

# WORK GROUP ON ORGANISATION

## Initial Core Group

### Addendum 1: A Starting List of Issues and Focus Areas

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The following are some thoughts in a brainstorming manner on focus areas which are suggested for discussion, under three main headings:

- **Aims of WSA**
- **Organs of WSA**
- **Decision making process**

The purpose of this document is just to ask questions, to provide food for thought, to stimulate thinking. It is not an attempt to define what are the important issues (and what not).

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# 1 Focus Area: **AIMS OF WSA**

## 1.1 *Basic Questions*

### 1. Do we need an (international) organisation at all?

Isn't Subud just the latihan and following our receiving? Balance between surrender, trust and patience in the kejiwaan, and effort, worldly activities, heart and mind?

Possibly 3 aspects of organisation (projects etc.) in Subud:

- To be normal, competent, make efforts to achieve practical purposes,
- to create a space to put our receiving, talents etc. into practice,
- training ground to learn something about working together, about using heart and mind (nafsu) and not be used by the forces .... .

### 2. What is meant by WSA (World Subud Association)?

- a. WSA = all of us "in Subud"?
- b. WSA = organisation of national bodies and affiliates?

Assumption: Understanding *a.* (all of us) represents a shared feeling, an inner bond, very relevant for us as brother/sisterhood, at gatherings / congresses etc.

Understanding *b.* relates to WSA as an organisational structure, designed to achieve agreed purposes. As such it is necessary to be clear: What are the shared/agreed purposes/aims of WSA<sup>\*)</sup>? (Why do members, i.e. nat. bodies & affiliates, join WSA?) What are the specific aims/purposes of the various parts / organs of the international organisation? What are the resources, procedures, rules, etc.?

### 3. Does Subud have a worldly programme, do we have a "Subud value system"?

There are beliefs, convictions, and traditions in Subud, often based on / quoting Bapak's talks; however Bapak told us not to believe unless it is a reality based on our own receiving, our own personal experience. And we come from very different backgrounds (cultures, value systems).

### 4. WSA, vessel for all and everybody "in Subud"?

If we want WSA to be home for all of Subud, and if we ask all members (national bodies) to subscribe to / support the aims of WSA, what are the implications?

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<sup>\*)</sup> **Typical aims of Associations:**

To facilitate members' activities in/for their own interest/benefit (sports, singing, latihan ..... ) and

To represent such shared interests / activities vis-à-vis third parties, in court etc., and / or

To co-operate for the benefit of others (e.g. Greenpeace, Médecins Sans Frontières / Doctors Without Borders, latihan for all of mankind?)

Can WSA have aims which are not shared by all, or even rejected by some?

## 1.2 **Review Of Some Of The Present 10 Aims Of Wsa**

1. **Aim No. 1:** *(To facilitate the worship of Almighty God through the Latihan Kejiwaan of Subud and to provide for the other needs of the Subud membership.)*

**Question:** How much does WSA, does the international organisation actually do in this regard? How much is actually done on the local and national level?

Is this possibly business or government way of thinking? (Head office is in charge, the execution is delegated down to departments, branch offices etc.) Do we want such centralized organisation in Subud? Wouldn't a decentralized concept be more appropriate: the key is the individual person who lives his/her life with the latihan, facilitated / supported mostly on the group level, supplemented by the regional and/or national organisation etc.? A decentralized organisation also invites more volunteers to get involved, more participation and ownership.

It therefore is suggested that the principle of subsidiarity is appropriate for Subud, i.e. the international organisation takes care (only) of specific functions/tasks to strengthen and to supplement the other levels (local, regional, national). WSA, of course, takes care of the shared intentions and specific needs of the Subud community as an international movement.

To work and cooperate effectively requires clarity about who does what, clarity about the distinct aims / purposes of WSA.

2. **Aims No. 5.** *(To provide educational and other facilities for the development of the full potential of human beings.)* and **No. 6.** *(To relieve poverty and deprivation.)*

Both aims raise questions:

- a. By how many Subud members / national organisations are these aims accepted / supported, which helper ever mentions such aims to a probationer?
- b. Wouldn't it be more appropriate if members who pursue such aims (not supported / accepted by all) form suitable vehicles / organisations / companies etc. as "projects of Subud members"? Wouldn't we avoid potential conflicts if members / groups of members do "their thing", pursue their aims in their name, not in the name of Subud / WSA?
- c. Do we want WSA to own / pursue / manage such projects? Does WSA have the necessary capacity (competence, finance etc.), do we want WSA to take risks involved in projects?
- d. Why in particular these programmes (if we want such programmes at all), why not other equally worthwhile causes (e. g. science, sustainability .....)?

3. **Aims No. 7 – 9:** *(encourage activities)*

Such aims trigger the question of how to implement them:

Do we have standards, does WSA have a fair screening process, how are decisions made which activities / projects are supported and which not? Does WSA have minimum requirements (e.g. quality of management, disclosure, reporting/accountability/ transparency, protection of trust / of investors' or donors' rights, code of conduct, code of ethics ....)?

Or is it enough if one Subud person is involved? Can any Subud person e.g. fundraise for his/her project via the Subud media (however much or little / long or short / committed or casual) he/she “is in Subud”?

#### 4. Missing Aims?

There may be essential aims of WSA not yet mentioned:

- International gatherings including world congresses are popular, shouldn't that be a WSA aim?
- Supporting / strengthening the members (nat. orgs and affiliates) is not mentioned, wouldn't that be an obvious WSA aim?
- Others .....?

#### 5. Legal / technical issues:

- a. Is it possible at all to change the Aims? Some argue that changing the Aims would put WSA's status as tax exempt charity at risk. If we cannot change the Aims as part of the Articles of Incorporation, would it help to modify and supplement the Aims as part of the Bylaws / Constitution?
- b. If laws and Government regulations are difficult in Washington DC / USA, would it make sense to investigate options for relocating WSA?

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## 2 Focus Area: **ELEMENTS, ORGANS, BODIES OF WSA**

### 2.1 *Members*

An association exists because of its members, WSA exists because of the national bodies as members. Members' cross-border activities, communication, meetings/visits etc. bring the international dimension of Subud to life.

#### 1. Support for members

- a. What do the national bodies need from the International in support of such activities (e.g. sharing of experience / consultation, financial support for gatherings, for Subud premises)?
- b. What does WSA need from its members, i.e. the countries and affiliates? What is the function/role of the Committee Councillors?

#### 2. Membership Issues

What about countries with no Subud organisation? How can Subud people there become “Subud members”, be part of WSA? New categories of (e.g. extraordinary, non-voting) membership in WSA? Is assistance required / available to support such countries with legal / organisational matters?

## 2.2 Zones

### 1 Purpose of Zones? Purpose of Zone meetings and Zone Council?

Many seem to enjoy gatherings, enjoy personal relationships (cross border, cross culture), big latihan, testing, and sharing. But serious work as Zone Council is limited, is perceived as burden by many.

There is considerable disparity between Zones (number of countries and of Subud members within Zones, distances, variety of cultures, languages, and living conditions etc.), some Zones hold annual gatherings / council meetings, others meet very seldom.

This may be enough to indicate that there are lots of questions around the purpose and functioning of Zones, Zone-councils and Zone-meetings. Also the question of the borders of Zones may be usefully discussed, provided we are clear about the purpose / functions of Zones.

### 2 Zone Representative

The Zone Reps. role is complex, partly unclear:

- The ZR is chair of the Zone-council, comprising kejiwaan and committee delegates, therefore the ZR's role at Zone-meetings should encompass both aspects.
- As communicator, networker, provider of services throughout the year within the Zone the ZR usually is considered a committee function, while the international helpers of the respective areas take care of the kejiwaan support.
- Automatically the ZR is member of the WSC (World Subud Council) as well as legally responsible Director (member of the board of directors) of WSA. Within WSC and as Director the function is clearly on the committee side.

#### Questions:

- a. How feasible is the double function (within the Zone / as member of WSC and Director of WSA)? Is there enough capacity for support within the Zone, enough time and competence for WSC / WSA issues?
- b. Does the considerable demand on the ZR's time justify/require a remuneration? Can the money be made available? What about other volunteers in international functions (e.g. internat. helpers), what would be an equitable and affordable approach?
- c. The position as Director of WSA is a personal responsibility, possibly with the consequence of personal liability (in case of gross negligence). Since WSA is based in Washington DC., a director should have some understanding of relevant US legislation, should be well informed about WSA developments, and should be involved in policy / strategic decisions of WSA. Most of these aspects have been neglected in the past when ZRs were tested and chosen.

Do we send ZRs on a mission impossible? What improvements are possible? How can we reduce/avoid the risk of damage?

## 2.3 WSA Executive

Common perception: The WSA Executive implements the decisions of World Congress.  
Fine.

- a. Question: Is there enough attention / capacity for the continuous process of providing services to the members, of responding to members' needs, of facilitating, supporting etc.? Can the WSA Executive become more relevant, more tangible for the Subud membership at large?
- b. With little (or no) advice and supervision of the BoD and little or no feed-back from ZRs the Executive time and again is left alone and takes policy decisions which then lack democratic mandate and sometimes get mixed response from the WSA members. What can be done?

## 2.4 World Congress

- a. Can we still afford World Congresses with respect to costs and the environmental impacts?
- b. Tension between great interest / enthusiasm for an alive gathering and necessary delegates' business (similar at Zone meetings). How to find a good balance?
- c. Congress is the highest authority, is our democratic credo. Does democracy really work at World Congress (and/or at Zone-meetings)? Do (most) delegates have the interest, time, competence, level of information to make informed decisions? (see *Lessons Learned from Christchurch*: [www.subudworldnews.com/wsa/report/3\\_WorldCongLessonsLearned\\_Oct2010-FINAL.pdf](http://www.subudworldnews.com/wsa/report/3_WorldCongLessonsLearned_Oct2010-FINAL.pdf) )
- d. Between congresses the perception of many (most?) members is that the international bodies / office holders develop a life of their own, loose touch with the "normal member". How to reduce this gap?

## 2.5 WSC / WSC meetings

Great meetings in many ways, however little space/time to deal with management issues of WSA.

With a majority of international helpers, many meetings of international bodies and parallel discussion threads, sometimes with a lack of advance preparations and poor meeting facilitation, it is quite a challenge to make room (and time) for all legitimate demands at such meetings. How can we improve? Is it advisable to arrange smaller, more focussed meetings (as well)?

(These questions obviously need close communication with the present teams in office. )

## 2.6 Board of Directors

Has hardly functioned in the past, hardly met, no time to become a team, issue of competence. WSA Directors are not chosen as such, and for most of the time they have not been aware of this function.

Consequently WSA in the past has done without a functioning BoD, which some consider dangerous for WSA and for the Directors (risk of personal liability).

**Question:** How to take care of the functions of a responsible BoD without too much of a burden on the office-bearers?

## 2.7 *WSA-/WSC-/BoD-Chair*

Is this a non-executive function of a volunteer, or a position for a highly involved and paid person?

The lack of a functioning BoD makes for a lonely chair in his advisory/supervisory/policy function and adds to his work load. In addition policy decisions of the chair without involvement of the BoD lack democratic mandate, unless based on congress decisions.

## 2.8 *MSF*

We suggest close communication between the orga working group and present officers discussing WSA-MSF relations.

- a. MSF is created to control the bulk of WSA's financial assets. History tells us: Money is power. How can WSA avoid to become dependant on MSF? How can WSA monitor and supervise MSF in a democratic and competent manner?
- b. Decentralised organisation, subsidiarity, strengthening the groups and national bodies: How can MSF adjust to that approach?
- c. Via MSF (and or related, legally separate bodies) Subud / WSA is involved in a range of projects which partly are controversial amongst the Subud membership, and which sometimes lack the minimum of transparency. What can be done?

## 2.9 *Wings*

- a. Between Wings, MSF, WSA and WSA-members a shared understanding is needed of the division of labour: Who does what, who is (hopefully) competent and authorised? How can we avoid tensions regarding authority, and avoid building up competence in competition?
- b. In the past it was often said that the wings execute WSA programmes. Earlier the question was asked whether WSA should have worldly programmes at all. In any case there is the question whether the Wings pursue programmes (of WSA or of their own) and expect the Subud membership and the WSA members to support such programmes, or whether it is the Subud members who undertake projects and activities (following their own intentions, receiving, interests) with the Wings supporting, facilitating, pooling etc. such initiatives?
- c. What is true for all the elements of Subud International may have particular importance for each of the wings: The need for clarity of purpose, modus operandi, interface with other "players", job description of officers etc.
- d. Activities and projects take place in the world. How do we relate to non-Subud people as team members, partners etc. in Wing activities?
- e. What is a "Subud project", a Subud activity? Is it enough that Subud member(s) is/are involved? Or is it the quality of how we do things which matters, our (more or less existing) ability to work from an inner place, the "human quality" in what we do? Who can make that judgement and how?

## 2.10 International Helpers

We may want to add the IHs as a body/element of WSA. Their role seems to be well established however there may be questions, e.g. regarding the cooperation with and strengthening of helpers on other levels, the IHs role within the WSC, and within Zones and Zone-Councils, helper support for international officers etc.

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## 3 Focus Area: **DECISION MAKING PROCESS**

Quote from the proposal of Subud Germany (to world congress 2010):

"What do we mean by consensus? Which role does testing have in our decision process?

And voting? What does democracy mean in Subud? .....

..... we suggest that WSA in general tries more and more to initiate and supervise processes to deal with complex issues instead of having delegates voting at Zonal Meetings or World Congresses, who have had no chance to think over and discuss issues thoroughly."

This leads to the question: How to organise such processes, how to be inclusive and invite participation, and at the same time be quality and result conscious ?

### **Other thoughts:**

Consensus seems closely related to harmony which is a high value for most Subud members. And we don't want to criticise in fear of hurting feelings. But what about facing and resolving conflicts (rather than sweeping them under carpets)? What about critical analysis of our experiences so that we may learn and improve?

Past world congresses have addressed decision making issues. E.g.:

In 1997 world congress in **Spokane** resolved that decisions like appointing international officers or location of world congress should be made in 3 steps:

1. Practical considerations (e.g. job descriptions and qualification of candidates, necessary/available time, financial aspects, screening of candidates)
2. Testing of suitable candidates, sharing test results with the delegates
3. Decision by voting (in consideration of the outer and the inner aspects)

In 2005 world congress in **Innsbruck** resolved to initiate a process of cultural change. Some guiding principles were formulated how we want WSA to function, among others:

1. Foster a culture with more emphasis on process, networking, consultation and participation.
2. Continue to improve transparency, in particular in decision making.
3. Clarity about key job requirements and responsibilities.

#### 4. Better balance between professional aspects and testing in decision making.

We have implemented these resolutions in the decision making process regarding location of world congress.

But it still happens that we appoint officers without clarity about the job and its implications (like time requirement, issue of remuneration), SES was re-created without clarity what SES is supposed to do/be etc.

So, we may ask: Why are we still acting in such unprofessional manner ? Are there deeper reasons?

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### ***And more:***

It would be easy to ask more questions, to raise more issues (e.g. around helpers' work and structures, fundraising in Subud .....), and still other issues will emerge. And there are organisational issues like

- Continuity
- Volunteers versus paid officers
- Continuous monitoring and evaluation

Ultimately the Articles and/or Constitution (i.e. bylaws) of WSA, and the so-called WSC Handbook need revision, after fundamental issues are sorted out.

In conclusion: This list of issues is not intended to be complete. But we hope that it will provide useful inputs for the suggested meta discussion, and will help to get started with topic groups.

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