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# NFP PIONEERS: Introduction to the International Federation for Family Life Promotion

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## *Early Interest in Natural Family Planning*

When I graduated from medical school (McGill 1957) in Montreal, I was soon introduced to the budding couple-to-couple NFP movement in Montreal in 1958 which was soon to become SERENA CANADA. After working closely with a group of medical students in 1959-1960, I came to the U.S. to pursue a residency in Obstetrics and Gynecology at the University of Chicago (1960-63). My wife Anne and I married in 1963, and at that time I pursued post doctoral studies at Yale (1963-1965). There I evaluated the effectiveness of the STM in some 1000 couples in a combined retrospective and prospective study. After obtaining a Masters in Public Health at Harvard 1965-66, I began my career as a Public Health Officer in Connecticut (City Health and State Health Departments from 1966-70). At that time I worked with Anne in helping to begin NFP couple groups such as the NFP Association of Connecticut and others which were encouraged by the publication of *Humanae vitae* in 1968. In 1970 we moved back to Canada where at the University at Sherbrooke I was to become the director of the Division of Social Medicine in 1973. This was also the time when in close collaboration with Professor Frank Rice (Department of Biology at Fairfield University in Connecticut) we jointly conducted the Fairfield Study, a collaborative

use-effectiveness evaluation study of over 1000 STM users in 5 countries (Canada, USA, Colombia, France, and Mauritius).

## *IFFLP Beginnings*

In the early 1970's, stimulated by the Fairfield Study contacts, our close collaboration with the Human Life Foundation (created by the U.S. Bishops), my position on the Pontifical Committee for the Family, and the general preparation for the 1974 U.N. Population Conference in Bucharest, the climate was ripe for two subsequent Washington meetings in 1973 and 1974, which launched the International Federation for Family Life Promotion (IFFLP).

The 1973 initial international NFP Seminar brought together some 30 international representatives from 15 countries interested or involved in NFP activities under the sponsorship of the Human Life Foundation in Washington. One of the main results of this initial meeting was the creation of the international family liaison secretariat under my responsibility with the specific task to work at preparing a formal international federation structure with a formal constitution, which would incorporate the 12 principles of l'Action Familiale of Mauritius, which Dr. François Guy had presented in Cali, Colombia in August 1972.

In close collaboration with Msgr. John Seli and the Human Life Foundation, the necessary ground work

of contacts, draft constitution, and by-laws were prepared within one year so that the formal founding meeting of the International Federation could be held in Washington, D.C. in August 1974, by representatives from 13 countries. The founding board members were elected and the constitution and by-laws were drafted. The Federation became incorporated in Washington, D.C. in September 1974, as an international non-profit membership association devoted to family life promotion with special emphasis on Natural Family Planning and with the mandate to hold its first constitutive General Assembly within three years.

After three small regional recruitment meetings were held in the fall of 1976, in Honduras (Tegucigalpa), Austria (Vienna), and Hong Kong, then a fourth in March-April 1977, in Cameroon (Yaoundé), the formal constitutive General Assembly of IFFLP voting members was held in Cali, Colombia in June 1977, with 42 initial voting members.

The Federation is a pluriconfessional non-governmental and non-profit membership association - clearly pro-life and dedicated to the promotion of natural family planning services on a worldwide basis. Its basic principles and membership guidelines recognize as voting members only those associations who exclusively promote NFP. Currently in 1993, it has over 120 members (over 100 voting organizational members) in 75 countries. It has held international congresses in 1980 (Navan, Ireland), 1983 (Hong Kong), 1986 (Ottawa, Canada), and 1989 (Nairobi, Kenya) from which scientific proceedings were usually published. Its sixth International Congress is projected to be held in Lublin, Poland in September 1994.

## **Organization, Mission, and Activity of IFFLP**

From its very beginning, the Federation was structured around its four zones: the Americas, Africa, Asia-Oceania, and Europe. Each zone elects one of the four zonal board members to the Board of Directors; two additional Board members are elected at-large. In 1983 the four zonal councils were formally constituted and these have progressively assumed more coresponsibility with the Secretariat in membership selection and in the review, the planning and in conducting zonal development programs.

Since 1978, the Federation has recognized its double mission as primarily a membership association yet complemented by its role as a development association to meet some of the needs of its members and to seek out development resources from a variety of donors.

The Secretariat began as a one man affair with a half-time secretary, from 1973 to 1978, and has grown to three senior staff with two secretaries and a part-time financial officer.

The financial support of the Federation was initially from the Church and Church related donors - development agencies such as CRS (Catholic Relief Services), Development and Peace, and Misereor, to name the major ones - but since 1983, 75 to 80 percent of its support has been assured from national or international public agencies such as USAID, CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency) and UNFPA. Membership dues and contributions represent on the average only about \$10,000 out of a \$600,000 plus annual budget. The Federation is tax exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code.

Its development program over the last 15 years began with a primary focus on development support to

initial Family Life Education (FLE) and Natural Family Planning (NFP) projects or associations by supporting a variety of short term IFFLP consultant visits and training workshops in over 25 African countries between 1978-83. In 1983 and since, through more substantial program support from USAID and CIDA (annually between \$300,000 and \$350,000), various development activities have been undertaken in 15 to 20 countries. The CIDA efforts have concentrated in the continued support of three of the four zonal councils, special training workshops for NFP teachers, teacher supervisors, and (more recently) NFP/FLE program managers, ongoing resource development, encouraging women-in-development projects (currently three of the six board members are women), and usually three to four small target country support projects.

The current USAID support through the Georgetown University Institute for Reproductive Health addresses two major areas, NFP activities (2/3 of its support), and breastfeeding and Lactation Amenorrhea Method (LAM) promotion. NFP support includes four target-country programs in Peru, Brazil, Zambia, and the Philippines, along with a special program quality management effort through the development and testing of an NFP Management Information System (MIS), currently being field tested in over 20 NFP programs. Five or six American (U.S.) diocesan NFP programs have been invited to participate. Two special program categories complete this NFP activities section: an ambitious NFP program management training project in Mauritius which seeks to offer a combination of 3 week training preceptorships, followed by semi-annual technical assistance field visits over 1 to 2 years, and a special Teen Star abstinence training initiative (Dr. H. Klaus), which we hope

to support both in Chile and Slovakia in the coming year. Breastfeeding promotion support includes the integration of LAM and a LAM/NFP Interface in a variety of NFP programs in each of the three developing country zones of the Federation.

Currently, the Federation is in a position to offer DDP members assistance in three specific areas:

- Free copies of IFFLP International Congress proceedings are still available on request for the following congresses:

Hong Kong (1983): Monograph: *NFP, Development of National Programs*

Ottawa (1986): Special Issue: *International Journal of Fertility*

- from Georgetown:

*NFP Teacher Training Guide* (in English, French, and Spanish)

Proceedings of their December 1990 *International NFP Seminar* (2 volumes as supplements to the *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology*. December 1991, Volume 162, N° 6)

Also, IFFLP can provide interested diocesan NFP programs with guidelines and instruments to develop their own MIS instruments and NFP service indicators; however, no subsidies are available for the U.S. Currently, the voting U.S. members of the Federation are the DDP, the Couple-to-Couple League, the American Academy of NFP, and Family Life Mission of North America.

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