



TRIENNIAL REPORT OF THE MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

Members: Hazel Bowen (*South Africa*), Convener; Zehra Canfesci (*Turkey*); Susan Njoku (*Nigeria*); Regine Oltersdorf-Paul (*Germany*); Arielle Wagenknecht (*Switzerland*); Shirley Randell (*IFUW Vice-President*), *ex officio*; Vivian Ike (*International Coordinator Young Members*), *consultant*

Meetings of the Committee

The Committee met together once in Geneva in 2008. In 2009 and 2010 the Committee met virtually, using three conference calls and special online teamwork project software. In general, the Committee operated by e-mail. In addition, the Convener participated in the special planning session with the Board of Officers in November 2007.

The Committee was able to work well using the virtual methods; however, it is important that the Committee meet at least once in person. There also needs to be more cohesiveness with the Board and other committees. Either the Convener needs to attend the Board Meetings in person or there needs to be better reporting back of the discussions and outcomes.

At the beginning of the triennium, Vivian Ike, the International Coordinator of Young Members, was appointed as a consultant. She attended all meetings and gave input to many of the e-mail discussions. It was good to have a young member participate; there were discussions of whether a young member representative should be a full member of the committee, with voting rights, in the future.

Geographic areas were allocated to each committee member, who worked with prospective members in those regions, as well as national associations and federations in difficulty.

There was a problem with one committee member who did not fully participate, especially via email. It is essential that members who accept nomination should understand that there is a commitment and they must willing and able to fulfil their role.

New and Prospective Affiliates

Women Graduates-USA, Inc. was admitted as a full member by written vote of Council in 2008. Associations from Zambia and Malawi submitted constitutions and are ready to formally apply for re-affiliation in the first case and affiliation in the second. Other countries expressing interest included Benin, Ethiopia, Ghana, Hungary, Jamaica, Liberia, Mozambique, Niger and Tunisia.

The Membership Committee keeps regular contact with all prospective members, providing support and guidance. In some instances, groups in formation have been linked with an IFUW national federation or association (NFA) or individual members who act as “mentors”. The model constitution previously developed and available on the IFUW website has continued to prove invaluable and a great help to organizations wishing to join.

Review of Constitutions

The Committee has assessed constitutions from prospective members, reviewed constitutional changes by existing members, including the Australian Federation and WG-USA, and reviewed the revised constitution of one regional grouping.

Loss of Membership

The Membership Committee, with the Finance Committee, continue to look at ways in which to assist struggling NFAs. In 2008, the Committee individually contacted each of the groups in arrears with dues to find ways of helping them to maintain membership. An instalment plan, which would allow groups to pay back dues over three years was offered and, in one case, helped an association to remain part of IFUW. The Committee developed a business plan to help associations to work toward financial stability. The Committee has encouraged “twinning” or NFA to NFA assistance. A number of NFAs in danger of losing membership were happily assisted by other NFAs, branches or individuals to meet their IFUW dues commitments. We would like to express appreciation to the Canadian Federation, the Irish Federation and the Swiss Association for their generosity.

Despite these efforts, the following NFAs lost membership because of arrears in dues exceeded three years: 2008: Burundi; 2009: Brazil, Estonia, Guatemala, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Panama, Senegal, Solomon Islands, Tanzania, Uruguay and Vanuatu; 2010: Chile, Estonia and Kazakhstan. Belgium and Costa Rica advised in 2009 that they were withdrawing from IFUW due to financial constraints. Denmark paid its dues, but gave notice that they were withdrawing in 2009 because the association was ceasing activity.

Promoting and Strengthening Membership

Falling membership remains a major challenge for nearly all NFAs. Many older associations find it difficult to attract new members, especially younger members. The Committee undertook a series of activities during the triennium to try to strengthen older associations:

- A profile of potential members was published.
- A survey on “Best Practices in Recruitment, Maintenance and Retention of Members” invited NFAs to share strategies that have shown some success.
- An online discussion on Multigenerational Leadership highlighted challenges and strategies for more inclusive leadership structures. This has led to the organization of a relevant training programme for the Mexico Conference. One of our committee members is part of the planning committee for this.
- Contact information provided by NFAs on the IFUW website and individual websites was tested, showing that certain NFAs are difficult to contact, which could be limiting their growth in membership. Committee members wrote to those with unreliable contacts to point out the problem. The Committee suggested to the Board that an annual report by NFAs could assist IFUW to keep all contact details current.
- Other suggestions shared with NFAs ranged from twinning to the use of membership cards.
- The Committee is investigating ways in which other organizations successful grow and develop.
- A blog discussion on public relations/ marketing of IFUW will take place in May. Input from this discussion will feed into a workshop facilitated by the Membership Committee in Mexico.

Looking Ahead

The Committee is keen to have key material on the website translated into other languages. We also believe strategies should be developed to create awareness of IFUW/NFAs within the higher education sphere.

*Hazel Bowen, Convener
May 2010*