

## **SUBUD PREMISES OVERVIEW**

January 2010

### **PURPOSE**

This document aims to bring together information collected from three workshops during Congress, plus that from the Subud Property Questionnaire.

It aims to be a practical document providing information for discussion, decision making and action.

In being succinct, much background information is omitted, and this can be provided as required.

### **CONTEXT**

This document relates to Subud Latihan Premises – which may be used for enterprises, not to premises which are not used for Latihan but are used for Subud enterprises or endeavours. Related surroundings and gardens are presumed to be part of the premises..

### **QUESTIONNAIRE**

During 2009, a questionnaire was sent out to a number of Subud Groups asking about their premises. This was circulated to English speaking Groups, and responses were received from sixty of them. The information has so far been processed in the form of a spreadsheet, and will be processed further in due course. It was intended that the questionnaire would be translated into other languages and circulated to non-English speaking groups as well. The responses provide valuable information on the Group and Premises situation.

### **WORKSHOPS**

At Congress, as the two property workshops were scheduled during the final stages they were not well attended. In both, the key issues reflected those expressed in the questionnaires. A workshop on Architecture and Culture produced valuable outcomes related specifically to Latihan premises and properties owned by Subud members.

### **ACCOMMODATION**

Workshop participants agreed that the basic accommodation that is required is two Latihan spaces and toilet/s. In addition, a space to meet, to make tea and even meals is desirable, as is outdoor space, and crèche facilities suitably located. Places for enterprise activities, and sleeping accommodation is also considered desirable by some groups.

The premises should be accessible, flexible and adaptable. They should be smart, beautiful, harmonious and calm, with entrances that are welcoming. Collaboration should be central to their development.

### **ISSUES**

#### **Conditions**

The conditions in Groups vary enormously from large groups owning valuable properties which are also used for enterprises and contribute substantial sums to National coffers, to small groups that are struggling to even pay hourly rents. There are Groups that would like to rent or buy, and Groups where their premises – due to reduced numbers – are now underused. There are Groups which cannot afford even basic rent, where members' homes provide unsatisfactory accommodation, and those whose rented premises are larger than they need.

#### **Ownership**

Renting long term can provide the same opportunities as buying without the burden of finding large capital sums. In some cultures, long-term renting (leasing) – as opposed to renting by the hour - is more normal than owning.

**Costs**

The costs which members bare cover not just the purchase, price or rental, but also servicing, maintenance and possibly management. Groups may be struggling with any of these elements.

**Uses**

Premises may be used solely for Latihan, or for Latihan and other Group activity, or may used by other parties as well. This may be simply through letting space, or may be more of an enterprise activity, including perhaps organising and catering for events.

**Support**

From the questionnaire, it is clear that Groups may need moral, as well as financial, support. Many Groups ask for information of one kind or another.

**Funds**

At Congress, there was discussion about pooling funds / assets, and of the lack of trust that exists in Groups fearing that they will loose direct control of the premises which – in many cases – have been purchased with members' contributions.

**Events**

Groups may be able to pay for Latihan facilities, but would appreciate funding for special events.

**Management**

In many cases, on-going management of the premises is a major issue. This may be handled by members, who are paid or unpaid, or by paid outsiders. Where space is rented out, or there is an enterprise activity, effective management becomes essential. There are some excellent examples of this, but the management of properties and property enterprises can still be improved.

**Contributions**

With contributions from Groups being essential to the Subud organisation, the role of Premises enterprises is critical. Indeed it can be argued that beyond property expenses, this element should form a part of the planning process for acquiring all premises.

**Flexibility**

Flexibility and adaptability were noted as major issues, in that premises should work for different activities on a daily basis, and also be adaptable over time as Group circumstances change.

**Design**

The difficulty of working with designers to obtain designs which worked well in all senses was noted, and it was suggested that Subud architects could usefully get together. It was also suggested that the design of Subud premises should interpret higher ideals, and the connection to the other realms. 'Asking' rooms and sites what they 'want to be' can be a useful exercise.

**Culture**

It was noted that Latihan premises could communicate the essence of the Subud culture to the community.

**People**

It was suggested that taking an honest inventory of 'people-power' before embarking on buying or renting premises was important.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The recommendations below were made under different situations, sometimes by several people, sometimes by a single person. These included that:there should be:

**Ownership**

A register of ownership of Subud Latihan premises Worldwide, and this should be monitored to ensure that proper use is made of these assets. This relates both to knowing what exists, but also ensuring that individuals cannot dispose of properties without proper approvals.

**Management**

A management guide, and also that 'professional' managers of Subud premises should liaise to bring together their expertise.

**Guide**

Guidelines to help members consider all the critical elements of purchasing, renting, servicing, managing and maintaining premises. This should allow for varying conditions in different cultures. It should include a list of criteria describing what makes up a suitable Latihan premises in terms of facilities and feeling, and should include environmental issues. This should include details of how to write a business plan related to Subud premises.

**Research**

All the existing information should be brought together.

**Expertise**

A list of experts, and of information.

**Directory**

A directory of properties providing information about the different Groups.

**Website**

A website consolidating all the above.

**ACTION**

Many of the recommendations have been discussed for some years, however to implement them does require considerable input. An overall strategy needs to be agreed relating to what information is needed by whom (members, groups, countries, WSA, MSF), and how this can best be obtained and disseminated. Although, some of the work can be carried out voluntarily, there maybe a need for paid provision in the short term.

**CONCLUSION**

The questionnaires provide much useful information, and it is the answer to the last question on 'support needed' which is perhaps the most critical. Many groups do not require support, but those that do vary from big groups wanting financial help to provide enough space, to those with just a handful of members wanting the buy premises.

On the basis that money is in short supply, it may be necessary to consider what the criteria are for being a property owning Group by asking questions such as: Is there a minimum number of members where it makes sense to own their premises? When does it make better sense to rent premises? Will there be sufficient ongoing income to support the premises? Can the premises be rented out when not used for Latihan and other Subud activities? What constitute Subud activities? What process will there be for managing the premises? If owned, who will the owner be?

Local legislation is becoming a major issue in many countries, with Health and Safety requiring more sophisticated management structures, and this needs taking into account.

**Santa Raymond**

(Santa is an architect who helps clients get places that fit their needs. In the past she was Property Representative for Zone 3, and – over the years - has been involved with property workshops for a variety of countries from around the World).