



IFUW Status of Women Committee

2008 ANNUAL REPORT

Dorothy Meyer, Convener

Summary of Action since February 2008

International Advocacy

This has been a learning period for Aliaa El Erian who is taking over the role of SWC Advocacy liaison from me. Establishing a reliable email address for Aliaa was an initial barrier. Now it is a matter for her to keep a watching brief on several key websites and to transmit information to the Advocacy Network that is relevant to the IFUW Strategic Priorities and the Programme for Action.

Following the release of the Strategic Priorities framework it was not clear what the role of the SWC was to be in implementing aspects of the framework. At our meeting the SWC had proposed that we would prepare action plans for NFAs on advocacy issues related to the framework. But as a result of misunderstanding the SWC did not proceed with the planned actions.

The SWC plan to ask NFAs for reports on advocacy action was delayed until the latter months of 2008 and was attached to a Questionnaire prepared by the IFUW Working Group on the Girl Child. At the time of writing there appears to have been a very small response to the SWC component of the questionnaire and the responses have yet to be analysed.

Clara Ikekeonwu volunteered to be the IFUW representative to the Decade for Peace network but there has been little to share with NFAs this year. She also volunteered to represent the SWC on the IFUW Working Group on the Girl Child.

Alice Kagoda asked NFAs for reports on their activities for International Women's Day 2008. A summary of the NFA reports was put on the IFUW website. Alice has volunteered to represent the SWC on the Working Group preparing an Education Advocacy handbook.

Ayden Birendinc has volunteered to represent the SWC on the Higher Education working group.

Programme for Action website

The Overview, the Education and the Human Rights priorities have received minor modification to reflect changes in the approach to the issues highlighted. The Board did not accept the SWC recommendation that we incorporate in the Programme for Action suggestions for action based on relevant issues in the Strategic Framework.

International Federation of University Women

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Email Discussions

As proposed in the report to the Board in February a first email discussion was held in May-June 2008 with Alice Kagoda serving as the Moderator. The topic was 'What constitutes quality education?' It was unfortunate that due to her professional commitments Alice was not able to supply a report on the Discussion until the end of July. A summary report was presented in the September issue of the Board-Committee report and this included the website address to read the full report.

We were pleased to note the increased participation of the membership in an email discussion held in November on 'Women Building Sustainable Futures for us and Generations to come.' Based on a number of the priorities highlighted in the Programme for Action section on the Environment and the Economy, the discussion, led by Peet van der Loo, a workshop leader in Manchester, was planned as an activity to follow up on workshops and offer workshop leaders at the Manchester Conference more responsibilities in between IFUW conferences. It also helped to raise participation of members joining the online discussions. This worked well.

The next discussion, on Women and Employment, is scheduled for the beginning of February 2009 and will be moderated by Marion Minis.

Unfortunately this and one other discussion – 'Higher Education' (Jennifer Strauss) has not been able to be held at the times offered by the respective Committee members due to logistical problems with timing, staffing and Office holidays. I have been pleased to enter into some proposals for over-all planning with the Secretary General so that we avoid such glitches in the future.

Preparations for the Thematic Days at Conference 2010

Jennifer Strauss and I were advised that the ID Seminars and Workshops would be held over two Thematic Days at Conference 2010. We were invited to suggest 2 of the 4 themes for each day, the SWC ones being based on the Programme for Action while the Board would suggest 2 themes per day based on the Strategic Priorities. Under each theme there will be 3 seminars, 2 in English and one in Spanish. Jennifer will coordinate all of the Seminars while Clara Ikekeonwu will convene the Workshops. Arriving at a coherent set of themes proved to be very stressful especially as I was the only representative of the SWC included on this particular email discussion network and consequently had to consult with Jennifer separately

Agreement was finally reached on the programme. Jennifer has prepared the papers to be sent to the NFAs - a Call for Papers, an Information Sheet about the Papers and a Guideline Sheet for Writing an Abstract. These will be made available to NFAs in February 2009.

Members of the Committee have supplied names of people for consideration to be Conveners for the English-speaking Seminars. These will be further discussed at our meeting and the names forwarded to the Board for approval.

Communications

I participated in an email 4-way discussion with the President, Secretary General and the SWC Board liaison during November in an effort to clarify the lines of communication required. As the discussion proceeded it became clear that there had been much 'talking past each other' over the last 8 months and that with the speed with which we communicate with one another there isn't always time to reflect and put the issues under discussion in perspective. I felt that a lot of misunderstanding had been cleared up and I hope that this can be explained to the committee when we meet.

I also participated in a small group with members of the Board, the Secretary-General and Dr. Marcia Penn drawing up a Questionnaire which went out to the membership at large seeking their views on the Programme for Action and the Strategic Priorities Framework in order to determine future directions. The responses are being analysed by Dr. Penn and we are currently awaiting her analysis.

As a group we have endeavoured to observe the protocols we drew up for communication. What became clear is that most of the members of this committee are either in full-time employment, and/or hold high office in their NFA. Prioritising becomes very difficult under these circumstances so I believe that it is important that the Office and the members need to take one another's situation into account when tasks are being allocated/delegated.

The first on-line email discussion brought a number of complaints from some long standing members to me and I guess the office about having their in-boxes swamped, but the system of advice about being on the Discussion email list seemed to work much better during the second discussion. It is certainly an easier process than having to make your submission on a bulletin board.

Marion Minis attended the international Women's Worlds Conference (WWMM08) in Madrid as a member of an interactive workshop. Young members of Germany and the Netherlands have developed the format of the workshop they presented. It will be made available on-line for IFUW members.

Submitted by Dorothy Meyer, Convener
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