

**WOMEN ENGINEERS SUMMIT - WE SUMMIT 2015**

by Ir. Raftah binti Mahfar

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Women Engineers Section of the Institution of Engineers, Malaysia (IEM-WE) organized the “WOMEN ENGINEER SUMMIT- WE SUMMIT 2015”, at Equatorial Hotel, Penang on 26 November 2015. A total of 46 participants attended the said summit with the theme ‘WE Diverse Work Life towards Future’. The event was officiated by the IEM President, Y.B. Dato’ Ir. Lim Chow Hock.

WE Summit comprised two keynote addresses and three forums featuring a diverse group of prominent women engineers (WE) leader from engineering consultancy, government bodies, the airport industry, oil & gas industry and academicians. WE Summit addressed issues relating to WE and sharing of perspectives in devising strategies to address the imbalance of women participation in engineering.

Keynote addresses

The 1st keynote speaker, Y. Bhg. Datuk Ir. Rosaline Ganendra, Director of Minconsult Sdn. Bhd in her paper entitled “The Role of Women in Building Climate Change Resilience” suggested that women should play a crucial role in coming up with disaster mitigation measures and to lead recovery efforts in the aftermath of disasters. Presently, in most communities women do not have equal access to disaster relief education, resulting in them not knowing where to go or what to do in the event when a disaster strikes. “Women also suffer a higher mortality rate than men while trying to protect their families from harm and prone to sexual harassment in relief centres that do not have sensitive areas for women and children to bathe and change”, added Ir Rosaline Ganendra.

The 2nd keynote address entitled “Recognising Women Engineers’ Involvement Towards Malaysia Becoming a Developed Nation” was presented by Y. Bhg. Datin Prof. Ir. Dr. Siti Hamisah Tapsir, Deputy Director-General, Ministry of Higher Education, Malaysia. She expressed her concern akin to the “leaky pipeline” where women were a minority in top management and at board level globally. The number of women taking engineering in higher education institutions has increased but the number of women in leadership roles and STEM jobs are still small.

Women are lost from the pipeline (workplace) through voluntary termination at a rate two or three times faster than men once they have attained the experienced, mid-career, manager/senior manager level of their careers. Some studies have suggested that the situation

is due to the lack of mentor/icon to look up, raising family commitment, employers' gender discrimination, limited women's networking, lack of motivation/career advancement and lack of recognition.

First Forum

Forum 1 with the theme "Raise the Image of Women Engineers and Encourage Them to Strive toward Their Fullest Potential" believed that Women in Engineering have a bright future. Forum 1 panellists consisted of Ms. Gillian King, Vice President – Asia Pacific of TENDEKA, Ir. Khairiah Salleh, General Manager – Engineering, Malaysia Airports Holdings Bhd, and Assoc. Prof. Ir. Dr. Leong Wai Yie, Chairman of Healthcare Research Group, Taylor's University. It concluded that in order to strive to their fullest potential, WE should have the confidence in their own capabilities and strengths. WE also need to establish their own networks and if possible, find a mentor to guide her career advancement. The moderator for Forum 1 was Prof. Ir. Dr. Siti Hawa Hamzah, Professor, Civil Engineering Faculty of Universiti Teknologi MARA.

Second forum

In Forum 2, Ms. Hilary Mercer, Vice President, Projects Integrated Gas, Shell (M) Sdn. Bhd and Dr. Yong Leng Chuan, Lecturer, Taylor's University, shared their survival secrets with the theme "Recognizing the Involvement of Women Engineers in Nation Building". Ms Hilary said that being a woman in engineering environment means you will be recognised and remembered by others. Hence, you always need to do the right thing, to demonstrate leadership, and to set a good example. She believed her success recipe as her willingness to say "YES" when challenged.

Dr. Yong suggested the use of "brain rewiring" exercise that gave WE the power to control what WE think and how to react in any situation. With this exercise, WE can train her brain to think positively. The moderator for Forum 2 was Ir. Raftah Mahfar, Director of SCG Consultants Sd. Bhd.

Third forum

Forum 3 with the theme "Enhancing the Capabilities of Women Engineers to Achieve Work-Life Balance" was chaired by Assoc. Prof Ir. Hayati, Director of CTL, UTM Academic Leadership, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia.

The panel consisted of Ir. Dr. Khalidah Hj Haron, a Trainer, Coach and Hypnotherapist, Ms. Zainab Kayat, Petronas Technology & Engineering Division, and Ms. Kamila Ab Hamid, Wood Group Kenny. The consensus achieved was that husbands' cooperation played an important part so that WE could juggle and prioritise between work and family in a stress free manner.

Connecting and interacting well with family, persevering a childcare support system such as developing extended family support, or establish good friends/neighbours, or seeking the

right domestic help will earn WE a robust support system in order to achieve their work goals.

Finally, drawing from the invaluable experiences of the keynote speakers, forum panellists and participants, WE Summit 2015 had moved one giant step forward in achieving visibility of women in engineering and technology.



Group photo of the Keynote speaker, Forum Panellist and Moderator together with IEM President Y.B. Dato' Ir. Lim Chow Hock.



Group photo of the WE Summit 2015 participants together Keynote speaker, Forum Panellist, Moderator together with IEM President Y.B. Dato' Ir. Lim Chow Hock