

## IFGK Activity Report 2020

The IFGK continued to have nine active and six dormant members during the reporting period. The active members are: Martin Arnold, Anne Dietrich, Reinhard Eismann, Albert Fuchs, Mirjam Mahler, Gudrun Knittel, Barbara Müller, Achim Schmitz, Christine Schweitzer.

The year 2020 was mainly marked by the work on the establishment of the foundation "Strength of Nonviolence", in which several IFGK members (Martin Arnold, Barbara Müller, Reinhard Eismann and Christine Schweitzer) actively participated.

The 2020 general meeting of the IFGK took place online on 6 November 2020 due to the pandemic; the study day actually planned for September was cancelled.

### Activities of IFGK staff

During the reporting period, **Dr. Martin Arnold** continued to be active in refugee work, at the Round Environmental Table Essen, as leader of the local peace group Forum Billebrinkhöhe, which supports the initiative "Rethinking Security", and in peace work groups of the Evangelical Church in the Rhineland. In February 2020 (shortly before the borders were closed due to Covid19), he gave a lecture on "Practicing Active Nonviolence in the 21st Century" at the "Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti" Institute during a lecture tour in India. He spoke online about "700 years of powerful concepts of nonviolent action" in international seminars organised by the Indian Council of World Affairs, New Delhi, and the Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study, South Africa. As a member of the International Ark Community (founder: Lanza del Vasto), he collaborates in the two-year training "Discovering the Ark". He also became one of the two chairpersons of the new foundation "Power of Nonviolence".

**Anne Dietrich** has been working as a peace specialist for GIZ since 2005, with a two-year break at Responding to Conflict in the UK and the Academy for Civil Conflict Transformation; since October 2016, she has been in Rwanda, where she works at PIASS (Protestant Institute of Arts and Social Sciences) with both students from the region and peace practitioners, gathering practical insights for her research on "needs-based conflict transformation". In the past year, she has been more concerned with connecting the concept of Nonviolent Change to the practice of different approaches to overcoming and preventing violence - such as Project Alternatives to Violence, Nonviolent Communication, Restorative Dialogue and 'Healing and Rebuilding Our Communities' (the latter an approach developed by Burundian and Rwandan trainers after the genocide in Rwanda). The aim of this work is to explore the conditions for how the development of skills and behavioural repertoires for non-violent conflict transformation can be anchored in broader strata of the population and gain political relevance for non-violent political and social change.

**Reinhard Eismann:** For him, the year 2020 was also marked by his involvement in the development work for the "Strength of Nonviolence" Foundation. In September 2020, he was appointed to the first advisory board of the newly established foundation.

Reinhard Eismann's other peace policy activities were severely restricted due to the pandemic and shifted entirely to virtual space. They were mainly limited to online participation in two CampaNet meetings in September and November and to the video meeting "Anti-Corona Demonstrations and the Peace Movement - A Critical Discourse" initiated from CampaNet in mid-December.

**Prof. Dr. Albert Fuchs** continues to be appointed as treasurer. He is involved in the Bonn Peace Alliance, the pax christi Peace Policy Commission, the Peace Psychology Forum and as an advisor to the journal Wissenschaft und Frieden (Science and Peace). The work on a W&F dossier on the ethical dimension of the drone debate, which took about two years, was successfully concluded with its publication (as a supplement to W&F 2/2020). The topic remains highly topical in view of the rapid further development of drone technology (towards full autonomisation) and not least in view of Germany's drone policy ambitions.

**Gudrun Knittel:** Action research Dealing with power and conflict dynamics in a peace organisation, in-depth studies on process and dialogue accompaniment.

**Dr Barbara Müller** looks after the IFGK's finances as treasurer. In 2020, one focus was to bring a milestone in the development of the IFGK to a conclusion: The establishment of an independent foundation that is able to use its own resources to promote research and practice on nonviolence and to support the networking of people who work on this heritage of humanity worldwide and constantly live and develop it further, sometimes even reinventing it, in countless conflicts around the world. The fact that together with the FSIO it was possible to found the "Power of Nonviolence Foundation" brings to a close a chapter that the IFGK had already had on its agenda before its founding. The fact that after the foundation was established in August and recognised in September, the board met for the first time in October and has been working steadily since then is just as much a cause for joy for Barbara Müller as the fact that the board of trustees has now also been constituted and that endowments have already topped up the foundation capital and donations will make it possible to build up the foundation operationally this year.

Due to Corona, the advisory activities for the IFGK had to be largely scaled back or shifted to the digital space. This also applies to the events and mindfulness courses that accompany the counselling activities. However, initial learning processes are already taking place here on how to convey the content and maintain group cohesion even in lockdown situations.

This also applies to cooperation in events. Organising the general meeting completely digitally was a real challenge, especially due to the digital underdevelopment in the country. All the more surprising was the experience that in this way our member Anne Dietrich, who works abroad, was also able to be present this time. New standards for the future can grow out of these experiences, learning to take advantage of forced changes in communications.

Work on the biographical research project is currently at a standstill - there is a connection with the pandemic situation that has not yet been fully clarified. But this too will become clear and ready for discussion.

**Dr. Achim Schmitz** taught job-related German courses in Krefeld. He continued his communication training at the University of Stuttgart and had teaching assignments at vocational schools for geriatric care in Krefeld on various conflict topics. At the Fliegener University of Applied Sciences Düsseldorf-Kaiserswerth, he offered online seminars in sociology. Since May, he has had a half-time job as a social education worker in Krefeld, where active listening and conflict management are occasionally called for. At pax christi he was active in the peacebuilding commission.

**Dr. Christine Schweitzer:** In addition to her work as managing director of the BSV, she continues to be an assistant editor and editor for the journal Friedensforum ([www.friedenskooperative.de](http://www.friedenskooperative.de)) as a staff member of the IFGK.

Christine continued her work as a documenter of Nonviolent Peaceforce good practice workshops in the reporting year with another workshop in Colombia, which took place in January 2020, before the pandemic. The reports of all previous workshops except the last one, which took place in February 2021 and dealt with the European region, are online at: <https://www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org/what-we-do/developing-and-expanding-the-field>.

**Outlook: Safe the date!**

**Study Day 2021: 18 September in Essen.**

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