

ZONAL FORUMS

A REPORT TO WSC'92 FROM THE MDF NETWORK PROGRAMS WORKING GROUP

This is a report from a group of WSC'92 participants selected during the Multinational Development Forum to examine and prepare recommendations about *network programs*. The group was composed of Scott Allen (RSR, San Diego-Imperial), Christian Guerree (RSR, France), Lucie Gelinias (RSR, Al-Sask), David Jones (RSR, TriState), Michael McDermott (Alternate RSR, Northern California), Mike Polin (RSR, MidAtlantic), Vivianne Ronneman (Chair, World Service Translations Committee), and Paul Tanner (RSR, Spain), group spokesperson. Also participating in the group's discussions were Becky Meyer (Chair, World Service Board) and Mary Banner, a local NA member.

Networks occur at every level of service in Narcotics Anonymous. Whenever we gather representatives of our groups, areas, regions, or national communities together to share with one another their experience, strength, and hope, we have created a network. We use these networks to communicate with one another about what has worked for us, find solutions to what hasn't worked, and come up with new ideas about how to serve better.

In facilitating the international development of our fellowship, one comparatively new kind of network has proven particularly valuable: the *zonal forum*. Zonal forums are service-oriented sharing sessions that provide means by which NA communities can communicate, support, and grow with one another. Their formats vary according to the needs of their member-communities. Today, the list of established zonal forums includes:

Canada. The Canadian Assembly.

Europe. The European Conference and Convention and its current steering committee, the European Resources Group.

NW South America. A mutual support network between Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela.

Scandinavia. A network between Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden.

USA. The Western States Forum and the Midwestern Caucus.

Some of the Pacific regions have also voiced interest over the last couple of years in creating a zonal forum. Additionally, Argentina and Brazil in SE South America have explored ways to better communicate with and support one another.

Zonal forums periodically bring representatives of nearby NA communities together to discuss common concerns and develop means of addressing common needs. Because they involve NA communities relatively close to one another, the travel costs for participating in zonal forums are small when compared with those for participation in the World Service Conference.

One of the major problems such forums face today is that they appear to exist outside the NA service structure. These forums provide opportunities for communication, cooperation, and a variety of other NA services for their member-communities. Yet nothing in our service literature talks about zonal forums, leading some to believe that they're somehow unnecessary, duplicating the work of existing service bodies.

During the Multinational Development Forum, a wide array of subjects related to the topic of networking was examined. Of all those subjects, our group felt that the most important was the recognition of zonal forums in Narcotics Anonymous. They *do* exist in a number of places, taking a variety of forms and fulfilling various responsibilities. They provide services that are not being provided by any other element of our service structure, services critical to the development of NA communities worldwide. To encourage the continuation of existing zonal forums and the creation of additional forums, we ask the World Service Conference to concur with the following affirmation:

Zonal forums, as service-oriented sharing sessions that provide means by which NA communities can communicate, cooperate, and grow with one another, are valuable components of NA. We support the continued work of the zonal forums that exist today worldwide and encourage any further efforts NA communities may take to support one another.

We also ask the conference to include consideration of zonal forums in its budget and travel planning. The members of our group encourage the conference to fund travel for world service personnel to meetings of zonal forums upon request of the forums themselves. Our group also encourages the WSC to fund the inclusion of spokespersons from zonal forums in future worldwide development discussions when travel assistance is required. Toward that end, we ask that the following two items be added to the 1992-93 conference budget priority list:

1. World service travel to meetings of zonal forums.
2. Zonal forum delegate travel to WSC'93.