

[2007-02-23] International Women's Day - 8 March: Educators aim to eliminate discrimination and violence against women and girls

On International Women's Day, educators worldwide are demanding that governments act to halt violence that endangers women's lives, violates their rights, harms their families and poses an affront to humanity and international law.

Women around the world continue to face systemic discrimination and inequality that restricts their choices, limits their ability to act and undercuts their enormous potential to contribute to peace and development.

A delegation of eight women activists from all corners of the globe will represent EI in New York at the 51st session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, February 26 to March 9, 2007. They will be calling on UN member states to strengthen their political commitment and accountability to eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls.

"Violence against women is both a cause and a consequence of discrimination against women," says Deputy General Secretary Janice Eastman, who will lead EI's delegation to the Commission on the Status of Women.

"Efforts to prevent and ultimately end violence against women must therefore be grounded in the work of all states to eliminate discrimination against women and promote women's rights and fundamental freedoms," Eastman said. "This means not only making sure that laws and policies are not discriminatory; it also means changing the stereotypical conceptions of gender roles through education."

Teacher unions worldwide are fully prepared to play their part, Eastman added.

Education is fundamental because it is a process of empowerment in itself. Therefore, EI and its member organisations urge governments to pursue the Education for All goals and Millennium Development Goals related to education, by:

1. Guaranteeing the fundamental right to education to all girls worldwide;
2. Strengthening opportunities for post-primary education for girls while meeting commitments to universal primary education;
3. Making schools girl-friendly;
4. Recruiting female teachers from the communities in areas where the school enrolment of girls is low due to cultural factors and traditional practices that pose impediments to education;
5. Implementing international conventions prohibiting child labour and setting minimum age for labour;
6. Combating violence against girls and women;
7. Taking measures to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children, and providing assistance to victims of trafficking; and

8. Providing sexual health education and access to quality public services by adolescents, poor women and disadvantaged groups.

"If governments everywhere implemented these measures, they would have a significant and positive impact on the lives of women and girls worldwide," Eastman said. "We at Education International and our member organisations around the globe are committed to the goal of achieving quality public education for all, especially for girls and women, whose education is the key to development."