

International Association for Mission Studies (IAMS)

**Report of the General Secretary
To the General Meeting of IAMS at its XIth International Conference
Port Dickson, Malaysia, July 31 – August 7, 2004**

Right after the Xth IAMS Conference in South Africa, Areopagos, a Norwegian-Danish foundation/mission organization with a specific emphasis on studies, mission, and dialog in Asia was approached by the NIME (The Nordic Institute for Mission and Ecumenical Studies) with a request to finance the secretariat of IAMS for a four-year period. I was on the staff of Areopagos. And the bottom line is that in July 2000 IAMS, Areopagos and I signed an Agreement of Secondment of me as General Secretary for IAMS for the period 2000-2004 and that the secretariat of IAMS was moved from Evangelisches Missionswerk in Hamburg to the Areopagos Office in Copenhagen, Denmark.

So now it is my duty and privilege to report on developments in and activities of the association since the South Africa conference. I do it without having been formally approved as general secretary by a general meeting. And I do it towards the end of my four-year term. Unfortunately Areopagos is not able to extend its financial support to IAMS beyond the present four-year period. Therefore a new secretary will be needed for the next four-year period.

Since Hammanskraal the Executive has met three times: January 2001 in New York City, January 2002 in Prague, January 2003 in Paris and the officers met in New York City in April 2004.

The IAMS Executive committee for 2000-2004 consisted of
Officers:

President, Dr. Paulo Suess, Brazil
Vice President, Dr. Darrell Whiteman, USA,
Treasurer, Dr. Andrew Kirk, United Kingdom
Editor, Dr. Stephen B. Bevans, USA
General Secretary, Birger Nygaard, Denmark

Other executive members:

Dr. Emilio Monti, Argentina,
Dr. Cathy Ross, New Zealand
Dr. Christopher Oshun, Nigeria
Dr. William B. Burrows, USA
Dr. Klaus Schäfer, Germany

1. Transfer of the Secretariat to Copenhagen

In September 2000 the secretariat was transferred from Hamburg to Copenhagen. The transition went smoothly, although it does take some time to get into the issues and rhythm of an organization. A new membership database with web-access was developed. Archival material of the association has been prepared for delivery to Selly Oak Colleges in Birmingham, where the archives of the association will be maintained.

In times of transition it is very important that IAMS is not centralized in one place. But we have been fortunate to have stable and competent help from the editor in Chicago, the treasurer in Birmingham and the web-site editor in Dunedin, New Zealand.

2. MISSION STUDIES - Editorship

Over the last eight years Dr. Stephen B. Bevans, SVD, Professor of the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago has done an outstanding job as editor of Mission Studies. He is a very competent and reliable person for that job. In 2002 he announced that he thought that another person should be looked for to take the editorship after the conference in 2004. The executive challenged Dr. Pachuau Lalsangkima (Kima) at United Theological College (UTC) in Bangalore to take over as Editor of Mission Studies with his colleague at UTC Dr. J. Jayakiran Sebastian as an associate editor (in the same way Stephen Bevans and Robert Schreiter have worked together in Chicago). Dr. Kima responded favourably and is now presented to the general meeting for approval as new editor of Mission Studies. The IAMS executive is delighted that the editorship now shifts from North to South. It is one small step in the direction of moving IAMS close to where the majority of the Christian world is now located.

At the same time it was decided that a formal review system be set up according to general standards for a refereed journal. The editorial/review committee consists of the assistant editors: Dr. Kirian Sebastian, Dr. Paulo Suess (will cover Spanish/Portuguese language articles), Dr. Cathy Ross (will cover French language articles). The committee is to secure proper critique, feedback and balance. The chair of the committee is the lead editor, who considers responses from the associate editors and makes final decisions on articles to be selected for publication.

3. MISSION STUDIES – Publication and Distribution

Administration of journal subscriptions and membership fees has taken up much of the time and energy of the treasury and secretariat. Further to that the IAMS secretariat is not geared to handle the complexities related to journal publication, distribution and marketing. Therefore the executive committee has been looking for a better way to publish and distribute the journal. As of 2004 this task has been handed over to Brill Academic Publishers in the Netherlands. It turned out that Brill was willing to take over publication of the journal at a price that would allow IAMS to keep the membership fee at the present level (30 US\$). And Brill even offers IAMS a royalty per member subscription, which makes it a better deal for IAMS to let Brill do all the work than doing it ourselves. Further to that Brill will take over the job of handling membership fees. From 2004 membership fees (including the journal subscription) are to be paid directly to Brill. Brill will then forward part of the membership fee to IAMS. That alone will significantly reduce the workload of the treasury and the secretariat.

4. IAMS Treasury

The IAMS treasury and finances have thrived under the good leadership of Dr. Andrew Kirk, Birmingham, with the efficient assistance of Mrs. Briony Seymour. In 2003 Andrew Kirk retired from his position at Birmingham University. His term as treasurer will end after this assembly. His colleague from Birmingham, Dr. Allan Anderson is willing to take over this office. He is hereby presented to the general meeting for approval as the new treasurer of IAMS. We are grateful to Allan Anderson that he is willing continue the tradition of hosting the treasury in Birmingham.

5. IAMS Homepage

Dr. John Roxborough was the pioneer in IAMS, who pointed to the importance of making more use of electronic communication means. He set up the IAMS web-site and maintained it for a number of years. And he still maintains and updates some of the sub-webs under www.missionstudies.org. For practical reasons the maintenance of the web-site has been with the secretariat in Copenhagen in the period of intense preparation for the conference. The conference web-site has been an important communication tool leading up to the conference – and provides good possibilities for extending the input and outcomes of the conference to those who cannot be present in Malaysia. The executive thinks that web-site maintenance should be handled by a volunteer. We are happy to announce that Dr. At Ipenberg from the Netherlands has volunteered to edit the web-site for the next three years.

The executive committee has been much aware that the Internet/E-mail is still a medium that separates those that have access from those that have no access. But more and more it becomes clear that those involved in academic efforts indeed do have access to email and the Internet on a worldwide basis. The fact that all but one participant in this conference has communicated via email tells about the possibilities of electronic communication to a global association like IAMS. Over the next years we still need to interpret how this tool can be used to further the objectives of the association. The value of meeting face to face at a conference is immense. But the hard realities are that a number of IAMS members did not make it to this conference for various reasons, not least financial. In what ways can electronic communication become a means of including those who would otherwise be excluded? And what do we need to learn as a global academic community in order to make proper use of all the possibilities that are already there?

6. IAMS Projects and Interest Groups

The General Secretary's report to the Xth assembly in South Africa elaborated on the importance of "IAMS Projects" and "IAMS Interest Groups". If IAMS is to be more than the quadrennial conferences and the journal, it has to take place in such projects and groups. In 2000-2004 the executive committee has continued the policy that was laid down by the previous executive.

Right now there are four IAMS Interest Groups in existence:

- 1) Project on Documentation, Archives and Oral History (PADOH) – formerly called the *Documentation, Archives and Bibliography (DAB)* group - Convener: Dr. John Roxborough
- 2) Biblical Studies and Missiology (BISAM) - Convener: Dr. Teresa Okure
- 3) Healing - Convener: Convener: Dr. Godelieve Prové
- 4) Women in Mission (WIM). Convener: Dr. Katja Heidemanns

Reports on the activities of these groups over the last four years can be gleaned from the study group pages of www.missionstudies.org. The BISAM and PADOH groups met at separate workshops/conferences in 2002. It is obvious that such targeted focus groups are able to go much deeper than the general IAMS conferences are able to.

It is appropriate to give thanks to the volunteer leaders of the interest groups and appoint them as the real heroes of IAMS.

The challenge is to see IAMS utilized as a platform for more initiatives like the above. In order for this to happen it is important that members of IAMS hold a IAMS identity that makes it obvious for them to use the IAMS framework when they are about to enter into new study projects. Through IAMS a local or regional project has the possibility of becoming global through networking with researchers with similar research interests across the globe. It

is the desire of IAMS to function like this. The global constituency and the ecumenical nature of the association make IAMS an ideal platform for such networking. But the initiatives are to be generated from individual members and their academic institutions. In order for projects to become viable they need a specific (local) base from which the outgoing initiative is coming. Without such a base projects are engines without energy. Therefore IAMS members and member institutions are challenged to consider how to make use of IAMS whenever they develop new study projects, establish specialized research centres, extend calls for papers, invite for conferences, forms new networks, etc.

7. IAMS Research Interest's Database

With that in mind a special online searchable "Research Interest's Database" has been developed in relation to the Membership Directory. More than 180 members of IAMS have already included their research profiles (academic background, dissertation, current research interests, current research projects, etc.). Through this database you will be able to find peers who have indicated research interests within specific areas – and you are able to contact them right away as all contact data are included in the same database.

The executive committee has decided that this database should be open to members of other associations for mission studies as well. The primary objectives of IAMS are to further high quality academic mission studies, not organizational boundaries. If the IAMS Research Interest's Database can also link qualified researchers, who are not members, IAMS is happy to serve others with that facility. All those who have not yet updated their membership record are requested to do so in order that they become academically "visible" to their peers across the world.

8. Membership Issues

a) General situation

As of July 2004 the total membership of IAMS is 424 members: 361 individual members, 46 corporate members, 12 associate members and 5 honorary members. Of these 43% are from Europe, 30% from North America, 5% from Latin America, 9% from Africa, 10% from Asia and 4% from Oceania.

In January 2004 we turned our membership records over to Brill Academic Publishers as they will now be in charge of handling membership/subscription fees. Before doing that we had to do a major purging of the database. We had to realize that over the years we have been quite soft in our policy towards members, who did not pay their membership fees. It is a requirement that members pay their annual dues in order to maintain their membership. However, we have been hesitant to remove members from the list as there might be very good reasons why they had not paid their membership fee. We know that especially members from the South often have problems in getting money out of their county. And to some the fee is quite high, though it is low compared with similar academic associations. Through that process close to 150 members were removed from the membership records as they did not respond to repeated pleas to pay their dues. In future, only those members who pay will maintain their membership. Brill is a commercial journal publisher and is not going to continue to send journals to those who do not pay their dues and subscriptions.

Another reason for the loss of members is the fact that a number of first generation members of IAMS are now retiring. We have recorded the death of 21 members over the last four years. There are probably several others, whom we have not recorded. The average age of those 220 members, whom we have birthdate records on is 55 years. The average age for all members

would be higher than that. Our oldest member was born in 1916. So we have received several cancellations of membership due to retirement. Finally there is a group of lapsed members, who could easily pay their dues, but they do not find it relevant to continue their membership.

After having identified the issue of declining membership the executive committee has taken action regarding recruitment of new members. This issue has been high on the agenda of each executive meeting. In the period 2000-2004 approximately 85 new members (associate, individual and corporate) were accepted into the association, all well-qualified persons fully meeting the rather strict membership requirements for membership of the association.

From my experience over the last four years I conclude:

- a) There are hundreds of well-qualified missiologists around the world who are not yet members of IAMS and who have never been challenged to consider membership of IAMS.
- b) There is a continuous need to recruit new members, not just for the sake of the future of the association, but primarily in order to bring more missiologists around the table in academic study and discussion, which will advance mission studies in years ahead.
- c) New members are primarily recruited as existing members ask younger candidates to apply for membership and sponsor their application. Therefore existing members are the primary recruitment force. It is a main responsibility of all executive members to drive the quest for recruitment within their region.
- d) There is a segment of IAMS members, who are loyal to the very idea of IAMS and who will continue membership until retirement and beyond. There is another segment, who will only maintain membership if they can see IAMS as a dynamic tool in their academic endeavours.
- e) There are serious issues to be addressed regarding membership composition. IAMS needs to put efforts on becoming truly global and develop its membership in a way that better reflects the shifts in world-Christianity from North to South.

9. Relations to other Mission Study Associations

Over the last four years I have received repeated requests from other mission study associations wanting to discuss relations between IAMS and other associations. On the one hand regional and denominational associations will often be better rooted in their setting than IAMS (the number of IAMS members is only a small fraction of the combined membership of the regional/denominational associations for mission studies). On the other hand regional and denominational groups want to be part of a global setting like IAMS because mission studies are by definition a global venture. Therefore the question: Can some dynamic linkages between IAMS and the regional/denominational associations be developed, that will facilitate the advancement of mission studies? In its most radical form it is suggested that members of regional associations automatically become members of IAMS (some kind of double membership).

Obviously this discussion raises a number of questions to IAMS in terms of role and identity, academic standing, working methods, governance, finances, policies, etc. Therefore ample time is needed for conversation and reflection on this matter. Preceding the conference representatives from more than 15 mission study associations and networks will meet (on July 31) and discuss the issues and visions. Much can be done without structural changes. Close

communication between IAMS and other associations is the key to developing effective working relationships in terms of joint projects, study groups, etc. Such ongoing dialog and cooperation may lead to structural changes some day. But it is still too early to draw any conclusions. The new executive committee will need to keep this issue on its agenda over the next few years as it seeks to define and develop the unique role of IAMS among the plethora of mission study associations.

10. Future of the Secretariat

Like in 2000 IAMS is again looking for a new institution that will host the secretariat. In the deliberations on IAMS role and structure the financial aspects are very important. It is increasingly difficult to raise external financial support for the basic costs of running IAMS. Until now membership fees have paid less than 25% of the ordinary expenses. The rest has been donated by the organization hosting the secretariat.

In the future development of the organization IAMS needs to move in a direction of less dependency on external funding for operational costs. This has been held clearly in mind over the last four years. In handing over journal publication to Brill, the chores of the secretariat and the treasury have been considerably reduced. Likewise with automation of application procedures and conference administration and emphasis has been put on distribution of tasks in a way that makes IAMS less dependent on a centralized secretariat. The active contributions and institutional resources of the executive members become more important in the future as they need to see themselves as co-workers in the IAMS secretariat. Therefore newly elected executive members need to set aside ample time for the job so that they can take responsibility for certain tasks within the organization.

That means that for the next four-year term IAMS will be able to keep the basic structure going with less effort and money. What is saved on chores should, however, be spent towards new initiatives that will further mission studies and the vitality of IAMS, not just maintaining a status quo.

Several persons and institutions have been approached for hosting the secretariat – and in Port Dickson negotiations will take place with some interested partners. But nothing is yet sure. Therefore the call to host the secretariat for the next four years is still valid.

I hope that this report provides some helpful insights into the present status of IAMS – and that it can spur relevant discussion at the business meetings. Thank you for your cooperation in securing that IAMS will continue to be a unique gathering of people from around the world advancing mission studies.

Finally: It has been a great privilege to work for IAMS for the last four years. IAMS consists of captivating people from a wide variety of backgrounds, which makes it an intriguing place to be involved. Especially I want to thank the president and the executive committee for their gentle leadership and support over the last four years. I look forward to continued involvement in IAMS

Copenhagen, 20. July 2004

Birger Nygaard
General Secretary