



## **TRIENNIAL REPORT OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL**

IFUW Headquarters facilitates the work of international volunteer leaders and acts as a clearinghouse for information flowing to and from the national federations and associations (NFAs). During the triennium, staff members assist with nearly every aspect of the Federation's programme.

### **International Advocacy**

Over the last three years, staff members have worked closely with IFUW's teams of representatives to the United Nations (UN) in Geneva, New York, Paris and Vienna. Staff facilitated the periodic reporting required for IFUW's official consultative status and accredited IFUW's representatives, both permanent and occasional, to UN conferences and other meetings. This is a year-round task, as meetings take place in the four centres on a continual basis.

Special efforts were made to increase NFA involvement with the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review. Staff provided advance notice to NFAs whose countries were scheduled to report on their human rights and gender equality records and encouraged NFAs to participate in, or even initiate, alternate NGO reports to these bodies. In the case of CEDAW, NFAs were encouraged to suggest areas of focus for the UN experts examining the country reports. NFAs were also invited to join IFUW's delegations for the public hearings when their country reports were discussed.

With the UN's increasing shift of focus to the regional and national level, more meetings are taking place outside of the major UN centres. Staff members liaise with the team coordinators and NFAs to identify local members with appropriate expertise to represent IFUW at regional conferences.

Tightened security measures, especially in New York and Geneva, have made it increasingly difficult for members from developing countries to obtain the visas necessary to attend UN meetings. Where in the past, IFUW could provide a single visa support letter, now staff must spend considerable time in follow up with central authorities and national embassies.

Staff members edit and circulate advocacy reports from the volunteer leaders, manage the advocacy email network and encourage interactive discussions on advocacy topics.

### **Communications and Public Relations**

The IFUW website continues to be the most exciting, versatile tool at IFUW's disposal. A major revision of the site was launched in 2008, with a fresh, more interactive and attractive approach. The new structure provides both members and visitors easier access to information about what is happening in the Federation. The number of visitors has risen to almost 80,000 per year. A password controlled-section of the website gives national and international leaders continuous access to contact information for all NFAs. One of the newest web features, a bimonthly blog started in 2009, offers members an opportunity to share views on issues ranging from "the leaky pipe" of women in academics to the future of volunteerism. The visibility is well worth the considerable time and effort required to maintain and update the site. Special recognition should go to Anamaria Vere and Réka Fogarasi Musso for their excellent work on the site.

IFUW staff members also enable regional groups and national affiliates without resources to have a web presence, by designing, hosting, and updating their web pages and providing technical support and advice. The University Women of Europe, the Pacific Graduate Women's Network, the Rwandan

Association, the Spanish Association, and the Irish Federation are a few of the groups that have benefitted from this service in this triennium.

Special appreciation should go to PlantageNet Ltd, the private company in the USA which has provided the servers free of charge since 1997 for IFUW's website and email listservs. This service has been extremely valuable over the years.

Online discussions were a regular feature this triennium, with an average of four discussions each year. IFUW staff members provided technical support for the IFUW committee members and other volunteers who led these discussions. Topics ranged from sustainable futures and quality of education, to intergenerational leadership and the most recent one on women's health.

Efforts to increase subscriptions to IFUW's various email networks were only moderately successful. Less than 2000 members are now subscribed. If IFUW's information is going to reach a wide segment of the membership, assistance from NFAs is needed to advertise this opportunity.

Staff members are continuously looking for more effective ways to improve IFUW's use of new communication technology. In 2010, IFUW created a new Facebook presence, which should appeal to younger potential members. Seventy percent of the "fans" of the new page are between 25 and 45. IFUW Updates in a more professional-looking HTML format were introduced at the end of 2009.

### **BRPID, Fellowships and Hegg Hoffet**

Headquarters continued to provide the ongoing administrative support for IFUW's various funding programmes. Staff assisted the Projects Committee in the changeover of Bina Roy Partners in Development Programme (BRPID) to a competition format and liaised with both the NFA project leaders, as well as donors. A new web-based donation scheme for raising funds for the programme, suggested by staff, will be launched later this month.

Nearly one hundred applications were received at Headquarters from national finalists and independent members for the 2008/2009 fellowships competition. For the first time, the entire competition was conducted electronically, from the submission of applications to the assessment of applications by the Committee for the Award of International Fellowships. Staff handled the general enquiries, coordination of references, correspondence with applicants, payment of awards and tracking of reporting by the winners. The 2011/2012 competition is now underway.

Staff also handled the payment of grants for the Hegg Hoffet Fund.

### **Conference**

Preparations for the 30<sup>th</sup> IFUW Conference in Mexico City have taken a considerable amount of staff resources. Staff prepared the conference website and registration system for non-Mexican participants, liaised with the local arrangements committee, assisted with programme planning, prepared the documentation, facilitated visas and funding requests, and coordinated the accreditation of delegates. A new on-line credit card payment system introduced for Mexico will eventually facilitate credit payments for other IFUW programmes. A number of unexpected events, including complications with tours and hotel arrangements, have required greater staff involvement.

### **Other Highlights**

Ongoing administrative assistance was provided to the Board of Officers and committees, including logistics for the annual meetings in Geneva and the special planning meeting in November 2007.

Several approaches to virtual meetings were tried, from a conference call and a bulletin board meeting for the Membership Committee, to a Skype conference in the case of the Board. In 2008, a special programme was organized at the United Nations for observers in conjunction with the annual meeting.

Staff continued to administer the independent membership programme, maintain the contact data base for national affiliates; administered the special programme survey in 2008; provided technical assistance for the programme consultation in 2009 and 2010; carried out the 2009 poster competition; and restructured the financial accounting system.

The amount of staff time dedicated to facilitating NFAs and regional groups increased steadily over the triennium. Special requests from national leader touched topics ranging from explanations of IFUW dues or programmes, contacts in other countries, historical material, assistance with starting groups in other countries, support for national funding proposals, and help with national surveys. Special attention was given to groups in danger of losing their membership because of arrears.

### **Staffing and Budget**

In 2009, Christine Marijan retired after 35 years of excellent service as IFUW's Finance Officer. This position was reduced to 30% following her departure. She was succeeded first by Elly Fischer in 2009 and then by Lotta Grammatikopoulos in 2010. Réka Fogarasi Musso joined the team in 2009. Hélène Queyrane filled in for a staff member on maternity leave in 2009 and is now assisting on a temporary basis with conference preparations. Leigh Bradford Ratteree, Susan Phillips and Anamaria Vere provided continuity. The regular team is now the equivalent of 2.9 full-time employees, a very small number for the scope of tasks carried out. With the reduced staff, assignments are sometimes completed more slowly than we would like, but we strive to provide efficient service.

In 2009, Headquarters shifted to a four-day week on a trial basis, with the office open from 8.00 to 17.00, Monday to Thursday. Special arrangements were made to accommodate Friday visits by visiting members of NFAs, and urgent emails continued to be handled as needed. As this worked well, the schedule is now permanent.

Every effort has been made to maintain staffing and administrative costs within the levels set by the Council. Despite an early retirement package given to the Finance Officer in 2009, the results for both 2008 and 2009 were very close to target. Although the revised budget for 2010 projects a sizeable deficit, staff and administrative costs will be under the amounts originally budgeted. Over the last two triennia cuts have been made everywhere possible, from the reduction of staff, and the elimination of printing to the use of Skype. We have advised the Board and Finance Committee that further savings cannot be expected either from staffing or administrative costs.

We would like to express special thanks to Hillevi Perraudin, IFUW Assistant Treasurer in Geneva, for the tremendous support she has provided in her role as the staff liaison.

As staff, we are fortunate to be in regular contact with IFUW members throughout the world. We realize that it continues to be a difficult time for IFUW, as the leadership seeks to redefine IFUW's purpose and direction in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We are ready and willing to assist this process in any way we can.

Leigh Bradford Ratteree, IFUW Secretary General  
on behalf of the IFUW staff  
May 2010