

2020 President's report

A summary of the year 2020 which was a year like no other!

Everyone knows the challenges that we all faced and the impact that this year had, of uncertainty, cancellations, lock-downs and all of our worries about contagion, illness, friends, families as well as the economic and social fall out.

Despite the difficulties in many ways SFW managed to go beyond sustaining where we were

but in fact grew and developed. Every challenge is an opportunity and we rose to the challenge, by switching our focus to online activities, research, and publications.

What didn't happen:

When the pandemic raised its ugly head, we were working on our presence during the week at Eurosatory with European friends joining us. As well as a physical presence at the entrance to Eurosatory we were in the process of organising a week of parallel conferences and events including an exhibition about Eurosatory in coordination with faith groups in France. Then Eurosatory was cancelled!

What did happen:

At the beginning of the year we launched into producing a webinar with the help of Agir de

la Paix and 2 podcasts (however the planned format of public interviews was abandoned). During the first lockdown we brought in Djamila to lead our online presence and to give a coherent approach and creative flair to our social media and publications. We have increased our visibility on twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

We also brought in Alice to use her research and analytical skills to continuously survey the

French media, seeking friendly journalists and publications and creating archives of these threads. Also to follow all references to arms sales transparency within the French government research and with this up to date referencing to assist in the production of publications.

One of our great gains during 2020 was a more profound understanding of how French government and society works, this was due to links with other French organisations and having French staff.

Other events:

- Students from The Sorbonne University, Paris invited us to put the case against the arms trade. This went live in September on their magazine Classe Internationale.

-We were invited to join a series of discussion groups hosted by the Brussels- based Rosa Luxembourg Foundation about looking at a new security approach which incorporates aspects like feminism, structural inequalities, etc.

-We hosted an online information and discussion about 'what is Peacebuilding?' for our

members.

-We have continued discussing and working towards an exhibition on the French arms trade but this has remained in the planning stage as opportunities to hold this have disintegrated during 2020.

- SFW was accepted as part of civil society to be an observer for the ATT (Arms trade treaty) Conference of State parties.

-We have been upgrading our internal processes and office systems including – Assoconnect for membership payment and distribution of emails, Discord, Trello, Nextcloud, etc.

-We moved: SFW was initially housed in the International Quaker Centre in Paris but since it's sale in September, we have been sharing offices with other peace associations.

Publications: this is what we produced during 2020:

- A guide to good answers to difficult questions in both French and English: covering some of the most common challenges and themes encountered when speaking about peace. We produced these in two formats (both with the same contents): one more attractive for younger audiences and another with a more formal layout. (we developed this further for a more in depth publication in 2021).

- Developing a detailed infographic with other European NGOs on the Saudi-led coalition war in Yemen, including supply routes, legal and other challenges, the impact of the war and we had an online event based on this.

- Articles on the arms trade: Two op-eds on Covid-19 questioning the meaning of 'security', coronavirus and climate change which have been reproduced on the WRI (War Resisters International) website and Global Day of Action Against the Arms Trade (GDAMS), as well as QCEA'S 'Around Europe'.

- At Stop Fuelling War, we are increasingly focussed on highlighting the links between topics which were once perceived as separate issues. To this end, we have produced short briefing papers on a range of topics in both French and English : Arms trade and military spending: Arms trade and Covid 19: Arms trade and Climate Change: Arms Trade and Peacebuilding in France: Arms Trade and Peacebuilding: Militarisation of Police

Future publications in the pipeline are: The arms industry and employment, Service National

Universal (French only)

Finances

We have inevitably spent time raising funds to pay for staff, functioning and events. Some approaches were successful but inevitably not all, including Church and Peace Europe's joint peace project application to the European Commission. You will see from the treasurer

Judy that we have remained solvent and have a few months running costs in reserve. We should celebrate this achievement!

Towards the future

We are looking to widen our steering committee membership, to bring in other skills, particularly peace building. We are planning LIVE events, two exhibition events in Paris in the autumn. Fingers crossed!

One of the most satisfying achievements for me personally this year has that other groups are beginning to know who we are.

We continue to build our network and work with other groups including ENAAT, the European Network Against the arms trade. Recently we were approached by Security Policy

Alternative Network (SPAN) and we will be coordinating with this group. Also with a French

collective which is campaigning against the 'Service National Universal ' which is ostensibly

offering youth services to civil society but is in fact conscription by another name. We will be focussing on the military industrial complex effect on climate emergency into 2021 and will do as much as our small resources will permit.

We are grateful to hear any suggestions or comments that you have and if you would like to offer your time in any way, we would be delighted to hear from you.

We will be taking slow steps towards Rethinking Security in France but at the moment we are gathering information and building our networks to position ourselves to do this.

A note about the people involved:

Naima who was our first member of staff left Paris and SFW, and as I mentioned, hired Djamila and Alice who started on short term contracts but quickly proved their worth and are now on permanent staff. Holly continues to develop as a project leader on a contractor basis. The founding members have been fully implicated through the year and without them SFW would not be able to function. My thanks goes to everyone involved. Also particular gratitude goes to our funders without whom none of our achievements would not have been possible. Also to our treasurer Judy and our accountants and those who have guided us, mystified and confused; through the labyrinth of French employment law. I think we can be grateful and proud of what SFW has achieved in 2020 and the small dedicated team and members we have. Thank you.