primary/elementary schools is a critical step towards Education For All by 2015. The commitment to provide a free, quality basic education to all children is best advanced through increasing the access to government primary schools.

Visits to a number of EI schools brought a plethora of emotions. One could not help but contemplate the tragedy the children had suffered. The schools changed, but the stories remained the same. School populations were devastated. Children recounted moving stories of seeing family members swept away and entire families wiped out. Each school visit was testament to the strength of human courage and resilience. The inspiration the children provided to us was immeasurable. The sight of the children smiling, laughing and playing together was both uplifting and a reminder of the important role of education. These children are the "new generation" and offer a new hope.

It is warming for the soul to see the number of comprehensive and diverse programs being implemented by EI, and the success these programs are having. Training for 1,001 newly-appointed teachers has been



The Huynh sisters with students at their new school.



Teacher Glenn Hokin with students.

completed. This is an important strategy in the provision of a basic quality education. However, it is clear that the government must increase the pay in order to attract more quality teachers. At present, some teachers are paid only one US dollar a day.

Training of 338 teachers in trauma counselling has also been carried out. This is a vital measure in providing support, and allows the teachers to identify children suffering trauma, who can then be referred for treatment. Hearing the stories of tragedy and looking into the eyes of the children and teachers, the importance of this program can not be overestimated.

EI is also providing 4,000 scholarships to orphans and other seriously affected children who would otherwise be unable to

attend school.

For us, the Student Tsunami Tour was a humbling, rewarding and life-changing experience. The success of the program is thanks to the hard work and commitment of Jerome Fernandez, EI coordinator in Aceh and his team of six workers, as well as Aloysius Matthews, EI Asia Pacific regional coordinator. Despite huge obstacles, they have achieved remarkable things for the children and teachers of Aceh. The accounts of personal tragedy will live with us forever, as will the smiles and laughter of the new generation and the new hope of Aceh.

Excerpted from a longer report by students Phuoc Huynh, Hue Huynh and their teacher Glenn Hokin from Sydney, Australia.

Is modern life **toxic** for children?

By Dr. Richard House

Are today's technological and consumerist lifestyles compromising children's healthy development and ability to learn? Could the education system be contributing to the "toxicity" of 21st Century childhood?

Last autumn a major London daily newspaper published an open letter entitled Modern life leads to more depression among children. The letter was signed by over 100 public and professional figures in child development and education, me included.

In it, we expressed grave concerns about the loss of childhood in contemporary life, and the urgent need for an informed public dialogue about what to do about it. We are worried that a lifestyle that is sedentary, "virtual," and screen-based is affecting the behaviour and learning ability of a growing number of children in the world's richest countries.

One of our most prominent signatories, Baroness Professor Susan Greenfield, director of the Royal Institution, believes that children's increasingly screen-based lifestyle might have profound long term risks. These include "the potential loss of imagination, the inability to maintain a long attention span, the tendency to confuse fact with knowledge, and a homogenisation of an entire generation of minds." She fears these risks "could even actually change the physical workings of the brain."

My colleague Sue Palmer spent three years researching the influence of contemporary culture on children's development, particularly their capacity to learn. Her book, *Toxic Childhood*, addresses the following questions:

➤ What lies behind the current explosion in developmental and behavioural disorders, increased childhood depression

and general dissatisfaction among young people?

➤ What changes in children's lives over the last 25 years may be affecting cognition and behaviour – thus making it more difficult to teach children to read and write?

➤ How can schools, parents and society "detoxify" contemporary childhood?

In her research, Palmer found that under-10s are more distractible and impulsive than they were a few decades ago, causing problems with discipline in school. She also found an explosion in "special educational needs."

Another finding was that technology is out-stripping biology in many areas. Children need to spend less time in virtual worlds and more in the real world – eating real food, playing real games, and interacting with real people, including the important adults in their lives. If they don't, it compromises their development – intellectually, emotionally and socially. Recent research from London University suggests that, in terms of cognitive and conceptual development, today's 11-year-olds are two to three years behind their counterparts 15 years ago.

Our open letter was by no means meant to be alarmist. Neither was it in any way critical of teachers or children. The aim is not to apportion blame for the "toxicity" of childhood, but to initiate a major public debate.

In the educational press over the past decade we have read countless letters from teachers about the "audit culture" of relentless

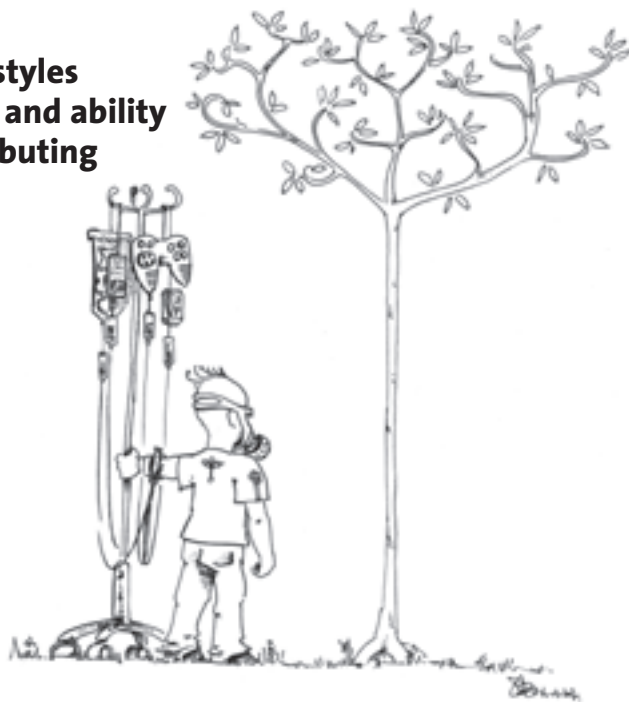
testing, examinations and over-academic learning. This, they argue, is systematically destroying children's innate love of learning and – just as importantly – the living, creative art of teaching.

There are grave dangers with educational policies that start with little or no reference to the human learning relationship. We are striving to restore this balance by understanding the role of authentic "relational learning" as a prerequisite for an emotionally and spiritually mature learning experience. If our children do not have the opportunity to grow up in such an enabling learning environment, the danger is that the behavioural and mental health problems that are now so rapidly increasing will become even more widespread, and our children will be ill-equipped to deal with the society of the future.

At Roehampton University's Research Centre for Therapeutic Education, we are embarking upon a major research programme looking into the place of what we call "the relational" in teaching and learning. We can begin

by encouraging awareness of the research that already exists in abundance on the effects of "toxic" modern culture on children's development and learning.

And all of us – parents, teachers, academics, campaigners, and politicians – can take responsibility for mitigating the worst excesses of this culture. If we start to do that, then not only will children grow up with a positive rather than a cynical view of the world, but teachers can begin to reclaim the creative art of teaching.



Dr. Richard House is an early years teacher at Norwich Steiner school and senior lecturer in the Research Centre for Therapeutic Education at Roehampton University, London. Email him at r.house@roehampton.ac.uk.

Reprinted with permission from the December 2006 edition of "The Teacher," a magazine of the NUT of England and Wales.

Colombia: In memoriam

According to the Colombian Human Rights Commission, 33 teacher trade unionists were assassinated in Colombia in 2006. EI honours their names, and grieves with their colleagues and families.

01-23	Maria Isabel Fuentes	04-11	Herminda Lozano Plata	08-17	Fabio Martinez Rincón
02-13	Eneida Josefa Quintero Epieyuu	04-24	Alvaro Enrique Garnica Diaz	08-19	Berta Inés Agudelo Valencia
02-13	Arturo Santo Guzman	06-02	Julio Enrique Vergara	09-05	Germán Eduardo Solano Andrade
02-23	Guillermo Zemanate Bermeo	06-07	Mario de Jesús Giraldo Aristizabal	09-10	Afranio Martinez Rincón
03-05	Luz Miriam Farias Rodríguez	07-04	Luis Hernando Chira	10-24	Ana Lucia Moreno Alvarez
03-09	William Rafael Ortiz Cardenas	07-06	Francisco Ernesto Garcia Mora	11-03	Elías Perea Quejada
03-22	Norberto Castillo Romero	07-10	Ivan Nañez Muñoz	11-16	Ramiro Rafael Romero Caba
03-28	Max Villagarcia	07-12	Helbert Orozco Pinzón	11-17	Esaú Gutierrez Galves
03-30	Arcenio Peña	07-17	Hernando Molina	11-18	Jorge Víctor Padilla Babilonia
03-31	Jhon Jairo Osorio	07-25	Maria Leticia Garces Franky	11-18	Rodrigo de Jesús Rendón Galvis
04-08	Edgar de Jesús Rave Serna	07-27	Javier Pedroza de la Hoz	12-02	Luís Nelsón Zapata Sepúlveda

Iran: Teachers face brutal crackdown

Thousands of teachers are taking to the streets of Tehran to demonstrate their anger and frustration over utterly inadequate salaries and a total lack of respect from education authorities. Iranian teachers' wages are so far below the poverty line that many must take two and even three jobs in order to feed their families.

Government's response to the teachers' protest was swift and brutal, with mass arrests of up to 1,000 teachers on 14 March. The Guardian newspaper reported: "In a carefully coordinated operation, riot police swooped on demonstrators and beat them with batons as they tried to gather outside Iran's parliament

and education ministry. They herded groups of teachers into police vans and buses and transported them to detention centres across the capital, Tehran." EI wrote to Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad on 16 March condemning the harsh repression, and urging immediate release of all teachers. The

letter received widespread news coverage inside the country. EI and the ILO Workers' Group met the Iranian delegation to the ILO Governing Body in Geneva on 21 March. They urged the Iranian government to engage in social dialogue with the teacher trade unions. EI will continue to monitor the case closely.

Korea: Freedom of expression violated

Two Korean teachers face potential death sentences for uploading information from the internet about North Korea. Choi Hwa-Seop and Kim Maeng-Gyu were arrested 18 January for violating national security by uploading North Korean posters

and information concerning North Korean politics. The charge of violation of national security carries a potential death penalty. The two teachers have both received awards for their contribution to peace education, and their work in unification educa-

tion has been recognized by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Unification. Korean teachers, fellow members of the Korean Teachers and Education Workers Union, KTU or JeonGyoJo, have rallied in support of Choi and Kim. EI wrote to

the President of the Republic of Korea strongly urging his government to respect the fundamental right to freedom of expression enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and release the two detained teachers immediately.

Zimbabwe: EI concerned as national crisis deepens

As the crisis in Zimbabwe deepens, teachers and their unions are concerned about growing violations of human and labour rights. With hyperinflation running at 1,600%,

unemployment rates exceeding 80%, and both food and fuel in short supply, the national economy is verging on collapse and civil unrest is growing. With salaries well below the

poverty line, teachers joined the nation's doctors in striking over pay demands, and students are protesting exorbitant tuition fees. Unionists and opposition leaders have been harassed and impris-

oned in a government crackdown. EI is maintaining close ties of solidarity with member organizations in Zimbabwe facing these extremely difficult circumstances.

Making Bologna a reality: EI organises London Official Bologna Seminar on mobility of staff and students

By Monique Fouilhoux

As part of an ongoing collaboration between Education International and the National Unions of Students in Europe (ESIB), and in close cooperation with the University and College Union, this seminar was organised with the aim of enhancing the idea of moving from “individual to institutional mobility.”

A total of 185 participants from 35 countries, including trade unionists, students, representatives of institutions, governments and inter-governmental bodies, gathered in London to address issues of mobility of staff and students.

In his address, EI General Secretary Fred van Leeuwen reminded participants that mobility of academic staff and students is key to higher education as it is “a tool to promote cooperation within and between disciplines across borders in Europe, to contribute to the personal and professional development of staff and students, and to create a truly European dimension to higher education.”

Two studies on mobility of staff and students were presented by Conor Cradden, an independent researcher, and Sanja Brus, from ESIB, respectively. They showed that if mobility among students is lower than desirable, mobility among academic staff for *teaching* periods abroad is probably even lower. In their presentations, they highlighted key obstacles

to mobility and put forward possible solutions, to form the basis for discussion in four subsequent workshops.

One of the main problems identified was the lack of data on mobility. The working group appointed by the Bologna Follow-Up Group to collect data on mobility of staff and students has not managed to present comparable and reliable data on mobility. The reasons for this were seen as being twofold: Common definitions are missing and national data collection is scarce. Otherwise the following were seen as the main reasons behind the lack of progress in the field of mobility: The rationale



for mobility has mainly been described from an *individual* perspective and most higher education institutions have therefore *not* seen it as their responsibility.

The seminar generated recommendations intended to deliver mobility and, equally important, to ensure that issues relating to academic pay, conditions and career opportunities,

Suggestions for the London Communiqué

We are convinced that mobility will enhance the quality of higher education and that it is now high time to genuinely make mobility the key concern of the Bologna Process. A much greater effort is therefore needed to build coherent strategies, including action plans at all levels, to provide incentives for more balanced mobility and to remove obstacles. We ask the Bologna Follow-up Group to give high priority to work on mobility, and to report back to ministers by 2009.

We require the Bologna Follow-up Group to invite the EI Pan European Structure and ESIB, with the participation of other relevant partners, to develop a European strategy on mobility of staff and students for consideration at the next ministerial meeting in 2009. The definition of appropriate data in collaboration with international data providers must be seen as a priority task to underpin the rest of the work. Stocktaking in certain well defined areas may be a potential tool to support this work. Any such strategy will call for the greater involvement of all partners at all relevant levels, especially higher education institutions as well as relevant ministries that deal with issues other than education.

We have also agreed that - as a matter of urgency - visa regulations, work permits and social and financial conditions for mobility need to be addressed by the national authorities, with a view to the removal of obstacles to staff and students' mobility well before the ministerial meeting in 2009.



are adequately reflected within the Bologna Process, having been markedly absent during the first eight years of its history. It also agreed on suggestions (see the box) for the communiqué to be adopted by the ministers at the next ministe-

rial conference to be held in London in May.

All documents in relation to the seminar and the full report are available on <http://www.ei-ie.org/highereducation/en/>

EI has been a consultative

member of the Bologna Process since 2005. This seminar represents a key step for EI and its affiliates in making a constructive contribution to the Process. It showed the centrality of academic staff concerns for the achievement of

the Bologna goals, and demonstrated the trade union movement's capacity to engage with these difficult issues. It vindicated the long struggle to make the union voice heard within the Bologna Process.

> Interview

Mahnaz Afkhami: Promoting lessons in leadership for women

By Claude Carroué

Sixty years ago her grandmother broke out of traditional gender roles as a working single mother in southern Iran. A generation later, her mother found the courage to leave her wealthy husband, come to the United States, go to work in a cannery to support her children and put herself through school.

Not surprisingly, Mahnaz Afkhami was profoundly inspired on a personal level by her grandmother and mother's fiercely independent lives. Professionally speaking, one of the most influential people in her life was the first female cabinet minister in Iran, who set up a girls' high school and began giving lessons in leadership.

"I was the second woman to become a minister in Iran, so I followed in her footsteps in many ways," Afkhami said. "My work has been pretty much involved with education as a pillar of movement building. It is based on the idea that young girls especially need to be exposed to a variety of ideas, concepts and philosophies so that they can choose how they will shape their lives."

After studying in the United States, Afkhami returned to teach at the National University

of Iran. There she was head of the Department of Literature and set up the association of university women students and professors. Its goal was to help "bridge our cultural roots with new concepts of human rights and social justice."

On March 8, to celebrate the International Women's Day, Afkhami will be in Washington, DC, to deliver the message that "in spite of the diversity of circumstances and of contexts within which we work, there is a great deal that binds us together. There are numerous strategies we can share, and our solidarity is our strength."

She will also be there to launch "Against All Odds," a film made about Women's Learning Partnership, an organisation Afkhami founded.

"We came together originally with women leaders from five countries: Palestine, Morocco, Jordan, Pakistan and Nigeria," she recalls. Now they work with a network of 18 independent partner organizations in the Global South, to empower women to transform their families, communities, and societies. The Women's Learning Partnership now works in Muslim-majority countries as well as in countries, like Brazil or



Mahnaz Afkhami

Nicaragua, with different religious traditions. "Our particular way of looking at leadership appeals to women in a variety of cultural and religion contexts," Afkhami underlines.

"Women's Leadership Partnership came through the proved need for women leaders, especially in the Middle East-North Africa region," she explains. "They came to the conclusion that we need to create a curriculum and concrete learning situations that will help women to realise their leadership capacities. Until and unless women re-

alise that they are agents in their own lives, all other changes for the society are really unlikely to be achieved."

"We have just launched the Young Women's Learning Partnership to emphasize the education and movement building among girls from 12 to 18," she adds. But she does not see this exchange of experience and knowledge as the older generation mentoring the younger, rather as generations having a dialogue and learning from each other.

Asked what is the most important obstacle she and her organisation face, Afkhami responds without hesitation. "It's the long-held patriarchal cultural context within which almost all of our partners work, this traditional concept of human relations, which affects not only the status of women, but also the creation of just and democratic societies."

More than anything, Afkhami hopes that "peaceful resolution of disagreement will become the way of the world."

To learn more about Afkhami's work with the Women's Learning Partnership, go to:
www.learningpartnership.org/

Fighting violence against girls in school

In 2000, countries around the world committed themselves to achieving gender parity in education by 2005, and yet almost no progress has been made,” deplores Action Aid International’s latest report entitled *Making the grade: A model national policy for the prevention, management and elimination of violence against girls in school*.

“It is clear that unless discrimination, harassment and vio-

lence in schools are addressed, girls will not be able to enjoy the right to education that has been promised to them in so many national constitutions and in so many legal treaties and international declarations,” the report says.

“Violence against girls has short and long-term impacts on the lives of the affected girls. In the short term, it could mean the end of schooling” and “this situation of gender inequality and violence exacer-

bates women’s vulnerability to HIV and AIDS.”

The model policy presented in the report was elaborated by education policy experts, civil society activists, teachers’ unions, and women’s rights experts to help Southern African Development Community governments develop an integrated single comprehensive policy on violence against girls.

The report recommends that governments “ensure that

teacher training institutions integrate violence against girls awareness in the pre- and in-service training curriculum.” And teachers’ unions should “adopt clear definitions of violence against school girls, as well as teachers’ obligations and duties, guidelines for handling reports of violence, and guidelines for dealing with teachers who are accused of committing acts of violence against girls.”

In the public interest: Education, health, water and sanitation for all

Classrooms with teachers; clinics with nurses; running taps and working toilets: for millions of people across developing countries these things are a distant dream. And yet it is these vital public services — health, education, water and sanitation — that are the key to transforming the lives of people living in poverty.”

Thus begins *In the Public Interest*, a compelling new report jointly produced by Oxfam International and WaterAid, both UK-based NGOs. The report calls on rich countries to support developing countries by increasing long-term aid to strengthen and improve these fundamental public services.

Unfortunately, millions of families lack access to public education, health, water and sanitation. The report states that today:

- 4,000 children will be killed by diarrhoea, a disease of dirty water
- 1,400 women will die needlessly in pregnancy or childbirth
- 100 million children, most of them girls, will not go to school

These grim statistics can be changed, however. “The world can certainly afford to act.” Oxfam calculates that meeting the Millennium Development Goals related to education, health, water and sanitation would cost \$47 billion per year.

“Compare this with annual global military spending of \$1 trillion, or the \$40 billion that the world spends every year on pet food.”

The report’s authors document improvements when governments provide universal services for women and girls, abolish fees for health and education, subsidize water and sanitation, and expand services into rural areas.

When governments fail to provide such services, the societies are marked by deep inequities, gender discrimination, low education and high mortality rates. While civil society groups can help pick up some of the

pieces, the responsibility clearly rests with governments.

“If the state is broken, the market does not solve the problem,” the report asserts.



To read the full report, go to: oxfam.org or wateraid.org.uk

Empower Women to Help Children, UNICEF says

Eliminating gender discrimination and empowering women will have a profound and positive impact on the survival and well-being of children, according to The State of the World's Children 2007, a comprehensive report issued on UNICEF's 60th anniversary.

Gender equality produces the "double dividend" of benefiting both women and children and is pivotal to the health and development of families, communities and nations.

"If we care about the health and well-being of children today and into the future, we must work now to ensure that women and girls have equal opportunities to be educated, to participate in government, to achieve economic self-sufficiency and to be protected from violence and discrimination," said UNICEF Executive Director Ann M. Veneman.

The report presents seven key interventions to enhance gender equality. They are related to education, financing, legislation, legislative quotas, women

empowering women, engaging men and boys, and improved research and data.

It deplores that, "despite substantial gains in women's empowerment since the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979, gender discrimination remains pervasive in every region of the world. It appears in the preference for sons over daughters, limited opportunities in education and work for girls and women, and outright gender-based violence in the forms of physical and sexual violence."

Other, less obvious, forms of gender discrimination, such as institutional discrimination and cultural traditions perpetuating social exclusion and discrimination from generation to generation though gender stereotypes, can be equally destructive.

The benefits of gender equality go beyond their direct impact on children. The report shows how promoting gender equality



ty and empowering women – Millennium Development Goal number 3 – will propel all of the other goals, from reducing poverty and hunger to saving children's lives, improving ma-

ternal health, ensuring universal education, combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, and ensuring environmental sustainability.

APRIL 2007

01-03 > Global Labour University Annual Conference, Johannesburg, South Africa

23-29 > Global Action Week, Worldwide

MAY 2007

01 > International Workers' Day, Worldwide

29 > Opening 96th Session of the Conference of the ILO, Geneva, Switzerland

JUNE 2007

04-06 > Gender and Equality Regional Meeting, Brazil

JULY 2007

22-26 > Fifth EI World Congress, Berlin, Germany