

COUNCIL OF INTERNATIONAL FELLOWSHIP

Provides professional human services' development and training through intercultural exchange



What is CIPUSA – CIF?

Evolving societies around the globe with economic uncertainties, social changes, corporate stress levels, political upheavals and family conflicts create fault lines in societies and families that get reflected in behavioral attitudes of individuals and groups. It is left to the Social Workers, to related fields professionals, and reform systems to nurture the effects of the fault lines.

For a better understanding of issues and problems globally both at the macro level and the micro level of societies Council of International Programs USA - CIPUSA (www.cipusa.org), for Social workers, educators and other professionals in the human services field was launched by German émigré Henry Ollendorff in 1956 as an expansion of the Cleveland International Program formed by him nine years earlier. This is an International Exchange Program for exchange of ideas, working practices, research information and innovative methods. Dr. Ollendorff was convinced that the way to global peace was through personal contact and shared experiences. His was a vision of a “universal human community”.

In 1960, alumni of CIPUSA founded the Council of International Fellowship - CIF International (www.cifinternational.com), with the desire to continue the spirit of fellowship, human understanding and peace that they had experienced during their CIP program in the USA.

CIF International is an independent, private, voluntary organization with branches in many countries, which promotes peace and international understanding through educational and cultural exchange programs providing professional development and training opportunities for international professionals in the human services field (e.g. social workers, youth leaders, psychologists, early childhood teachers, speech pathologists etc.).

Today CIF International (registered body in Germany) is active in 31 countries. There are nearly 1.000 active members worldwide. 23 of them run CIF International Exchange Programs with similar aims to that first CIP.

The efforts to get optimal benefit from the Networking are overseen by its administering body, the Executive Committee and the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors elects the Executive Committee. The Board of Directors is the Presidents of the National CIF Branches. The Executive Committee and the Board of Directors conduct the work as it is laid down in the statutes. They meet in different member countries hosted by the respective CIF Branches; the Executive Committee twice a year and the Board of Directors once a year.

Masual Hoghughi, psychologist and long-time director of the Aycliffe Centre for Children in the United Kingdom, explains the term “Fellowship” (CERFFICE meeting in Luxemburg, December 2nd – 3rd 1994):

The term “fellowship” is a truly English concept, which had to be handled with care since it was likely to evoke special associations and expectations. The term “fellow” was used as an honorary title bestowed upon some person for their high merits. The term does not translate into other languages.

An international exchange programme using the term “Fellowship” in its title would – at least in the Anglo-Saxon world-denote outstanding quality requiring excellent professional standard: of the institutions receiving a “fellow”, as well as the “fellows” themselves. A fellow is expected to “offer” as much as she/he “receives” from the institution. The institution and the fellow should both benefit. If the gap between “give” and “take” of the institution on the one hand, and the “fellow” on the other, is too wide the result will be a state of confusion and frustration.

A genuine “fellowship” – programme would thus require partners of “equal standing”. If such a programme is properly carried out, all participants will benefit from it:

- *On the micro level those immediately involved, i.e. the “fellow” and her/his institution,*
- *On the mezzo level the bilateral-multilateral professional networks, and*

- *On the macro level the improvement of working conditions.*

CIF Exchange Programmes offer:

- The opportunity to experience the way of living and working in a different culture;
- The possibility of getting to know foreign welfare workers in one's own organization or at home;
- A new perspective on one's own professional and personal qualities;
- Broadening one's horizon;
- Challenging personal standards, values and culture;
- Increasing the ability to relativize;
- International friendships;
- Improving one's proficiency in expressing oneself in a foreign language;
- Enabling the international network.

CIF International organizes also a conference every two years on various social issues. The 25th CIF Conference was held in Goa, India from 24th of February to 1st of March 2003. The conference theme was "The Evolving Family of the 21st century - A Social work challenge" (www.cifindia.org). The 26th CIF Conference was held in Bonn, Germany from 25th to 27th of July 2005. The conference theme was "Building Bridges for Peace and Understanding" (www.cif-germany.de). The 27th CIF Conference is going to be held in Cleveland, Ohio, USA from 23rd to 27th of July 2007 and the conference theme is "Training Builds Bridges for a Changing World: Transforming Lives, Transforming Communities, Transforming Yourself" (www.cipusa.org).

The following quotes state nicely reasons for the great importance of international training for social workers and other professionals in the human services field in a rapidly changing world:

Apart from enthusiasm and perseverance, the key to advancing human rights is what Merleau-Ponty (1967) called the "happiness of reflecting together". The social worker, grounded in the ethical principles of the profession, must engage in partnerships of empowerment, both locally and worldwide, with other groups, people, and cultures.

(Joseph Wronka: Human Rights in encyclopedia of Social Work, National Association of Social Workers/NASW Press, Washington DC, 1995, p.63)

Indeed, such social worker, with an internationalism underpinning their practice, represent the future for the profession.

International work must no longer be regarded as peripheral to the apparently core task of social workers, but needs to be made central in our construction of the social work task and in our definition of fields of practice. International social work can no longer simply be an interesting but slightly off-beat option in education programs. All social work practice, wherever it occurs, must now be regarded as working at the global/local interface, at the point where global forces impinge on the human experience. All social work is therefore international social work. It is located in a world where international forces affect people's lives, and where if we are genuine about working at both individual and structural levels, we need to be internationalist in our outlook. Unless the global perspective is taken into account and specifically addressed, across the full spectrum of social work practice, we will fail both our profession and those whom we seek to serve.

Saying that all social work is international is not equivalent to saying all social work is the same. Rather it is saying that all social work must be concerned with the international, and that task of linking the global and the local becomes a part of the practice of every social worker, in whatever country or field of practice they may work.

(Kim Ife: Local and Global Practice: Relocating Social Work as a Human Rights Profession in the New Global Order, 2000)

Lambrini-Ninetta Zoi (MSW)

President CIF International

(ninetta.zoi@cifinternational.com , lzoi_ninetta@yahoo.gr)

**Athens, August 2003
Revised, December 2006**