Public Access to Health Information
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

• 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)
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.