



INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH AND GLOBAL EXCHANGE(IRGE) COMMITTEE TRANSITION REPORT 2019 - 2021

Abstract

The International Research and Global Exchange (IRGE) Committee had a productive 2019-21 term, during a pandemic, under the leadership of Chair Alan Zais and Vice Chair Irma Gorham. The committee made strong gains in utilizing our international relationships and partnerships to re-engage our committee research regarding how our partners reacted to the global pandemic to share with membership.

By: Alan Zais, Committee Chair

STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

- **IRGE Presence at International Events**

During this term, NAHRO members attended the WUF10 in Abu Dhabi and shared their international experience by bringing back new ideas and solutions to share with other NAHRO members. Additionally, committee members took advantage of the virtual meeting and training environment to join in conversations worldwide, including in Africa, Europe, and Australia. Furthermore, committee members attended the UN Climate Action Summit at the UN Headquarters. Committee members took part in the 2021 Canadian Housing and Renewal Association conference and presented at the International Perspectives on Equity and Inclusion, sponsored by NAHRO's Diversity Equity and Inclusion Advisory Committee, helping meet the NAHRO strategic goals plan goal of committee partnerships.

The Pandemic affected the ability to travel, which is valuable to the IRGE process. The Committee took this challenge head-on and used this to its advantage to bring in speakers, some with international connections, and guests to its monthly meetings. The new opportunity dramatically increased committee member participation. Guests have included speakers from the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association and the United Kingdom Housing Federation.

- **IRGE Presence at NAHRO Conferences**

In 2019, IRGE presented "How Your Housing Work Impacts the Global Community," which examined the best practices both learned and shared with the IRGE partnerships and exchanges of Australia, France, and South Africa.

In 2020, IRGE presented a timely session on "Social Housing Resilience through a Global Pandemic." The session consisted of a discussion about how other countries around the world responded to the COVID-19 Pandemic. The session resulted in an increased interest in the research the IRGE committee members were doing for NAHRO. While COVID-19 made us stay inside and in our homes, it encouraged dialogue across the world among essential topics such as equity and housing affecting all nations.

Plans for the 2021 National Conference had been for an international program with the theme of Universal Vouchers. However, the resurgence of the Pandemic did not make it possible for international speakers to attend the conference in person.

- **International Dinners**

In 2019, IRGE hosted our international dinner in San Antonio, where NAHRO leadership was invited to connect with international partners from the Netherlands and South Africa who were in town to attend the National Conference and a post-conference event. Due to the Pandemic, IRGE was unable to host an event in 2020 but will continue this tradition of

informal international social events with our international peers—creating more in-depth dialogue and relationships that delve deeper than the formal structure of a conference presentation or meeting.

Getting Regions Involved

- **Lunch & Learn Sessions**

IRGE continued to foster international engagement concepts with our membership by hosting a Lunch & Learn session in 2019 on urban development at the Summer Conference in Boston and the National Conference, discussing Housing As A Right in San Antonio.

- **International Partnerships and MOUs**

IRGE continued to pursue engagements with new international partners in housing and community development. Before President Shaw ended her term in 2021, IRGE renewed its MOU with CHRA. In 2021, IRGE submitted its UN Quadrennial Report to continue NAHRO's NGO status.

The John D. Lange Award retitled "The International Award," in 2020, honored Barry Pinsky of Rooftops Canada, who has worked for over 30 years in all aspects of low-income housing development from housing projects in Canada and Africa to municipal and national housing policy in numerous countries. In 2019, Michel Sudarskis, Secretary-General of the International Urban Development Association (INTA), received the award. Under his guidance, INTA is responsible for urban development: new towns, urban renewal, mobility strategies, metropolitan clusters, creativity and city innovation, housing and urban services, sustainable urbanism, renovation of historical centers, tourism, and leisure as levers for development and urban integration, etc.

- **NAHRO and IRGE Host International Housing and Community Development Forum**

In October 2019, NAHRO, with input from IRGE members, hosted an International Forum after the 2019 National Conference in Austin, Texas. This unique event explored the theme of Creating Community. With the participation of international practitioners from the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association (CHRA), The Housing Association of East London and Ireland. NAHRO and international members discussed a range of topics – neighborhood design, mix-income development, diversity and inclusion, health, education, and employment, environmental sustainability.

- **Communications**

IRGE has created news bulletins to help state and region Chapters with content for their newsletters and member information, help maintain the profile and understanding of IRGE, and help members understand the relevance of international events and programs.

- **Program Continuity**

A transition report is a valuable tool, but limiting the reporting process to two-year periods may not directly address the loss of program history and institutional knowledge as long-term members transition from the Committee. IRGE has been working for the past three terms on a program archive process and the archiving system, which it expects to have in place by the next term. The Committee discussed the archiving process with President Shaw and Senior Vice-President Wells, who wish to review the IRGE effort in this area and possible replication to other committees and overall NAHRO efforts.