

WE-AFEO (Women Engineers-ASEAN Federation Engineering Organisation) (CAFEO 31 Jakarta Indonesia, 11-12 Nov 2013)



by Ir. June Lau Yuk Ma

WOMEN ENGINEERS SECTION

FIRST and foremost, we would like to thank IEM President Ir. Choo Kok Beng, for his support and AFEO Chairman (2012) Ir. Dr Prak Min of Board of Engineers, Cambodia, for the endorsement on behalf of AFEO Governing Board to form WE-AFEO during the CAFEO 30 at Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

WE-AFEO kick-started the official networking among WE representatives from the 10 countries in ASEAN at CAFEO 31 in Jakarta, Indonesia. Two programmes were successfully organised. The second WE-AFEO Governing Board Meeting was held on 11 November, 2013. The WE-AFEO Regulation was endorsed at the meeting for presentation to the AFEO Governing Board during their meeting in the afternoon.

All WE representatives were given the opportunity to share their Country Report on WE development or activities. Ir. Menaga Deavi a/p Ramanathan presented Malaysia's

Country Report on behalf of IEM WE Section. The Country Report session was chaired by Ir. Raftah Mahfar, Chairman of IEM WE Section.

On the second day, 2013 WE organised a forum with the theme "Women Engineers: Today's Challenges And The Way Forward", chaired by Ir. Sharifah Azlina binti Raja Kamal Pasmah. There were 5 panelists:

- Panelist 1: Ir. Kumari Nalini (IEM WE Section, Malaysia)
- Panelist 2: Mrs. Anchalee Chavanich (EIT, Thailand)
- Panelist 3: Ms. Khin Sandar Tun (MES, Myanmar)
- Panelist 4: Ir. Betty Alisjahbana (PII, Indonesia)
- Panelist 5: Ms. Emma Sri Martini (PII, Indonesia)

Ms. Haiyani Rumondang, Director of Industrial Relations from the Ministry of Manpower and Transmigration, Republic of Indonesia, gave the opening speech. Ir. Kumari Nalini, Hon. Secretary IEM WE Section, gave an eye-opening, insightful presentation on "Women In Engineering – Strength, Weakness, Opportunities, Threats." WE, Women Engineers, are our own best friend and as well as our greatest enemy. It is time we learnt to lean in, leverage on the strength, be ourselves and do our best. The message we took home was that we need not be 100% well versed to do a job.

Mrs. Anchalee Chavanich is the Chairman of EGAT (Energy Generating Authority Thailand) Board of Directors, Thailand. She presented a powerful talk on "Challenging Power Generation in Thailand and ASEAN". Mrs. Chavanich said that for women engineers today, it's not only about self-development but also about being able to lead in the most important matter: "Energy" to the people, society and countries. Mrs. Chavanich is the role model of WE, and her goal is to provide "Power for Thai Happiness" via EGAT.

Ms. Khin Sandar Tun, the Joint General Secretary, Myanmar Engineering Society, talked about "The Vital Role of Myanmar Women Engineers in Engineering Education". The development of WE started from education. Are we given a fair education in universities? Are we given a fair appraisal during our employment? Ms. Khin Sandar Tun presented us with the statistics of Myanmar Women Engineers In Engineering Education, a review on the staff (graduated Philosophy of Doctorial, Master Degree holders) of the Ministry of Science & Technology, Technological Universities and Government Technological Colleges and the students intake in all universities, which had achieved the 50% ratio. The presentation showed that WE had a vital role in nation building for a peaceful and modern developing country.



IEM WE Section representatives to CAFEO 31 were Ir. Raftah Mahfar, Ir. Sharifah Azlina binti Raja Kamal Pasmah, Ir. Kumari Nalini, Ir. Menaga Deavi, Ir. June Lau Yuk Ma and Engr. Dr Habibah Haron

Ir. Betty Alisjahbana is an Independent Commissioner of PT Garuda Indonesia Tbk, member of the National Innovation Committee and Vice Chairman of the National Research Council. Her session was lively and fun and we all had a good laugh. But she also gave us important messages, including the need for women to be given opportunities with no barriers or constraints and that women must have access to mentoring, capacity building, networking and the development of specific skills and support.

Gender diversity at every level, including the top leadership position makes economic and business sense. Why? Here are some answers:

- *Women make up half the human capital of any economy. When you empower them, you increase growth, equity and reduce poverty.*
- *What is the largest economy in the world? It would be very sad if a company does not realise this. This is because it is not China or India. It is 12 trillion or twice the size of India and China combined. It is the power of women's consumption.*
- *Boards with women do better in terms of profit, rate of return, turnover of management.*

Ms. Emma Sri Martini, President Director of PT Sarana Multi Infrastruktur (Persero), presented a picture of women participation at labour, management and boardroom levels in different countries. The rate of women in the labour force in Indonesia is 53% higher than that in Hong Kong, Malaysia, Taiwan and India. She also presented the gender statistics of PT Saran Multi Infrastruktur employees.

She concluded by suggesting initiatives to encourage women participation in the labour force, namely management commitment, women's development programmes and collective enablers (schemes and options of employment benefits and support).

In the afternoon, at the end of the session, all WE attendees were given a chance to describe the outcome of the forum and WE-AFEO Jakarta in one word or phrase. These included empowerment, challenging, happy, united, encourage, proud, leadership, glad, amazing, magnificent, honour, enthusiasm, teamwork, motivation, fun, professional, synergy, inspiring, great, grateful, lead, sustainable, talent, humour, sweet, success, happy, equality, visibility, bless, love, energy and fun together.

The next WE-AFEO board meeting was handed over our Myanmar counterpart and IEM WE Section look forward to the participation of our members at CAFEO 32 in Myanmar.

After CAFEO 31, we continued our trip to Bandung, visiting Tangkuban Perahu Volcano, Ciater Hot Spring, and went shopping at Jalan Riau factory outlets. ■

Ir. June Lau Yuk Ma is the Principal of Perunding JLAU. She has vast experience in civil and structural engineering consultancy and construction work. Her keen interest in promoting IEM Women Engineers started since 2004. She is presently IEM Council Member, Immediate Past Chairman of IEM Women Engineers Section.