

Arctic Ocean

ifsw news

1/2002

North
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S o u t h

The World and IFSW change

The World changes, IFSW changes

This edition of IFSW News forms a backdrop to the General Meeting to be held in Geneva in July. When we meet again as a body it will be to review a period of considerable change and not only for the IFSW but the world in which we live.

The IFSW has been outspoken on World Debt, the plight of refugees, and the escalation in armed conflict and terrorism. We remain deeply concerned by most governments' responses to armed conflicts and terrorism in a solely military approach. Without a real and viable attempt to address the cause of dissatisfaction, conflict will continue.

The last General Meeting called upon the Executive Committee to move to the second stage of constitutional change, which would result in greater clarity and stability for IFSW. Since that time the Executive has considered changes which if adopted would result in a greater emphasis on work at a regional level; a new process for joining IFSW; a smaller Executive Committee and changes to the length of terms for members of the Executive Committee.

The IFSW has relied upon and benefited from the many volunteers serving on the Executive Committee and in other roles. They have provided a great reservoir of experience. However the outcome is a reasonably long "learning curve" - What is the role of IFSW; What does it seek to do and how does it operate? What is the role of the Executive, Members and representatives. Speaking personally, it took me at least four years to really feel that I had a proper grasp of this complex and frankly impressive organisation. So by the time Executive Committee Members feel more confident with the structure and their role and may be ready to take on a more senior role they may have only a further 4 years to serve. In practice it has been the case on a number of occasions that the Vice Presidents and President may only be eligible for a further 2-year term. This has seen a loss of valuable skill. It is proposed that the current terms be changed from 2 to 4 years. The current maximum number of consecutive year's service (8) has been increased to 12.

When I began this process as chairperson of the Structure and Operations Committee over four years ago I did not realise that one day I

would find myself in a conflict of interest. Indeed that is where I am at present but also with the majority of the Executive Committee. We had the unenviable task of having to look at the request of the General Meeting and consider options, which would inevitably have a direct bearing on most of us. I believe that we have conducted this task with as much transparency as is possible and with the interests of the IFSW at the fore.

Structural change has not been the only focus of our work in this past period and we have worked closely with our sister organisation the IASSW to develop further the unified voice of practice and education.

The IFSW has also published the excellent new resource manual "Social Work and the Rights of the Child" which provides a solid and accessible teaching format for this important Convention. Our work at the UN continues to be intense and we have been successful in establishing a renewed team in New York. We have extended our policy statements on globalisation and displaced persons. The Permanent Committee on Ethical Issues is underway with its important review of our Standards and Principles and the Human Rights Commission has worked tirelessly in support of Phyllis Coard, Carlos Toledo and Otto Alvarado.

Finally our membership has expanded and we are constantly seeking new and effective ways to improve communication.

It has been a challenging period and there is little doubt that there is more to come. However IFSW is well placed to continue its critical role as the global voice of social work practice.

Sydney, May 2002
Imelda Dodds, President

Frontpage:



Why all these changes, Imelda?

The big issue at the IFSW General Meeting in Geneva in July is probably the proposed changes in the IFSW Constitution and By-laws. *ifsw news* has therefore put "the-questions-you-are-too-polite-or-afraid-to-ask" to Imelda Dodds, the IFSW President and Convenor of the committee that has developed the new constitution.

Why does IFSW have to make changes in the constitution? Why can't the Federation just continue with the old one?

A constitution is a living document and needs to reflect the context in which it operates. We have found, over a number of years now, that the existing provisions relating to membership, elections and terms of office have had some problems. In Montreal at the 2000 General Meeting, the Executive Committee was asked to prepare a series of proposals that would remedy the problems and that is what we have done.

Why should IFSW reduce the number of Executive Committee members from 17 to 12? Will IFSW not become a less democratic organisation with fewer Board members?

I do not think IFSW will become less democratic because of the size of the Board members. The strength of any democracy is the actual participation of the people with the voting power.

The fact also remains that IFSW is not a wealthy organisation. We rely heavily on our membership fee income in order to operate. There are always competing demands on our very scarce resources. Also we have to "do more with less".

The cost of operating an Executive Committee of 17 people is substantial and yes there would be savings if the number of members was reduced and we cannot and should not ignore this element of the proposal.

What is the point of prolonging the number of years people can serve on the Executive Committee? Is not "new blood" always good in an organisation?

Certainly "new blood" is always important in any organisation and that is absolutely true for the IFSW. However, to follow the analogy the rate at which we are recycling blood has been seen to be too fast. Coming to the international table is, at least initially, a daunting experience and it does take time to get to know and understand not only the IFSW but also its many relationships with other organisations and the international context in general.

I know that 8 years seems a long time for people and they might rightly ask why do we need to extend the time frame. However, in practice, it can take 2 to 4 years at least for a new member to feel that they have a functional grasp on the work of the IFSW. It has often been the case that, by the time they are confident and ready to run for office, such as Vice President, Treasurer or President, they are approaching the end of their statutory term. As a result we have often had situations where many of the officers have only had two years to serve in that important and senior role.

You have suggested staggered elections - with exception of this year - that is half of the Executive is elected each time. Why cannot all be elected at the same time?

There is a recognised danger in that you can lose a substantial amount, frequently the majority, and possibly all of the experience of the Committee at one election. We frequently see a substantial turnaround, certainly over 50%. This inevitably results in a period of loss of energy whilst everyone comes to terms with the new roles. The reason behind staggered elections is to provide continuity without affecting the democratic process.

Imelda Dodds, you are both the President of the Federation and Convenor of the Structure and Operations Committee - the committee that has proposed the changes. One of the proposals opens up for you to continue as President for another four years, while you according to the old constitution are no longer eligible. You have served 8 years altogether in the Executive. Have you made these proposals just to be able to continue in the position as IFSW President?

I can truthfully say that I have not, although that I have always been aware of and concerned about the inevitable perception that could arise out of this situation. My awareness of this potential problem dates back to before my election as President, when still as Chairperson of the Structure and Operations Committee, we flagged the need for changes in this process in a separate discussion paper presented at the Montreal General Meeting. I then declared my conflict of interest and have done so ever since.

Whether it is adopted or not, in whole or part, is entirely and properly open to a democratic process. From my own point of view, yes there is no denying that if certain changes are adopted, it would open up the opportunity for me to continue in the role, but I can assure members that this is most certainly not the reason for the recommended changes.

IFSW is a global organisation. Can you explain why the Executive Committee members then - all but the President and the Treasurer - shall be regionally elected? Is not there a great risk that the Executive Committee members only feel a regional responsibility and will have difficulties in thinking globally and in making decisions that are the best from a global point of view?

This is always a delicate balance and it is a problem in almost any organisation that people come to the decision making table with their own local agenda, whatever that may be. However, part of the process is a strong emphasis on the orientation to the role and making explicit to people who are interested in nominating that, whilst they may be elected at a regional process (and remember that may or may not be accepted as a proposal at Geneva), they must take a global perspective when making decisions

and that they must inform themselves about the work of the entire organisation, not just the region from which they come.

I also must say that it is both the art and the responsibility of the Chairperson, whomever that might be, to ensure that all members of the Executive Committee understand that when they are making decisions they must do so on behalf of the entire organisation, not just one region.

Why cannot IFSW set up regional offices - one in each of the five regions with paid staff? You are in fact suggesting an increase of the membership fees from 1.40 to 1.45 Swiss francs per member and year.

This is certainly the ultimate goal of the IFSW and one which we would hope to realise. However, I don't think that it will occur in my tenure, but we must continue to work actively towards that outcome.

The increase of fees must also be seen in the light of an increase in costs over the intervening years since the fees were last increased. There are a great many of our member organisations at the moment who are unable to make their financial commitments and this is of great concern to the IFSW, not only financially for its operations, but of course a concern about our member organisations.

Member organisations that have not paid their fees run the risk of being suspended as members of the Federation: Why can't IFSW be more generous to poorer organisations and let them continue as members even if they cannot afford paying their dues?

I would have to say that in my experience of a number of organisations, IFSW has been tremendously generous to our poorer organisations over a number of years. However, we have reached a point where we can no longer continue to service an increasing membership when an increasing number of organisations are either not paying any fees at all, or are paying reduced fees when their circumstances may have changed. We must be realistic. Many organisations may not in fact be aware that a significant number of our members pay the reduced fee. Equally a number of more financially viable

organisations have generously given of their financial and other resources to support less robust member organisations.

How come a lot of documents are never translated into French and Spanish despite the fact that these also are official IFSW languages?

This is a very good question and it is also one that speaks directly to our financial resources. The cost of translation is very high indeed and we cannot possibly afford to translate every document into French and Spanish. However, over recent years we have made a concerted effort to identify key documents that require translation and to look at other ways of achieving this. We have been generously supported by our colleagues in French and Spanish speaking countries, notably the Spanish Association, the Swiss Association and the French Association who have taken a number of documents and provided a full translation.

What will happen if the proposed changes in the constitution are not approved by the IFSW General Meeting 2002?

Quite simply the status quo will exist. The constitutional arrangements under which we have been operating for the past years will

continue. As I said at the beginning, this is a democratic process and the Executive Committee, through its Structure and Operations Committee, was asked to prepare a series of constitutional changes.

It is now over to the membership to decide whether those changes are acceptable, in full or in part or not at all. That is one of the great strengths of democracy.

Is the work of the Structure and Operations Committee finished now or can we expect more big changes to come up at the General Meeting in 2004 in Australia?

Well that probably depends, in the large part, about the outcomes of the discussions in Geneva at the General Meeting that it would like to see addressed and that would go to the Structure and Operations Committee. However, I think the Committee anticipates that as far as constitutional change is concerned, it has probably finished its work.

There were, however, other tasks for that Committee which have been on hold while we have been addressing this major piece of work and those tasks, which include a revision of the statements of duties of staff and all office bearers and main representatives, human resource policies etc., will continue.

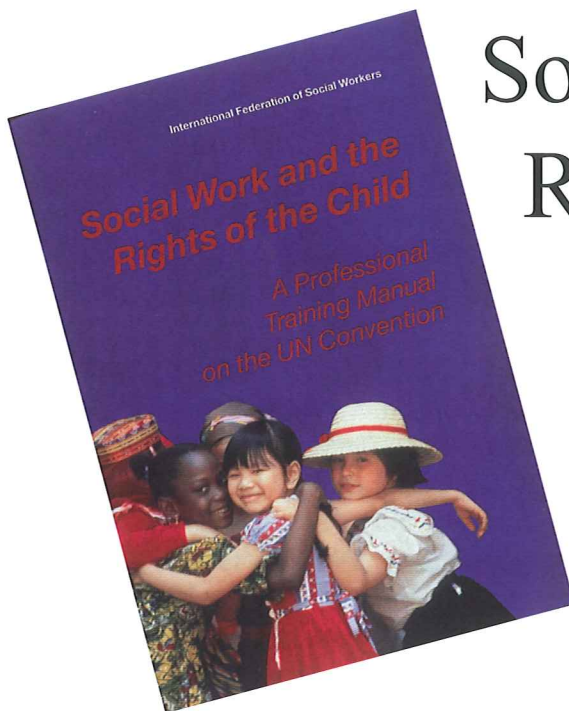
Facts about the Structure and Operations Committee

The Committee was established in 1997 as one of five Executive Committee sub-committees (the others were Conferences, Editorial/ Publications, Membership, and Policy). The overall aim of the sub-committees is to continue vitalise and develop the functions of IFSW.

Two of the main tasks of the Structure and Operations Committee have been to review the role and goals of IFSW and to develop structure and strategic direction.

Present members are *Imelda Dodds*, Australia (convenor); *Sue Dworak-Peck*, USA; *Nigel Hall*, Zimbabwe; *Eugenia Moreno*, Canada; *John Mould*, Canada; *Eilis Walsh*, Ireland; and *Anne Worning*, Denmark. *Juan Manuel Latorre Carvajal*, Colombia; *David Jones*, UK; *Fiona Robertson*, New Zealand; and the *Secretary General* are ex-officio members.

New IFSW Training Manual Social Work and the Rights of the Child



The long awaited professional training manual on "Social Work and the Rights of the Child" is now available. The 96-page manual – the most comprehensive IFSW document so far - is taking you through the Convention step by step, looking at how it can be used in day-to-day social work practice. A number of case examples from around the globe address the diverse needs and rights of children from different ages, backgrounds and personal circumstances. It is hoped that the publication will provide stimula-

tion and guidance to social workers and others who wish to live up to the high ideals of the UN Convention and to implement them in their work with children.

Chapters include General Measures of Implementation; Definition of the Child; General Principles; Survival and Development; Basic Health and Welfare; Civil Rights and Freedoms; Family Environment and Alternative Care; Education and Cultural Activities; and Special Protection Measures. The manual also includes a model curriculum on children's rights and the complete text of the UN Convention as well as a list of useful web sites. UNICEF has provided photos of children from around the world, and IFSW has received substantial support from the British Association of Social Workers, the Danish Association of Social Workers and the Norwegian Union of Social Educators and Social Workers. Translations are being prepared to French, German, Japanese and Russian. Hopefully other languages are to follow.

An order form is included in this newsletter.

IFSW expanding membership to 79 countries covering more than 500.000 social workers

In a postal ballot, three new member organisations have been included in IFSW: The Association of Social Workers, Bangladesh; the Japan Psychiatric Social Workers Association and the Moroccan Association of Social Workers. With this and an increase in membership in other member organisations, IFSW affiliation is now covering 500.117 social workers worldwide. As we welcome the new members, we can also celebrate that IFSW has never been stronger than today.

ifsw update

a new monthly news service

IFSW has from January 2002 introduced ifsw update as a web-based monthly news service, focusing on both global, regional and national news that affect the international social work community. It is hoped that the publication will provide even stronger links to member organisations and other affiliates. Look it up at www.ifsw.org

Russian social workers receiving strong government support during IFSW visit

The IFSW President Imelda Dodds and Secretary General Tom Johannesen visited Russia at the end of April to strengthen the links between IFSW and Russian social workers. It was a hectic week of meetings and conferences of the Union of Social Workers and Social Pedagogues of Russia (USWP), as well as discussions with the Minister of Labour and Social Development and other high-level government officials, parliamentarians and the deans of the schools of social work nationwide. A social work seminar gathering representatives from many parts of Russia, hosted at the European Union Embassy, focused on globalisation and its implications for the

profession. A number of social work services were visited both in Moscow and Samara, the transitional capital of Russia during the German invasion in World War II.

The most important event during the week was an official letter from the Russian government, expressing its strong support to the USWP, headed by Antonina Dashkina, and to social workers for their important and increasing role in providing professional services to the most vulnerable part of the population. The government also expressed that USWP's membership in IFSW promoted the integration of Russia into the world community.

Social Work Conferences 2002-2004

Copenhagen, Denmark, 26 - 29 May 2003

IFSW European Seminar

Social Work in Future Europe

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Quebec City, Canada 23 - 27 May 2004

4th International Conference on Social Work in Health and Mental Health

Secretariat:

4th International Conference on Social Work in

Health and Mental Health, 210, rue Lee, Suite 275,
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Tel: (1) 418 523 3555

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Nagasaki, Japan, 7 - 11 July 2003

17th Asia-Pacific Conference

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Secretariat:

17th APSWC Preparatory Secretariat,

c/o Japanese Society for the Study of Social

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Tel: (81) 3 5366 5964, Fax: (81) 3 5366 5965

E-mail: renmei@apricot.ocn.ne.jp

Web: www.17apswc.jp/eng.html

Adelaide, Australia, 2 - 6 October 2004

IFSW-IASSW World Conference

Reclaiming Civil Society

Secretariat:

Australian Association of Social Workers

P. O. Box 4956, Kingston, ACT 2604, Australia

Tel: (61) 2 6273 0199, Fax: (61) 2 6273 5020

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THE GOLDEN RULES FOR A CULTURE OF PEACE

Aboriginal Spirituality

We are as much alive as we keep the Earth alive.

- Chief Dan George

Baha'i Faith

Lay not on any soul a load that you would not wish to be laid upon you, and desire not for anyone the things you would not desire for yourself.

- Baha'u'llah, Gleanings

Buddhism

Treat not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful.

- The Buddha, Udana-Varga 5.18

Christianity

In everything, do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets.

- Jesus, Matthew 7:12

Confucianism

One word which sums up the basis of all good conduct. . . loving kindness.

Do not do to others what you do not want done to yourself.

- Confucius, Analects 15.23

Hinduism

This is the sum of duty: do not do to others what would cause pain if done to you.

- Mahabharata 5:1517

Islam

Not one of you truly believes until you wish for others what you wish for yourself.

- The Prophet Muhammad, Hadith

Jainism

One should treat all creatures in the world as one would like to be treated.

- Mahavira, Sutrakritanga

Judaism

What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbour. This is the whole Torah; all the rest is commentary.

- Hillel, Talmud, Shabbath 31a

Sikhism

I am a stranger to no one; and no one is a stranger to me. Indeed, I am a friend to all.

- Guru Granth Sahib, pg. 1299

Taoism

Regard your neighbour's gain as your own gain and your neighbour's loss as your own loss.

- T'ai Shang Kan Ying P'ien, 213-218

Unitarianism

We affirm and promote respect for the interdependent web of all existence, of which we are a part.

- Unitarian principle

Zoroastrianism

Do not do unto others whatever is injurious to yourself.

- Shayast-na-Shayast 13.29

These Golden Rules were presented to the United Nations' Assistant Secretary General Gillian Soerensen by the North-American Interfaith Network to mark the UN International Decade for a Culture of Peace, more relevant then ever after 11 September 2001.

ifsw news



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SOCIAL WORK AND THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

A Professional Training Manual on the UN Convention

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May 2004

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