

# WRI Executive and Office Report

## August 2006 to June 2007

### Introduction:

This is an internal report about WRI and its organisational development in the last year. In evaluating WRI, the starting point always is to measure achievements against our goals in the world situation – in this case, the need for a strong anti-militarist international promoting strategies to counter the rival militarisms that threaten us all and that continually stoke the fires of conflict. For WRI, 'anti-war' does not mean just opposing one war – such as the occupation of Iraq by the USA and its allies – or even opposing one sort of war. Rather, for us, being 'anti-war' means recognising that the various forms of militarism feed each other and committing ourselves to oppose all war and uproot the causes of war.

The period under review includes some notable achievements. It began with the 2006 Triennial Con-

ference, 'Globalising Nonviolence' – a conference that attracted more participants than any WRI event for 15 years. In this period WRI also tried to provide a strong reference point for nonviolence and anti-militarism at the *World Social Forum*, worked with Colombian objectors to initiate new forms of solidarity, and strengthened connections in other parts of the world. Our web page, the *Broken Rifle* and *War Profiteer News* give WRI and our perspective greater visibility.

At the same it has to be said at the outset that both the staff and the Executive have found themselves over-stretched at times during this period. In addition, we want to use the 2008 Council meeting to make WRI's pattern of meetings more resource-effective. The previous Executive already reduced the number of physical Executive meetings per year and

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**Eurozone:** War Resisters' International, Bank of Ireland, IBAN IE91 BOFI 9000 9240 41 35 47, SWIFT/BIC BOFIE2D

**Staff:** (Britain) Javier Gárate, Yvonne Kassim, Andreas Speck

introduced monthly internet 'chats', but the forms taken by the Council/Seminar and the international conference also need rethinking. As part of this, the Executive is particularly keen to look at how regional connections can be strengthened within the international.

These issues surface in various places in this report. If you and your group cannot be represented at Council, we encourage your written input on these issues – or indeed on any others!

WRI is entering a stage of our existence where it is in need of renovation – both involving new people in our organisation and network, and strengthening other contacts and connecting with other nonviolent campaigns. WRI needs to adapt to our own changing composition, and also to find more effective forms of networking. There is an added urgency to these tasks in view of the depletion of WRI's historic financial resources.

*Howard Clark (chair), Boro Kitanoski, Sergeiy Sandler, Majken Sørensen (Exec) Andreas Speck (Office Coordinator, and RRTK Programme), Javier Gárate (NV Programme), Yvonne Kassim (Finances and Admin)*

## WRI Programme Work

Between international conferences, WRI's work is mainly framed around two staffed programmes – The Nonviolence Programme and the Right to Refuse to Kill Programme.

### The Nonviolence Programme

The Nonviolence Programme has completed its second year, working on three main areas:

**Nonviolence Resources:** This means developing and distributing resources on nonviolence and nonviolence strategies. The main project so far is the production of a **Handbook for Nonviolent Action** to be a cross-cultural resource for antimilitarist and nonviolent grassroots activists. An incomplete rough mock-up will be available at Council. There will be both a print and a web version of the handbook, the web version containing many more details and numerous links to further resources. You can already find the articles that have been written in our own Wiki a web base tool for writing and editing collaboratively: [http://wri-irg.org/wiki/index.php/Nonviolence\\_Handbook](http://wri-irg.org/wiki/index.php/Nonviolence_Handbook)

WRI has provided nonviolence trainings at a number of Social Forums, the latest one being at the *World Social Forum* in Nairobi, Kenya.



*Illustration 1: Yvonne staffs the WRI stall at the World Social Forum in Nairobi*

**Nonviolence for Change:** Under this heading comes WRI's work with groups interested in using nonviolent action for social change. WRI's activities related to the World Social Forum and the G-8 Alternative Summit in Germany are covered under 'cross-programme'.

Javier has visited Latin America twice in the last year, in August taking part in the conference of Latin American antimilitarist initiatives organised by *Red Juvenil* in Medellín – "*US Intervention and Military Expenditure*" – where he led a workshop on war profiteers and made a general presentation on WRI. At the conference Javier gave a workshop on war profiteers, and also a general presentation on WRI. In March, Javier represented WRI in Quito, Ecuador, at the first conference of the No-Bases Network – the *International Conference for the Abolition of Foreign Military Bases*. Partly organised by our Ecuadorian affiliate, this conference was attended by some other Latin American groups linked to WRI and some WRI members from 'northern' countries, including Council member Tobias Pflüger, and reps from *Forum voor Vredesactie* and *US War Resisters League*. WRI has since been invited onto the coordinating committee for this network. Javier's talk emphasised the need to oppose militarism in itself, not just the militarism of the US and its allies. Javier also used the occasion to meet separately with Latin American anti-militarist groups attending to open discussion on the suggestion that WRI open a regional office (more below).

**Global Initiative Against War Profiteers:** Developing resources and networking around war profiteers with the WRI network. Javier has edited seven editions of *War Profiteers' News* (<http://wri-irg.org/pubs/warprofiteers.htm>), an e-mail newsletter on war profiteers, plus a special edition of *The Broken Rifle* (<http://wri-irg.org/pdf/br71-en.pdf>) on war profiteers.

As part of this work, Javier sometimes attends meetings of the European Network Against Arms Trade and in October 2006 went to the USA for WRI's conference "Stopping the Merchants of Death", the main goal of which was to form a national network in the USA against war profiteering.

**Funding the Nonviolence programme** is a major problem. We urgently need further suggestions for possible sources of grant funding. In the continuing absence of grant funding, however, we are also pursuing the strategy of asking for pledges from individual supporters – a regular monthly or quarterly earmarked donation. If you have any well-paid friends supportive of nonviolence, please show them the special leaflet at <http://wri-irg.org/pdf/nvflyer07-en.pdf> or ask for printed copies.)

The programme worker is *Javier Gárate*, and the programme committee is formed by *Joanne Sheehan*, *Majken Sørensen*, *Howard Clark*, *Stellan Vinthagen* and *Andreas Speck*.

### The Right to Refuse to Kill programme

This programme has involved solidarity campaigns with objectors in particular countries, together with some projects more widely focused.

#### Country-specific:

**Colombia:** With the emergence of the *National Assembly of Conscientious Objectors (ANOOC)*, an international solidarity campaign is now under development. Together with ANOOC, WRI has created a database of Colombian conscientious objectors (<https://lists.wri-irg.org/codb>), which forms the basis for a *Conscientious Objector Card (Tarjeta Objeto/a de Conciencia)*. This card, being issued by WRI to Colombian COs, was launched publicly in Medellin on 15 May. Although the card does not have any legal status, it is a symbol of the recognition of the right to CO in international law, especially following the ground-breaking decision of the UN Human Rights Committee on two South Korean CO cases from November 2006 (<http://tinyurl.com/2w87to> – CCPR/C/88/D/1321-1322/2004, 23 January 2007). The card and the database form the basis of solidarity activities in case a 'registered' conscientious objector gets into trouble with the Colombian authorities, as background information about the CO concerned is then already available to the network.

This can be considered a form of 'virtual accompaniment', similar to the Peace Brigades International's physical accompaniment on the ground. In this experiment, WRI also cooperates closely with the Quaker United Nations Office in Geneva, QUNO's Rachel Brett taking part in the launch and conducting subsequent meetings with Colombian authorities directly after 15 May.

**Turkey:** Following the arrest of CO Halil Savda in December 2006, WRI issued a number of CO alerts, and updated its campaign pages (<http://wri-irg.org/co/turkcampaign-en.htm>). In April 2007, WRI submitted the case of Halil Savda to the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention. WRI was also involved in the organisation of an international conference on conscientious objection in Istanbul on 27-28 January 2007 in which Andreas participated. As we write this report, a new warrant has been issued for the arrest of Osman Murat Ülke, WRI's former vice-chair who was first arrested for refusing military service in 1995. The office has been active in mobilising international solidarity in protest.



Illustration 2: Anti-war vigil in Yekaterinburg

**Russia:** *Andreas Speck* and Exec member *Sergeiy Sandler* visited Russia in late February and early March 2007, consolidating existing links and making new contacts with a variety of Russian groups. It is becoming increasingly clear that most Russian contacts are interested in WRI for its experience of anti-militarism and nonviolence, and work little on the formalities of conscientious objection.

#### Non-country specific:

**Women's CO anthology:** Some of the materials for the anthology have already been written and collected, and are about to be presented at the seminar before the Council meeting. Publication is now scheduled for 2008.

**Expert group:** In November 2006, Andreas represented WRI at a meeting of experts on the right to CO, convened by the office of the (UN) High Commissioner on Human Rights.

**Prisoners for Peace Day 2006** focused on Russia, following the murder of Russian journalist Elena Politkovskaya. However, it is increasingly difficult to develop Prisoners for Peace Day. The Exec is concerned how useful this day is in today's political and campaigning environment (especially as 1 December

is more widely observed as World AIDS day), and wishes Council to discuss this.

**Funding for the RRtK programme** will expire in April 2008, and in October 2007 WRI will need to make a special effort to secure renewed funding for this core programme. The Exec is keen to involve more people in this programme – hence Sergey's participation in the visit to Russia – and is now establishing a programme committee, to be convened by Boro Kitanoski.

### Cross-programme work

**World Social Forum:** The presence of WRI at the Social Forums has been a combined effort of the Nonviolence Programme and the Right to Refuse to Kill Programme, that is why we now call it a cross-programme project. WRI was responsible for several sessions at the WSF in Nairobi, Kenya, which was attended by all staff, as well as Council members *Tobias Pflügler* and *Stellan Vinthagen* and members of various affiliates. In addition, WRI invited Ela Gandhi from Durban, *Theodos Azbaha Haile*, an Eritrean exile, and *Rafa Uzcategui* from *El Libertario* Venezuela to take part in the sessions it organised. Rafa's participation provided a follow-up to WRI's presence at the Caracas WSF and alternative events in 2006 and offered the WSF another perspective on 'Chavezismo'. Cooperation continues with *Jai Sen* and CACIM (India Institute for Critical Action: Centre In Movement) in making more space for nonviolence in the WSF process.

**Counter-events to the G-8 summit in Germany, June 2007:** DFG-VK played a major role in coordinating the protests and their journal, *Zivilcourage*, published an article by Andreas Speck on globalisation and the anti-war movement ([http://www.zc-online.de/zc200706\\_3.pdf](http://www.zc-online.de/zc200706_3.pdf)). The Alternative Summit was attended by members of various WRI groups, as well as Council member Tobias Pflüger. In June, both Andreas and Javier took part in the events against the G-8 in Germany, at the Alternative Summit giving a workshop on Colombia and also collaborating with the workshops of the No Bases International Network.

The success of the nonviolent blockade, organised primarily by X-1000malquer, raises the question of whether WRI, together with groups with which we have an affinity, could play more of a role in coordinating a nonviolent presence at such events.

**Eritrea:** Following the 2005 Prisoners for Peace focus on Eritrea, the participation in the Triennial of Eritrean activists based in Germany and at the Nairobi World Social Forum, WRI – in cooperation with the Germany-based Eritrean Antimilitarism Initiative and the South Africa-based Eritrean Movement for Democracy and Human Rights – is looking to organise a seminar in South Africa in 2008 on possibilities

for nonviolent resistance to the Eritrean regime. A regular volunteer in the WRI office is working on this programme.

**Russia:** The visit of Sergey and Andreas to Russia in February-March included an introductory workshop on nonviolence and identified the need for more nonviolence training. The plan is to organise one workshop with anarchistic activists and another in St. Peterburg that might link more to Chechnya and would include more elements on nonviolent conflict transformation.

This work will require new funding, as the grant WRI received for work on Russia, as part of the Right to Refuse to Kill programme, will soon have been spent.

## Internal Organisational matters

### The office

**i) staff:** The past year has seen periods of several weeks of absence from the office for Andreas (sabbatical) and Yvonne (medical treatment), which – combined with the rather heavy load of international travel involved in the programme work this year – has led to some hiccups in coordination and the late circulation of minutes and some other communications to affiliates. These should be seen in the context of the achievements of the programme work, and also of the long hours worked by staff (inside and outside the office).

**ii) interns:** the office has some regular London-based volunteers – *Martyn Lowe* (filing and archiving), and *Natasha Burton* (Eritrea). In addition, there will be visiting interns – in August and September *Sebastian Lahner* from Germany working on Prisoners for Peace and war profiteers. Later this year, there will be at least two interns from Russia.

### The Executive

The Executive consists of *Howard Clark* (chair), *Boro Kitanoski*, *Sergeiy Sandler* and *Majken Sørensen* – only Majken remaining from the pre-2006 Executive. Therefore the Committee has spent some time finding its feet. We hope to be augmented by *Dominique Saillard* (WRI staff, 1994–98) as treasurer. At the Triennial, another person was asked to serve on the Executive, but he could not give a firm answer at that time. It has since become clear that he cannot serve in this period. However, the Exec members hope that, with a treasurer, we will be able to cope.

### Council meetings

The Triennial charged the Exec with investigating venues and themes for the forthcoming Council meetings. It has become increasingly clear that – unless the local organisers can take responsibility for

organising (including raising funds for) the seminar part of the Council – the only way the pattern of an annual seminar/Council can be maintained is if the seminar is considered as part of something larger and with a longer funding cycle. This could be a series of themed meetings and/or as part of one of the core programmes. Otherwise, the additional work – especially fund-raising – for a one-off event is too demanding. A proposal for a seminar/council in Gujarat, India, in December 2008, has been prepared by Majken and Javier, in consultation with the local hosts, and will be discussed at Council.

### International Conference

The International Conference (Triennial) absorbs a lot of energy from both staff and the Executive, as well as involving financial risk. The Exec is therefore asking this Council meeting to devote some time to reconsidering the form of this conference – this in the context of looking at the whole pattern of WRI meetings – Councils / Seminars and Conferences together with a new element, regional meetings.

### Regionalisation

The Executive is working in the perspective that WRI's future is as a radical anti-militarist network promoting nonviolent action. Strengthening regional links is a vital element of making this network more effective. Therefore the Exec were delighted to receive a proposal from *Xavier León* and *Yeidy Luz Rosa Ortiz* to consult groups in Latin America about establishing a regional office there (specifically in Ecuador). Xavier will attend the Council meeting. The history of anti-militarist coordination in Latin America is not a particularly encouraging background for this proposal, and there remains some bad feeling left over from previous efforts at continental coordination. Therefore it is essential to ground any project in thorough consultation with the Latin American groups cooperating with WRI.

The Executive is also keen to encourage groups in other regions to consider incorporating some element of WRI regional meetings into events they are organising. In Europe, this has been particularly discussed in the context of forthcoming anti-NATO events in Belgium.

Again, this will form part of the discussion at Council on the pattern of WRI meetings.

### Publications

The office has maintained the regular publication of the *Broken Rifle* (four times a year in English, French, German and Spanish), *War Profiteer News* (six times a year, English and Spanish), and *CO Update* (monthly, English and Spanish – French currently suspended). In addition, a *Handbook on Non-violent Action* and a *Women's CO Anthology* are in preparation. These publications are a way of raising

the profile of WRI – provided that affiliates actually use and distribute them.

**Internet:** Email lists and the web page are an increasingly important form of communication for our network, and a very cost-effective one too. The web page has been especially cost-effective thanks to the immense voluntary contribution for the past 10 years of our webmaster, Ken Simons. The web page is undoubtedly now the most comprehensive (and convenient) source of information on WRI and its recent past.

As the web has undergone various revolutions in the last 10 years, the Executive is planning for the web site to be redesigned, introducing a Content Management System (CMS). Progress on this is slow so far.

In addition, *michelle* (from Madrid, a WRI Council member from 1991–98) has bought the domain for WRI to open one webforum in English and another in Castellano, both of which she is prepared to facilitate.

More discussion is needed on how WRI could use the web more effectively, and funds will need to be raised to cover the costs of moving from the current website to a redesigned website with a CMS.

### Email lists and Working groups:

WRI has a number of email lists, some of which carry the name 'working groups'. Apart from wri-info, wri-internal and newsfromthenetwork, the more active email lists are subject-specific and generally connect with staffed programme work. These are open to all interested.

There are currently only two working groups with convenors – Nonviolence Training (*Dorie Wilsnack*) and Africa (*Jan van Criekeing* and *Matt Meyer*, to whom were added *Chesterfield Samba* and *Yvonne Kassim* at the Triennial). Working groups initially were intended to be a way of organising WRI activities independently of the office. It has to be acknowledged that – apart from the personal input of the convenors mentioned – at the moment 'working groups' as a structure are not contributing a lot to the WRI.

### Finances:

The context in which WRI works is not just shaped by the way that militarism recreates itself in various parts of the world, nor only by the possibilities opened by anti-militarists and nonviolent groups. There are financial realities! The previous Exec made various cuts in our expenses (including in the frequency of Exec meetings and the amount of office space occupied). Nevertheless, in most of our work we are perpetually faced with budget shortages and the need to make cuts. There is a permanent tension

between our ambitions – what we want to try to make possible – and our ability to obtain funds in due time.

The situation we are now approaching is even more severe. For the Right to Refuse to Kill Programme, we have been completely dependent on one funder and do not yet know if the grant will be renewed. For the Nonviolence Programme, we invested two years of work in setting this up, and now desperately need to bring in funds for it.

According to current projections, we have just one year in which we can operate on the current basis. We decided on our political preferences at the Council meeting in Macedonia in 2004: WRI should maintain its radical anti-militarist character and should function as a network rather than switch to being a funding-led NGO. The hard decisions about how to maintain a greatly reduced network still have to be made.

## Figures

Some comments on the accounts:

1. Income from affiliation fees is down. This probably also has to do with not sending out a reminder/invoice yet, but it is a worrying sign. However this would look slightly better with the US accounts, and WRI decided to increase its affiliation fee (hurray for *Patrick Sheehan-Gaumer* and *Joanne Sheehan*).
2. Sales are also down – we don't sell many copies of *Devi Prasad's* book any more, and not many Broken Rifle badges. A website re-design also needs to include a much easier to maintain webshop, and a better range of merchandise, possibly in cooperation with Housmans Bookshop.
3. Legacies are down too. We received one now, but not that high (but not yet in the accounts).

## Income and Expenses 2004–2007

(2007 figures up to 30 June 2007<sup>1)</sup>)

SUMMARY ACCOUNT	2007 Account	2007 Budget	2006 Account	2006 budget	2005 Account	2005 budget	2004 account	2004 budget
<b>Income</b>								
General income	8,502.38	21,000	27,530.51	26,500	115,518.09	24,000	26,305.35	30,000
Right to Refuse to Kill	15,551.26	29,346	34,649.63	33,760	34,143.33	34,270	31,520.40	30,000
Nonviolence programme	1,389.17	15,000	6,152.42	11,500	50.00	1,000	1,262.07	
Dealing with the past	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	1,589.52	10,000
Other projects	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0
Seminars	122.07	14,400	0.00	0	16,125.87	16,100	2,559.72	0
Triennial	3,061.04	0	22,732.09	50,800	0.00	0	0.00	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>28,625.92</b>	<b>79,746</b>	<b>91,064.65</b>	<b>122,560</b>	<b>165,837.29</b>	<b>75,370</b>	<b>63,237.06</b>	<b>70,000</b>
<b>Expense</b>								
WRI Office	9,737.58	34,550	33,916.44	28,040	24,808.98	26,045	31,044.00	28,300
WRI Network	1,069.20	3,750	1,645.47	3,100	4,722.13	6,000	13,307.42	13,100
Outreach (publications)	0.00	3,000	600.49	2,000	6,266.57	2,000	6,710.86	6,400
Crisis response	14,600.63	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	229.44	0
Right to Refuse to Kill	0.00	33,346	25,590.35	33,760	29,110.94	34,270	27,414.82	27,000
Nonviolence programme	18,088.30	28,000	23,658.61	26,000	15,772.96	17,000	1,324.11	
Dealing with the past	0.00	0	0.00	0	778.80	0	11,849.80	10,000
Other projects	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0
Seminars	0.00	14,400	0.00	0	14,785.02	16,200	1,627.94	0
Triennial	0.00	0	37,295.83	55,200	1,193.48	1,700	1,833.29	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>43,495.71</b>	<b>117,046</b>	<b>122,707.19</b>	<b>148,100</b>	<b>97,438.88</b>	<b>103,215</b>	<b>95,341.68</b>	<b>84,800</b>
<b>Year Result</b>	<b>-14,869.79</b>	<b>-37,300</b>	<b>-31,642.54</b>	<b>-25,540</b>	<b>68,398.41</b>	<b>-27,845</b>	<b>-32,104.62</b>	<b>-14,800</b>
taken from WRI Reserves	0.00	4,922	16,358.67	20,720	27,528.00	26,500	27,528.00	18,000
<b>Budgeted result</b>	<b>-14,869.79</b>	<b>-32,378</b>	<b>-15,283.87</b>	<b>-4,820</b>	<b>95,926.41</b>	<b>-1,345</b>	<b>-4,576.62</b>	<b>3,200</b>
taken from WRI funds								
<b>Final result</b>	<b>-£14,870</b>	<b>-£32,378</b>	<b>-£15,284</b>	<b>-£4,820</b>	<b>£95,926</b>	<b>-£1,345</b>	<b>-£4,577</b>	<b>£3,200</b>

## Notes

<sup>1)</sup> US account only included up to 31 March 2007