ABSTRACT

The International Research and Global Exchange (IRGE) Committee had a productive term during the 2014-15 period. Under the leadership of Chair Liz Glenn and Vice Chair Julie Brewen, the committee made solid gains and re-focused the committee to better position and focus the work of the committee for the future.
Developing a Strategic Plan for IRGE

The committee’s first task was to develop and implement a strategic business plan for IRGE. The plan was developed to ensure that consistent purpose and focus directed the committee’s priorities and subsequently the work of the committee. The charge of the committee is to live up to its new name to emphasize the research perspective and use topical research to guide us in the development and selection of study tours, partnerships, communications and priorities.

As a result of the strategic plan, we established a new subcommittee structure for IRGE that evolved from the business plan.

The subcommittees adopted by IRGE are: Research, Communications, Partnerships, Study Exchanges, Resource Development and Lange Committee.

**Research:** This subcommittee is tasked with the development and investigation of selected topic(s) as described in the plan. The subcommittee determines appropriate methods of research and investigation using a variety of tools and engaging with stakeholders, key informants, and partners. The subcommittee oversees research projects and then works with NAHRO to disseminate the results of that research to the membership through presentations and articles. The Research subcommittee selected as its research focus the analysis of the impact of restructuring and converting our public housing program from a traditionally publicly funded, owned and managed program to a more privatized system, with special focus on the impact of regionalization.

**Communications:** This subcommittee is tasked with the development of communication materials and marketing efforts that are consistent with the NAHRO brand but distinguishes the work of IRGE. This includes brochures, webpage design, exhibits, business cards, etc. This also includes ensuring an ongoing presence in The Journal and other NAHRO publications. Further the committee seeks to ensure open lines of communication with other NAHRO standing committees.

**Partnerships:** This subcommittee is tasked with managing the existing MOUs and other partnerships that IRGE is engaged with. This includes ensuring that MOUs are enforced. Further this subcommittee is tasked with ensuring the NAHRO's NGO status is maximized including an ongoing presence and role with the World Urban Forum, preparing the Quadrennial Report, and monitoring the actions of UN ECOSOC. This includes establishing partnerships with universities and other institutions engaged in research, international issues and social policy.

**Study Exchanges:** This subcommittee is tasked with augmenting the value of our existing MOUs by organizing study and travel exchanges. This subcommittee also ensures that research topic(s) are incorporated into the focus areas and outcomes of study and travel exchanges. The subcommittee is also tasked with bringing back best practices and presenting the findings of their exchanges to the committee and the NAHRO membership. This subcommittee oversees and manages travel protocol.

**Resource Development:** This subcommittee is tasked with the development of resources and revenue that both support the work of IRGE and further the mission of NAHRO. This includes identifying opportunities to market NAHRO's professional development programs and technical assistance to partner organizations and countries; identifying grant opportunities; and developing
non-financial resources that contribute to strengthening IRGE’s efforts to engage NAHRO’s members in international activities.

**Lange Award**: This subcommittee is tasked with managing the nominating process for the John Lange Award winner.

**IRGE Presence at International Events**

During the term, IRGE committee members engaged in several international events and activities. IRGE committee members visited more than eight different countries including France, Columbia, Germany, the Netherlands, South Africa, Poland, Canada, and Italy. These activities ranged from participating on technical panels in Peru and France, to engaging with international colleagues at the World Urban Forum, to speaking at conferences in South Africa, Canada, and France.

The term will culminate with a nine-day study tour in the Netherlands and Germany. The tour’s itinerary included visits to social housing developments in Amsterdam, The Hague, Zwolle, Hardenberg, Dusseldorf, and Cologne. The NAHRO delegation, led by NAHRO President Preston Prince, consisted of 13 delegates from all over the country and included representatives from South Africa and Canada. Delegates met with members of Parliament from Norrhein-Westfal, the chairman of the German Housing Federation and the Dutch Housing Federation. Delegates toured several housing associations including De Key, Eigen Haard, Beter Wonen Vechtdal and Rheinwonungsbau GmbH Dusseldorf.

*Highlights of participation in international events and professional activities include:*

- IRGE committee members participated on a panel sponsored by INTA at the World Urban Forum 7 that was held in Medellin, Columbia.
- NAHRO President Preston Prince spoke at the CHRA Conference in 2014 and 2015 held in Edmonton and Winnipeg, Canada, respectively. Past President and current IRGE member Betsey Martens gave a presentation on “Social Housing with Purpose” at the Edmonton conference in 2014. Preston Prince gave a presentation on Building Capacity Through Neighborhood Based Initiatives” in Winnipeg in 2015.
- NAHRO President Preston Prince, NAHRO CEO Saul Ramirez, Past NAHRO President Nola Popoola, Ramsey Jay and IRGE Vice President Liz Glenn attended the Southern African Housing Foundation Annual Conference in Somerset West, South Africa in September 28-October 2, 2014. Preston Prince, Saul Ramirez, Nola Popoola, and Liz Glenn each gave presentations on a range of topics including affordable housing, NAHRO programs, cultural competence and community development.
- The International Urban Development Association (INTA) invited IRGE committee members Betsy Morris and Liz Glenn to give presentations on developing and financing affordable housing at the Sollar 36th Anniversary Conference in Lyon, France. Sollar is a social housing association that operates over 5000 units of affordable housing in the Rhone-Alpes region of France. Sollar is part of the French Housing Group, which collectively manages nearly 82,000 housing units throughout France.
From September 13-24, 2014, IRGE committee Chair Liz Glenn participated in an INTA sponsored eight-day technical panel in Pont de Claix, France comprised of designers, planners and academics from Belgium, Spain, Portugal, France, Canada, Estonia, Denmark, and Ireland. The technical panel’s mission was to re-imagine the town of Pont de Claix, a small town of about 11,500 people located in the southeast of France in the Grenoble Metropolitan Area. Home to France’s largest chemical manufacturing platform, the panel’s charge was to develop a plan of social cohesion, economic development, recreational amenities, transportation and place making.

The 2014 National Conference and Exhibition in Baltimore had a strong international presence starting with the Opening Plenary Session, which featured keynote speaker Ndaba Mandela, grandson of the South African patriarch, Nelson Mandela. John Hopkins, president and CEO of the Southern African Housing Foundation was a featured speaker as well. IRGE Chair Liz Glenn presented the Lange Award to Robert Kempink, chief executive of Fonds Leren en Ontwikkelen Wooncorporaties in The Netherlands. There were several international delegates representing five countries at the conference. Maryland Secretary of State John McDonald presented citations to representatives from the Canadian Housing Renewal Association, the Southern African Housing Foundation, and the International Urban Development Association at the Board of Governors meeting.
IRGE’s Presence at NAHRO Conferences
Lastly, IRGE has made a strident effort to strategically incorporate international sessions at the NAHRO Conferences with a special emphasis on the National Conference. During this term, there has been a concerted effort to weave international best practices into the sessions, plenaries, brown bag lunches, and breakfast meetings. The result has been increased attendance at international events, increased awareness of IRGE’s work by non-committee members of NAHRO, and a more focused approach that maximizes the volunteer time of our committee members.

IRGE’s presence at the 2014 National Conference and Exhibition’s Opening Plenary, was woven throughout the conference. There were three sessions that included international panelists and focused on international housing and community development issues. The sessions were: “NAHRO and the UN-Habitat World Forum,” “Mixed Income Housing, Based on French and Dutch Examples: Social and Economic Benefits for Society,” and “Empowering Social Housing Residents to Improve their Living Situations.” Examples of international best practices explored included the French Régie Autonome des Transports Parisiens (RATP - Regional Rapid Transit System based in Paris France) approach to transit oriented development using real estate owned by RATP to build mixed use developments with affordable and workforce housing in Paris and an examination of tenant incentive programs offered in social housing in The Netherlands.

Plans for the 2015 National Conference include key international sessions, a topical Brown Bag Lunch, an International Dinner and an International Breakfast. Sessions that have been approved for the conference are: NAHRO’s Partnership with South Africa at the National Conference, Social Housing Policy in the Center of Paris, and Policy Suggestions for the Future of Public Housing based on Canada, UK and the Netherlands. This conference will be the successful culmination of the 2013-15 term and will position IRGE and its strategic vision for the next several years.

International Dinners
IRGE held its first corporate-sponsored international dinner at the 2014 National Conference and Exhibition in Baltimore. Sponsored by the international rating house Standard and Poor’s, NAHRO’s leadership hosted 27 international guests from France, Canada, The Netherlands, India, and South Africa at one of Baltimore’s well-known seafood restaurant McCormick and Schmick’s, located in Baltimore’s Inner Harbor.

Getting Regions Involved
MARC-NAHRO hosted receptions and community development tours for our international guests from South Africa and arranged for the representatives of INTA to meet with the Baltimore Metropolitan Council, which is the regional transportation planning organization for the Baltimore metropolitan area. They Director of the RATP was able to meet State and local transportation planners to discuss transit oriented development best practices in Maryland.
**Brown Bag Luncheons**

NAHRO sponsored a kick-off Brown Bag Lunch on Habitat III at the 2015 Washington Conference. State Department representative Massoud Ansari and HUD Staff Robert Peterson provided remarks and updated the several NAHRO members on the U.S. efforts on Habitat III. Further, President Preston Prince, IRGE Chair Liz Glenn, and NAHRO Fellow (and past chair of the international committee) Mary Paumen participated in a panel discussion on NAHRO’s role in the Habitat III preparatory process at the MARC_NAHRO 2015 annual conference in Ocean City.

IRGE sponsored a Brown Bag Lunch on Habitat III at the 2015 Summer Conference in Austin, Texas to update and engage NAHRO members on NAHRO’s role in the Habitat III preparatory process. Hosted by Chair Liz Glenn, Past President Betsey Martens (and past World Urban Forum participant) and CEO Saul Ramirez gave their perspectives on the preparatory process and how the World Urban Forums serve as a supporting platform for UN Habitat policy recommendations. Plans for an International Breakfast focused on Habitat III are underway to be held at the 2015 National Conference in Los Angeles.

**International Partnerships and MOUs**

IRGE continued the practice of establishing international partnerships in housing and community development. In 2013, IRGE member Kerron Barnes and IRGE Chair Liz Glenn began dialogue with Kelly Badewitz of the Australasian Housing Institute (AHI). After several months of exchanging information, the IRGE Partnerships Subcommittee prepared a resolution for the Board of Governors to approve entering into a formal MOU with the AHI. The Chairman of AHI’s Board of Directors attended the 2015 Summer Conference in Austin and made plans to attend the 2015 National Conference in Los Angeles.

**The John D. Lange Award**

The 2007 Lange Award winner, Lawrence Ramashamole, who is the President of the National Association of Social Housing Organizations (NASHO) has expressed an interest to partner with NAHRO in order to help establish a professional development association similar to NAHRO in South Africa. Mr. Ramashamole is also the Executive Director of the East New London Housing Association and has been in conversation with representatives of MARC NAHRO to establish a professional exchange with some of the Maryland PHAs. The professional exchange will be similar to the successful professional exchange that Vancouver and Seattle Washington had with NASHO member the Steve Tshweet Housing Association of South Africa that is led by Mr. Thomas Ntuli.
IRGE Committee Members’ Accolades

IRGE Committee member Josh Crites was awarded the 2014-2015 German Chancellor fellowship of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation and has spent the last year in Germany researching best practices in German Social Housing. His fellowship included two months of language training, a month of orientation in Berlin, and the remaining 11 months of his fellowship in the city of Hannover. In July of 2015, Crites, along with other German Chancellor Fellows, met with German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

In recognition of her work on housing policy, IRGE Committee member and NAHRO Past President Betsey Martens was invited to be a Resident at the Rockefeller Foundation’s Bellagio Center in Italy. The Bellagio Center, through conferences and residency programs supports the work of scholars, policymakers, and practitioners who share in the Rockefeller Foundation’s pioneering mission to “promote the well-being of humanity”. Betsey’s focus of her Residency at the Bellagio Center was an international perspective on public housing policy and the potential for housing to close the achievement gap.

Under the leadership of Past President Betsey Martens, and using the basis of the work done at the Bellagio Center, the Research Committee prepared a White Paper on the impact of restructuring and converting our public housing program from a traditionally publicly funded, owned and managed program to a more privatized system, with special focus on the impact of regionalization. The paper which was introduced at the 2015 Summer Conference will be the basis of future activities and will impact the deliverables from the 2015 Netherlands/Germany Study Tour.

NAHRO and IRGE to Participate in Habitat III Conference

In December 2014, HUD Secretary Julian Castro, kicked off the Inaugural Meeting of the U.S. National Planning Committee for Habitat III. Habitat III is the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements held every 20 years. The next conference will be held in 2016. The last conference was in 1996 and members of NAHRO’s IRGE Committee played an active role in the official U.S. Delegation that went to Istanbul to participate in Habitat II.

NAHRO CEO Saul Ramirez and IRGE Chair Liz Glenn represent NAHRO on the newly formed national committee and both participate in two of the three subcommittees that will be carrying out the work. The two subcommittees are the Education and Outreach Subcommittee and the Connecting to the Global Conversation Subcommittee. These committees are responsible for raising public awareness and engage local communities on housing, planning, and community development issues in the United States and how they connect to global conversations and to uplift best practices and innovations emerging from rural, tribal, suburban, and urban communities across the U.S.

IRGE will be the lead NAHRO entity in the development of a national platform for NAHRO’s members. A subcommittee was formed, led by IRGE Chair Liz Glenn that will convene during this
term and the next in order to prepare for the Habitat III Conference, which will be held in Quito, Ecuador in October 2016. In June of 2015, NAHRO applied to co-lead the Habitat III Housing Policy Unit. The preparatory process for Habitat III is designed to mobilize expertise on sustainable urban development to explore state of the art research and analysis, identify best practices and lessons learned and develop policy recommendations on specific issues regarding sustainable urban development. The main tasks of the Policy Units are to identify challenges, priorities, and to develop specific action-oriented recommendations for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. While NAHRO was not selected as a co-leading organization, in September 2015, IRGE Vice President Liz Glenn was selected by UN Habitat to serve as a Technical Expert on Policy Unit 9. Policy Unit 9 is one of 10 Habitat III Policy Units that will develop and submit recommendations and best practices to the Habitat III preparatory process.

As part of its commitment to engage NAHRO’s members in the Habitat III civil society engagement process, NAHRO encouraged the membership to participate in the Urban Dialogues Campaign, an e-discussion that is focused on engaging people in discussions regarding Social Cohesion and Equity, Urban Frameworks, Spatial Development, Urban Economy, Urban Ecology and Environment, and Urban Housing and Basic Services. Members had until July 31, 2015 to participate in the online dialogues to share their policy perspectives and best practice ideas with the national and international community.