

WSA executive: External Relations officer /coordinator role [May 2010 Amalia Rasheed]

Search brief for candidates for this role was sent by Garrett initially to Frederic, Virginia, Sharifin, Maya, Julia and Osanna for comment before being sent to council members and all national committees at the end of September 2008. It was also posted on the SWN.

Introduction: The WSA executive is seeking a person to be the coordinator of the external relations team. The job is a volunteer one, and the person appointed to this role will be directly responsible to the WSA executive officer (or ISC chairperson) and will work as part of the WSA executive.

The person will be responsible for coordinating a team that works in the different areas of external relations. The appointment would be for a four-year period.

GENERAL JOB DESCRIPTION

'External relations' includes the following: how the World Subud Association works with other institutions; Subud participation in international meetings and forums; how the WSA (and Subud more generally) presents itself to the general public; how the WSA interacts and communicates with the general public; relations to the press and radio and TV; how Subud communicates with people who are interested in Subud; and the attitudes and thinking within Subud with respect to the above.

The WSA's concern for external relations is three-fold. First, the WSA needs to ensure that the portrayal of Subud and the latihan is accurate, fair and that information about Subud is openly available to the general public; second, the WSA needs to interact and work with other institutions in order to advance its aims; finally, the WSA has a duty to protect the good reputation of Subud.

1) New initiatives and policy

The team will make strategy and policy recommendations with regard to the development of the WSA's external relations. It will propose programs and/or projects including cooperation with other institutions that are relevant to external relations as widely defined above.

2) Support United Nations related activities

SDIA, also on behalf of the WSA, holds special consultative status with the U.N. Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the International Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Department of Public Information (DPI). SDIA and the WSA cooperate to enable a wide Subud participation in U.N. related events and meetings. Whereas SDIA is responsible for direct communication with the U.N., the external relations team supports and coordinates international Subud attendance at these events in collaboration with SDIA; it identifies which events are of most importance, and helps participants prepare and debrief for such meetings.

3) Support inter-spiritual activities

There are Subud members who are interested in participating in inter-spiritual dialogue and other inter-spiritual events. There are also inter-religious events and dialogues that the WSA ought to be present at. The external relations team will support and coordinate international Subud attendance at these events; identify which events are of most importance; and help participants prepare and debrief for such meetings.

4) Support 'The WSA forum'

This WSA experimental program facilitates and supports research, dialogue and meetings on strategically important themes that pertain to the general aims of the

WSA and its affiliates, generally in collaboration with non-Subud experts and institutions. The person responsible for facilitating these dialogues is a member of the external relations team, and the external relations team as a whole supports and guides the general development of this program.

5) Communicate and inspire within Subud

The global Subud community needs to have opportunities to discuss and better understand the issues and themes that pertain to external relations and their importance. The external relations coordinator will be responsible for initiating such discussions and internal communications in conjunction with the WSA executive.

6) Advisory role for WSA websites, annual reports and other WSA communications

The WSA communicates with the general public through websites, annual reports and other publications. The external relations coordinator and his/her team will act as advisors to the WSA executive on these and other external communications.

Amalia Rasheed : I accepted appointment on the 31st October 2008.

As the work involves both practical and WSA policy related activity with cross functions throughout the WSA as a whole, it became clear that it needs to be housed in the main executive level of the organisation for closer cooperation and for decision making processes to be effective.

In addition, it has been recognised that WSA work has largely had an inward looking focus, and this needs to develop in concert with an external focus. The Being Present and Our culture initiatives were born out of this understanding. The purpose is I understand, to provide a service to Subud members, present and future, to position Subud as an association contributing to the community at large and in addition to the latihan, to make various other aspects of Subud activity more accessible to the public.

My understanding was that as opposed to the previous sub-committees until 2007, firstly IRC and later ERC (see history below), it was felt important to bring this function into the main executive work, for closer interaction. It had become apparent that as this work represented a cross function relating to many aspects of WSA work it should be developed accordingly as part of mainstream WSA executive activity; the role of ER officer providing specific competence.

Discussions at working parties at World Congresses 2005 and 2010 showed also that this topic had overlaps with many aspects of WSA work where it comes to 'windows' of Subud in the world: Helpers/applicants, Subud houses, Publications and websites, Wings, dealing with authorities and press, visa applications etc. As many of the topics raised during the Working Party at last congress were also being dealt with by other Working Parties, the proposals were then reduced to those resolutions and recommendations that were not being dealt with elsewhere. It was understood that as ER officer chairing the WP I would in any case, as part of the WSA executive be involved in the aspects covered in other working parties.

The ER officer, included in the loop of WSA executive and Council deliberations as an added resource, enables a more effective contribution both ways (WSA work internally and externally); to develop a better connection between our inward looking focus and the external dimensions of our development as a global, multi-cultural, spiritual organisation.

History

The need for bringing in an external relations dimension to the work of the Subud association, goes back some 30 years, when Bapak expressed that Subud should be more engaged in global community development and policy making. In the 1980's SBIF applied for UN consultative status, and this was then delegated to SDIA for practical reasons.

– 1989 consultative status was granted. UN reps were appointed to explore the potential use of this accreditation, which for a while was mainly focused on SDIA related work.

– 1999 WSC agreed to have a wide representation to participate in the UN World Conference against Racism (WCAR) to be held in 2001. In addition to SDIA, WSA, SICA and youth representatives were appointed to attend. A need for coordination within WSA was expressed by SDIA as it was seen that involvement in the UN has overlaps of interest for WSA as a whole.

– 2001 World Congress resolved to examine the potential of involvement, to develop a policy and to study means of cooperation and coordination among the Subud entities for effective representation of the Subud community in the UN and other international fora.

2002- WSC appointed a task force to study the history, purpose and potential of WSA as a whole to be involved in the work of the UN and other international fora. The outcome White Paper made following recommendations:

- i. Establish an agreement between WSA and SDI about the use of the accreditation, which formally is held by SDI. The agreement would also aim at formulating a wider understanding of the relationship between WSA and its Wings.
- ii. Develop in written form separate clear profiles of WSA, SDI and other active Wings, suitable for the public in general, and specifically for the UN.
- iii. Formation of a permanent Executive UN Working Group that will report directly to WSC. The purpose of the Working Group is to coordinate Subud participation at the United Nations and other international fora and to serve as a liaison between the WSA and SDI.

– 2003 WSC approved the recommendations and asked that a Working Group be set up to further develop policy and meanwhile coordinate activity only related to other international fora such as yearly Middle Eastern Spirituality for Peace conferences in Edinburgh (where Subud was represented 4 times, and contributed to the program with presentations and workshops. The WG was known as International Relations Committee (IRC).

– 2005 World Congress: some concerns were raised and policy was to be adjusted accordingly and developed further jointly led by WSA and SDIA chairs, who would be responsible also for decisions related to ongoing UN work. The WG renamed External Relations Committee (ERC) was set up to continue with work related to participation in other international fora.

– 2007 WSC agreed that the development of a forum would be explored where issues of global interest relating to WSA aims could be discussed and developed, for the purpose of providing a broad basis of debate which could then not least, offer substance towards contributing to UN work and that of other international fora.

– 2008 The need for creating a function within the main WSA executive team for External Relations as related to most aspects of Subud community activity, was recognised and approved by council.