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AFRICA & ARAB COUNTRIES NEWSLETTER

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PSI REGIONAL SECRETARY LAUDS PSI AFFILIATES IN NIGERIA



PSI Regional Secretary for Africa and Arab Countries David Dorkenoo commended PSI affiliates in Nigeria who are working with The African Women Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Network (AWWASHN) to calls on the Lagos State government to reject the privatization of water. This campaign has been very successful due to the collaboration work between Amalgamated Union of Public Corporations, Civil Service, Technical and Recreational Employees of Nigeria (AUPTURE) and the AWWASHN.

“This is very good example of how trade unions working together with civil society organisations can bring about positive change in the lives of people in our communities and countries. We in the PSI are looking forward to more collaborations of this nature to ensure that our citizen enjoy the best possible living condition. We shall continue to provide support to affiliates that are involved in fighting against privatization of any kind within the public services. Privatization has not help this continent in any way, rather the rich resources of our continent have been handed over to conics of politician who in most cases have to clue to the effective management of the privatised institution”. Says David Dorkenoo

He further commend PSI allies in the media who have contributed tremendously in placing PSI issues at the door steps of the average person living in the Lagos Stata of Nigeria.

“This is victory for the people and we in PSI are proud to be part of this noble course and you can continue to count on PSI for support in the future on any issue of privatization. It is part of our priorities as organisation that works to support development issues in the public sector across the globe” Says David Dorkenoo

LAGOS WOMEN CALL ON GOVERNMENT TO REJECT PRIVATIZATION OF WATER



The African Women Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Network (AWWASHN) calls on the Lagos State government to reject the privatisation of water.

The African Women Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Network (AWWASHN) has joined Our Water, Our Right water privatisation campaign in Lagos, Nigeria. On 17 March 2016, the women's network demonstrated in front of Lagos House and delivered a letter to the governor of Lagos. They ask the Lagos government to stop all privatisation and commodification programs; to begin broad public consultation and participation in plans to achieve universal access to water; to disclose all World Bank activity with the Lagos government, and to fully uphold the human rights to water and sanitation.

access to water; to disclose all World Bank activity with the Lagos government, and to fully uphold the human rights to water and sanitation.

The campaign convened a summit in August 2015 as a means to increase the pressure on the government of Lagos and to strengthen the network between trade unions and civil society organizations. The outcome document outlines a clear program of action.

In an interview with PSI, the union AUPCTRE outlined the key elements of the campaign, which include :

- developing research to understand the motives and the implications of the privatization policy
- raising awareness with union members on the dangers of privatization
- building alliances with civil society organizations
- developing messages for the media
- organizing demonstrations to grab the popular attention and to pressure politicians

Some of the key concerns for the union include the fact that the government seems unable to meet its commitments or campaign promises, and that when the World Bank arrives with the privatization plan, it is accepted as a way out. The issue of corruption remains central, as many of the elected and senior officials may anticipate personal gain. As well, the union is concerned that the bribes will be offered to certain union members in order to divide the union.

The NGO Environmental Rights Action/Friends of the Earth Nigeria (ERA/FoEN) confirm the positions of AUPCTRE and add their concern that many government officials are likely unaware of the implications of a PPP concession. ERA/FoEN is in regular contact with the media, and conducted a Journalist Training on Reporting the Water Sector as a key element in raising public discourse and awareness.

In the coalition, each partner brings a number of attributes to the campaign: the trade union is able to mobilize many of its members with relatively short notice; the union also has experience in engaging government officials. The NGO is able to reach out to the media and to a variety of community groups, and can broaden the messages about the dangers of privatization.

Once the privatization policy is defeated, the really difficult work will begin. This will require building public participation mechanisms to guide the strengthening of the Lagos State Water Corporation.

Read more on Lagos water campaign: <http://www.ourwaterourright.org/>

PSI SOUTHERN AFRICA OFFICE HOLDS ITS SUBRAC IN JOHANNESBURG



As it has always been, both the Women committee and the young workers' meeting preceded the main Sub -Regional Advisory Committee meeting, which started on the 10th of March. Over 50 participants representing 9 countries took part in this activity.

Both the Women's and Young Workers' meetings had to engage on group work in order to facilitate deep, thorough and broad-based discussions to highlight existing challenges, identify key priorities and isolate important areas of action for the meeting structures.

The Women's committee meeting explored, through a group-work, participatory process, a number of pertinent issues relating to privatisation, gender-based violence (GBV), capacity-building for women and maternity protection. The campaign on 'Equal Pay' was also flagged as a key campaign activity which needs, just like other campaign activities, improved mechanisms to ensure delivery of effective and sustained women's campaigns in the sub-region. Capacity-building and leadership development were also isolated as primary cornerstones for successful campaign work and building a strong network of women activists in the sub-region and within affiliates.

more information on: <http://www.world-psi.org/en/psi-southern-africa-office-hosts-its-subrac-johannesburg>

"TRADE UNION 50:50 BY 2024: STEP IT UP FOR GENDER EQUALITY", SAY PSI AFFILIATES IN GHANA



To commemorate this year's International Women's Day, the Trades Union Congress Ghana (TUC) organized a forum which all the 7 PSI affiliates in the country took part. Women were advised to struggle towards the 50:50 representation and participation.

Even though, universally, the theme for this year (2016) was "Planet 50:50 by 2030: step it up for gender equality", unions in Ghana celebrated the day under the theme 50:50 by 2024 - that is, they committed themselves to reduce the universal deadline in 6 years.

"What the unions seek to do is to look at their achievement so far and how they can work towards achieving equality and 50:50 representation in the trade union structures, decision making and at all levels in the union", says Patricia Ofoosuwa Tweneboah (Head of Women & Gender, HSWU of TUC).

Patricia stated further on that, it is about time that unions move from discussion policy based documents and move into action. An action where women will come out and take up leadership roles and positions.

On this sense, women leaders were urged, during the forum, to mentor the young ones so that they can replace them when they are not around; this Patricia believes will serve as the one of the very successful succession plan and that's a sure way male dominance in the trade unions and other work place will be broken.

Ann Apekey, a gender & youth consultant, also threw a challenge at women to adopt the "I can do spirits" and build their capacity in order to fit in any position and can actively and positively assume such positions and performs creditably just like their male counterparts or even do better.

Read more on: <http://www.world-psi.org/en/trade-union-5050-2024-step-it-gender-equality-say-psi-affiliates-ghana>

WEAK HEALTH SYSTEMS CAUSED THE EBOLA CRISIS IN LIBERIA



Liberia was the third country to be hit by the Ebola crisis in 2014-2015. Over 10,000 cases and almost 5,000 deaths were reported. Health workers in particular were severely hit due to the lack of personal protective equipment, medication and material, as well as knowledge of the disease.

Liberia's pre-Ebola health sector was poorly funded and under-resourced with only three health workers for 10,000 people while the International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates 41 to be necessary for an adequate health care system.

Fortunately for all three Ebola countries, the international community stepped in and now, at the end of the emergency period, Infection Prevention and Control materials are widely available. This current level of availability must be maintained at all times in order to avoid a future recurrence of the massive death toll among health workers and population. Health workers still need training and constant refreshers on Ebola control by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and other partners to keep them up to the task at all times.

However, those who take care of the sick in the country, are not being taken care of.

Thousands of volunteer health care workers who have served the nation for years are still working for free. These professional women and men have no job security, social security, pension scheme, medical or death benefits but are doing the same jobs and carry the same responsibilities as those with official employment.

The health system is understaffed and health sector unions in the country are waging a major battle to obtain first and foremost official employment of these volunteer workers, while at the same time fighting for adequate wages and hazard pay as well as appropriate training and protective equipment for current health workers. In the last ten years not one public health worker has been vaccinated against any disease condition and no Occupational Health & Safety Division have been installed at workplaces.

Trade union repression and intimidation is rife, and although Liberia has ratified ILO convention C98 on the Right to Organise, it still does not allow public servants to join a union. The National Health Workers' Association of Liberia (NAHWAL) which organises health workers in the public sector despite having gone through all required processes and paying Business Registry tax as a trade union for two years in a row, has been denied a union certificate and is not recognised by its own government. As a result, health workers' unions are not included in consultations by the government.

Read more on: <http://www.world-psi.org/en/weak-health-systems-caused-ebola-crisis-liberia>

PSI AFFILIATE IN IRAQ CALLS THE ATTENTION TO TRIBAL TRADITIONS THAT HINDER THE PROGRESS OF WOMEN



During the Celebration of the International Women's Day, the Union of Engineering and Technical Professions South Electricity Sector (UETPSES) distributed pamphlets calling the society to put a limit to such traditions when it comes to this issue.

Read more on : <http://www.world-psi.org/en/psi-affiliate-iraq-calls-attention-tribal-traditions-hinder-progress-women>

PSI EAST & WEST AFRICAN COUNTRIES HOST SUBRAC IN KIGALI



This year's Sub-Regional Advisory Committee (SUBRAC) for East and West Africa saw in attendance leaders of Public Sector Unions from Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Zanzibar and the Regional Office of the Public Services International (PSI) who deliberated extensively and resolved on the subjects of Funding of SUBRAC meetings, The advisory committee including SUBRAC being made a constitutional structure and lastly, the Constitutional committee should ensure that SUBRAC is included as a structure in PSI constitution even as considerations for amendments are ongoing.

During the SUBRAC for East and West Africa, held in Kigali, Rwanda from the 16th to the 17th of March 2016, participants discussed the issues of devolution, Restructuring of the energy sector in Rwanda, Affiliation fees, Indexation, Constitutional Amendments, Projects for affiliate members, Splinter union, Insecurities in Nigeria, Kenya and Burundi.

SUBRAC is the only organ that allows for the dissemination of decisions taken in other decision making bodies like Congress, AFRECON and AFREC among others. It is also the mouth piece of all other organs of PSI as well as providing opportunity to bring affiliates closer.

The young workers meeting which preceded the main SUBRAC meeting explored activities of the young workers in the East and West Africa (English Speaking countries). During their discussions, they deliberated and reviewed the previous SUBRAC resolutions on youth activities. The young workers of Rwanda appealed to SUBRAC to keep on supporting the Affiliates as most of them are still in the registration process to have the Unions well established and manage to function independently.

The women's meeting also delved into the issue of Provision of specific Budget for women activities, Insecurities in Nigeria and Burundi, Payment of Affiliation dues, Campaign against privatization, Campaign against privatization, Dissemination of information concerning Women and Research on women sacking and women empowerment through training and development

Members noted that there were still challenges in terms of dissemination of women resolutions by NCCs. This was making the implementation of women programs/activities to be a challenge. The hospitality given to the SUBRAC members by Rwanda affiliates was greatly appreciated.

PSI FRENCH SPEAKING AFRICA HOLDS SUBRAC IN LOMÉ



About 39 union leaders and young workers representing 10 countries from the French Speaking Africa sub-region met from the 1st to the 3rd of March 2016 in Lomé at the head office of ITUC Africa for SUB-RAC meeting. They discuss the challenges facing the sub-region and the issues affecting unions, workers and the society at large.

Prior to the meeting, the women and Youth committees met and laid down their annual sub-regional action plan which will guide them during the whole year.

This meeting also served as a platform to forge partnership with the “Jeunes Volontaires pour l’Environnement” (JVE) regional office. There was a presentation on "Unionism, Social Commitment and Environmental Activism: prospects in this Era of Sustainable Development Goals". This afforded the opportunity to sensitize the trade unions on their role in safeguarding the environment, raise the level of awareness of trade-union actors on key socio-environmental issues and encourage them to integrate such issue in their action plans at both the national and international levels.

There was another presentation on "Organizing and Recruitment" strategy, This was aimed at enabling trade-union leaders to identify the ills and obstacles undermining African trade unionism in the context of its mission geared at promoting and defending the interests of workers. This helped to determine courses of action for the PSI and its Francophone affiliates to enable them to genuinely strive towards the strengthening of trade unions. The main priority areas included: Organizing unorganized workers and soliciting their membership so as to increase trade union density; Developing and implementing organizational campaigns targeting and integrating young workers and women in trade union structures and trade union management bodies; Developing networks, alliances and synergistic actions with other structures such as NGOs or other civil society organizations with objectives similar to those of trade unions.

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