

Remembering Dan Gallin with Deepest Respect and Admiration by Mirai Chatterjee (WIEGO Board Chair)

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Dan was a steadfast friend and supporter of SEWA, and at a time when our work and presence was not fully acknowledged by the labour movement, both in India and globally. He astutely recognised the importance and power of organising informal workers, especially women, and how essential this was not just for the workers themselves, but also for the global labour movement. IUF under his leadership provided tremendous support to home-based workers and later the historic Convention and then to other informal workers, especially women.

His contributions to WIEGO and to ensuring that workers remained central to all we do, was also critical, especially in the formative years of WIEGO. He led the WIEGO Organising and Representation (ORP) programme with his usual panache, his deep commitment to organising workers and building their membership-based organisations. While his ideas may not always have been understood or accepted, he pressed on giving the ORP programme the direction it needed to grow and develop. He also expanded the geographies where ORP began working, including Eastern Europe, about which he had personal knowledge and experience.

He was both a dynamic and firmly committed global labour leader and an intellectual, always challenging many of us and the labour movement with his ideas and critiques as well. His commitment to workers and their struggles was unwavering and solid. He combined intellectual rigour with his long years of organising experience---both theory and praxis, based on his values and ideological commitment to a world based on social justice and equity. His many varied experiences in the labour movement were not only widely recognised, but also much admired and valued across all continents. He always spoke to workers in the language that they understood---and in so many different tongues! He was quite a linguist! He led IUF for years, expanding its reach across continents, traveling often to far-flung places and always enjoying a hearty meal with workers and their leaders.

As the Founder of the Global Labour Institute, he tried to consolidate his long years of organising in the labour movement through his writing. With his sharp analysis coupled with concrete experiences of the workers' movement, he wrote on a range of subjects. I remember one of his many writings where he critiques the bureaucratization of unions and urges us to ensure that we remain close to workers at all times. He was always generous with his time, encouraging young leaders, explaining what course of action needed to be taken to further the workers' movement and providing solid advice.

Dan introduced us to his friend, the well-known film maker Patricia Plattner, who made a moving documentary on six SEWA members, all worker-leaders. The film was a hit in theatres in Geneva and there was much interest in the SEWA movement after it was released. The film also resulted in the six women becoming heroes in their villages and neighbourhoods and strengthened their leadership significantly with their enhanced visibility and voice. Patricia also became a close friend of SEWA and mine too.

I had the privilege of meeting with Dan whenever I visited Geneva. He always generously invited me to a delicious lunch and with Joelle (his wife) there too. We shared updates about SEWA and WIEGO, and I listened quite spellbound as he analysed the politics of our day. His knowledge of changing political winds on every continent and what was going on and where, left me wanting to know more. We enjoyed many a good laugh too.

While I will miss him, like so many of his friends and admirers, I feel so grateful for all he was to the global labour movement, to SEWA, to WIEGO and to many of us personally also. He will be with us always in spirit, urging us to organise and fight for a better world for workers and in every corner of the globe.