

WUS AUSTRIA: The First 15 Years

“Returning from a conference of the International World University Service (WUS) in Harare, Zimbabwe, in 1982, my valued teacher and colleague Professor Dr. Konrad Ginther brought with him the idea of founding an Austrian committee of the World University Service. I gladly took over the implementation of this project. Through this, interested higher education teachers and students could take part in a world-wide network which was just as relevant in South Africa to those suffering under Apartheid as to those living in then military dictatorships in Latin America, but also in Asia, Canada and Europe.”

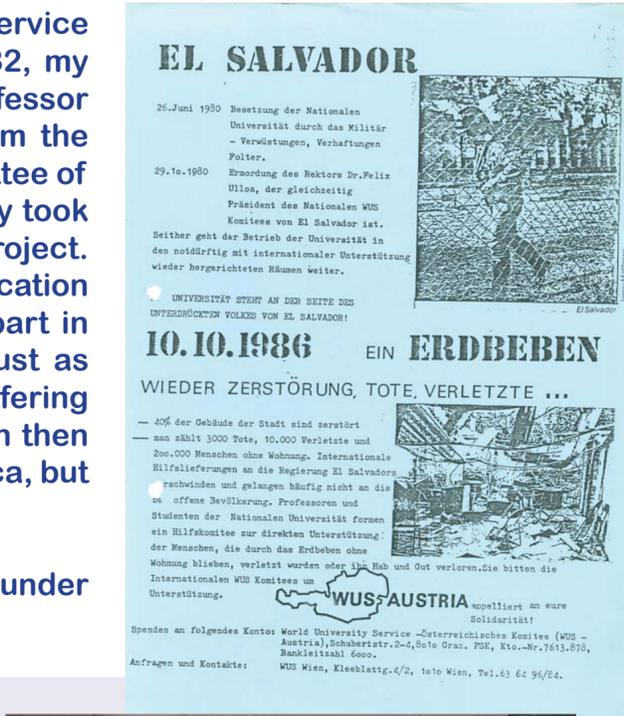
(Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Benedek, Co-Founder & Chairman of WUS Austria)



1995, Kampala, Uganda - Prof. Wolfgang Benedek with participants of the Postgraduate Course on Human Rights of Women in Kampala

“Even though WUS Austria developed from being a locally important initiative into an organization of international stature long ago: It is the original principals of borderless solidarity which are still reality today - more alive and necessary than ever! We are proud to have been there at the beginning and offer our hearty congratulations!”

(Grete Kernegger, Monika Fritz and Barbara Wiegele from the University of Vienna)



Since its establishment as a non-profit organisation in Graz in 1983, WUS Austria has been working on the promotion of higher education in various countries all over the world. Since 1994, following the conflict in former Yugoslavia, WUS Austria has developed a regional focus on South Eastern Europe (SEE).

When the war in the Balkans began in 1991, the Austrian committee of the WUS was one of the first to recognize their responsibility in terms of protecting the right to education.

1983

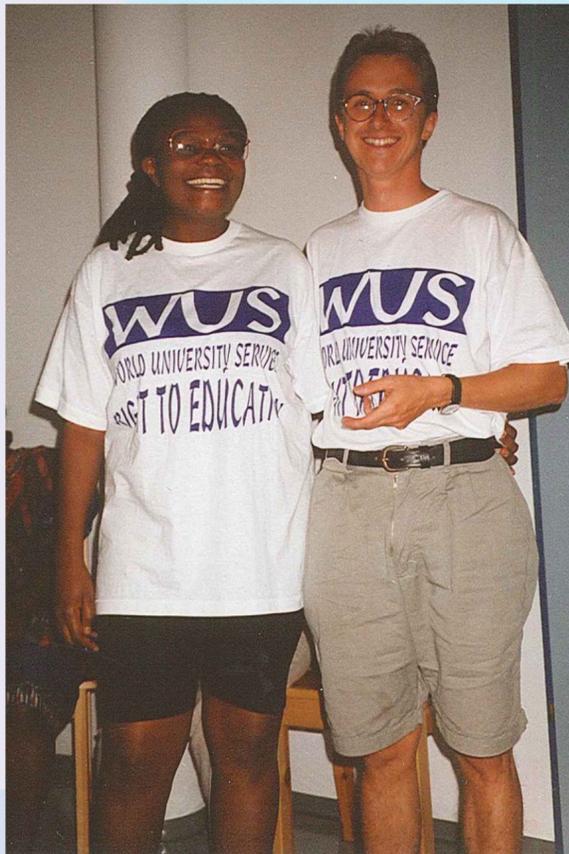
“World University Service Austrian Committee” was re-founded in Graz with three active groups in Graz, Vienna and Salzburg.

The 1980s and early 1990s

The newly founded WUS Austria was concerned with legal aid programs in South Africa and the support of the militarily-occupied universities in Latin America, and collaborated with committees in India and Sri Lanka.

WUS Austria also ran post-graduate summer courses in Stadtschlaining and then in Makerere University in Kampala.

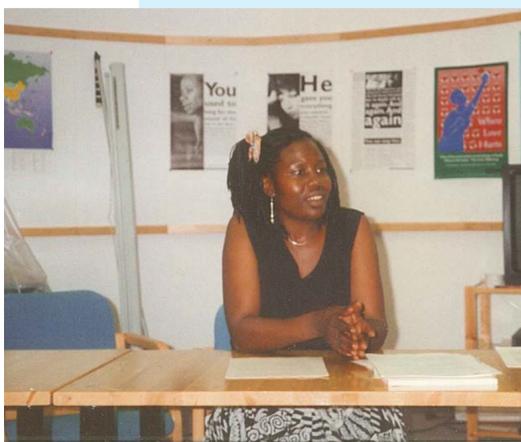
Of special importance here were the support for the right to education for those being politically pursued, and the autonomy of the universities. In this vein, the so-called Lima Declaration regarding freedom and autonomy in higher education was produced by the 1988 WUS general meeting. Manfred Nowak, who is still active as a board member of WUS Austria today, was the driving force behind this important step.



1995, Kampala, Uganda - Irene Kisule from WUS Uganda with Gerd Oberleitner from WUS Austria

Until 1990

WUS International was mainly involved in supporting higher education in Africa and Latin America and offered thousands of refugee-students the chance to proceed with their education.



1994, Stadtschlaining, Austria - Beatrice Achaleke at the 2nd Postgraduate Course on Human Rights of Women

WUS SUM-EUM
WORLD UNIVERSITY SERVICE • SERVICIO UNIVERSITARIO MUNDIAL • ENTRAIDE UNIVERSITAIRE MONDIALE

Programme of Human Rights in the Educational Sector

The WUS Human Rights programme seeks to:

- Promote the right to education and its implementation world wide.
- Encourage academic freedom and autonomy in the higher education sector.
- Engage in human rights teaching, education and dissemination of information.
- Defend and promote human rights of members of the academic community (academics, students and administrators) through joint action, networking and assistance projects for victims of human rights violations.

The area of activity within this programme taking place at national, regional and international level, consist of:

PROMOTING THE LIMA DECLARATION

The Lima Declaration on Academic Freedom and the Autonomy of Institutions of Higher Education is a set of principles that seek to guarantee academic freedom as an essential precondition for those education, research, administrative and service functions of the university and other institutions of higher education. The Declaration further deals with issues such as equal access to the academic community, non interference in research and teaching, the freedom to maintain international contacts, students rights, freedom of association and the duties of all institutions of higher education. The Lima Declaration was adopted by WUS at its General Assembly in 1988. The text of the Lima Declaration is available in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, German, Russian, Spanish, Swedish and Turkish. A seven point programme guides national activities, and an information kit is available in English, French and Spanish.

The main target of the international campaign is to promote standard setting in the fields of academic freedom. Numerous international, regional and national organizations and higher education institutions have adopted or support the Lima Declaration. The principles of the Lima Declaration have been the starting point for discussions between governmental (United Nations, UNESCO) and non-governmental organisations and universities on the development of an international instrument on academic freedom.

The result of the draft Declaration on Academic Freedom was noted during the UNESCO International Conference on Human Rights and Democracy and subsequently presented to UNESCO's General Conference in October 1993.

MONITORING ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION

Academic Freedom 1990 was published in September 1990 and reports on the situation of academic freedom and human rights in the educational sector in Colombia, El Salvador, Palestine, Peru, South Africa and Sri Lanka and includes 11 additional country listings. Academic Freedom 1991/92 was published in January 1993 and reports on the situation in Burma, Lebanon, Malawi, Paraguay, Palestine, Sri Lanka, Sudan and Swaziland. The third volume of the book will be published in October 1994 and will include reports on the human rights situation of all educational levels in Burma, Central Europe, Colombia, Guatemala, Haiti, Iran, Kosovo, Malawi, Palestine, Peru, Sri Lanka, Sudan, South Africa, Tibet, USA and Zaire. The annual survey is published by WUS in cooperation with Zed Press.

WUS ACTION ON VIOLATIONS, INFORMATION AND NETWORKING

WUS has Consultative Status with the United Nations and intervenes in the UN human rights structures - the Commission on Human Rights and the Sub-Commission on the Protection of Minorities and Prevention of Discrimination - to reveal violations of academic

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