

Engineers Without Borders – International Network Meeting and Workshop on Engineering and Technology for Poverty Reduction, Emergencies, and Sustainable Development

May 11-13, 2005
UNESCO, Paris, France

SUMMARY REPORT

For the first time, representatives from Engineers Without Borders/*Ingénieurs Sans Frontières* groups in Africa, Asia, the Americas, Australasia and from across Europe gathered together to discuss the Engineers Without Borders International Network. UNESCO provided Engineers Without Borders the opportunity to meet representatives of more country groups than ever before: 33 countries were represented, with 55 people attending.

The first day was spent gaining an understanding of the different organisations associated with the EWB-International Network, with presentations being made by each group. A social event in the evening allowed people to discuss ideas and projects on an informal, one-to-one basis.

The second day began with a summary of the history of the network and with a report of the questionnaires submitted about the attending groups. The focus of the day then moved on to exploring some of the common opportunities and concerns regarding the network. Some concerns were expressed, including the use of the EWB/ISF name and logo. To help address and resolve these issues it was agreed to create two task forces, one focused on functional issues, the other on structure and organisational issues, to consider and report on these issues by August, and make recommendations to the network members.

The final day allowed a broader discussion of the role of the engineer in development work. Presentations were made by EWB/ISF groups in developing countries, followed by presentations from: the World Federation of Engineering Organisations (WFEO), International Federation of Consulting Engineers (FIDIC), Engineers Against Poverty (EAP), Registered Engineers for Disaster Relief (REDR), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and the UK Institute of Civil Engineers' special commission 'Engineers without Frontiers'. Some of the challenges facing the engineering profession were outlined, with specific reference to poverty reduction and the Millennium Development Goals. The delegates then discussed possible collective activities, with particular interest in the production and sharing of information, learning and training materials, cooperative activities, professional development and related opportunities.

In the following months, the task forces will be working on proposals for the Engineers Without Borders International Network and how it can assist in meeting some of these global challenges and the needs of its member groups. It is anticipated that some of the opportunities and activities raised during the workshop will lead to new collaborations to allow the engineering profession to rise to the challenge set by the Millennium Development Goals.