



International Federation of  
Library Associations and Institutions

# Public Access to Health Information





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# An introduction to FAIFE and the Workshop Programme





# About FAIFE

- FAIFE is IFLA's Freedom of Access to Information and Freedom of Expression core activity
- The FAIFE Committee was set up in 1997
- Its work is to promote Intellectual Freedom for Librarians and Library Users
- Between 2005 and 2009 FAIFE received a grant to support its activities from Sida (the Swedish International Development Agency)
- Amongst other activities, the grant was used to create FAIFE's Workshop programme.





# What FAIFE does

- FAIFE promotes Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, particularly the right to
  - Seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers
- FAIFE does this through
  - Intervention
  - Advocacy, and
  - Education.



# Intervention

- When violations of intellectual freedom connected with libraries (such as political interference with collection development, or filtering Internet access) are reported,
- FAIFE investigates and then may
  - Issue statements, letters to governments etc.
  - Send missions to problem regions (Kosovo, Cuba, Israel/Palestine)
- Although this is high profile work, it is not FAIFE's main activity.



# Advocacy

- FAIFE helps IFLA develop policy on intellectual freedom, for instance,
  - Glasgow Declaration, 2002
  - IFLA/UNESCO Internet Manifesto, 2002
  - IFLA Manifesto on Transparency, Good Governance and Freedom from Corruption, 2008.
- The *FAIFE World Report Series 2001-*
  - Contains an up to date country by country account of libraries and intellectual freedom
  - Articles on important intellectual freedom topics.



# Education

- Presentations at conferences and articles in professional journals by the Chair and Committee members.
- A programme of Workshops on,
  - Internet Manifesto
  - Access to HIV/AIDS Information
  - Transparency Manifesto (piloted in India and Vietnam, 2009)
  - Public Access to Health Information (piloted in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, 2009).



# Intellectual Freedom challenged

- FAIFE regards intellectual freedom as a universal human value.
- However, a challenger called this ‘Complete and utter irrelevance’
- He said more fundamental rights were ‘Food, shelter, education and health’.
- Can librarians justify promoting intellectual freedom as the inspiration for their work?



# FAIFE's response.

- FAIFE believes intellectual freedom:
- Encourages resourceful and self-reliant individuals who
  - Get the maximum benefit from education
  - Are successful in their work
  - Can ensure the welfare of their families
  - Know how to look after their own health and that of others.
- Makes possible an Information Society, in which creative, independent-minded individuals contribute to the process of development



# FAIFE and Health

- FAIFE believes that a well-informed population will be a healthy one.
- People need to know how to avoid disease (for instance, through awareness of how parasites such as the guinea worm are contracted);
- People need information on preventive health programmes (such as immunisation for TB and other diseases);
- They need awareness and understanding of treatment programmes (such as complicated antiretroviral drug regimes for AIDS).



# Problems of Health Information

- People often place too much trust in traditional healers
- Social attitudes to certain types of health condition can be very negative
- People do not have sufficient access to clinics, and the advice of doctors, nurses and community health workers
- Many government agencies and NGOs have health information programmes, but there is still a need for more and better information.



# The example of HIV/AIDS

- HIV/AIDS is first of all an information problem
  - People do not understand how it is transmitted
  - People are afraid to admit that they (or family members) have the condition
  - Governments can be confused and unhelpful on prevention and treatment.
- When better information is available HIV/AIDS is a more manageable problem.
- FAIFE's HIV/AIDS Workshops were aimed at getting libraries involved in relevant information provision.





# Workshop Aims and Objectives

- Today's Workshop is intended to encourage librarians to commit themselves to providing more and health better information to the public.
- It will introduce
  - Ways of working, based on partnerships
  - Types of content and materials.
- FAIFE wants its Workshops to get better and better
- Your comments, questions and criticisms are invited, so that we can continue the process of making the Learning Materials the best they can be.

