

## Working Party: Is Subud a Cult?

World Congress Minutes 2001 Appendix 11

Recognizing that the protection of the reputation of Subud is the responsibility of the WSA international and national bodies, Recognizing that the perception of Subud as a cult may depends on the understanding and actions of each member, and of an awareness of the public,

This Working Group recommends that:

1 WSA distributes the attached document 'Do we in Subud behave like a cult or sect?' to all the groups in the association as a basis for reflection and workshops.

2 WSA sets up a follow-up strategy to gather and compile feedback from each country concerning the above (1) recommendation;

3 WSA asks each national committee to describe briefly how Subud is perceived in their country and the practical consequences for the members and the Subud organization's activities

4 WSA uses this information to develop a deeper understanding of the situation within and outside Subud; and a communication strategy and actions necessary to protect the image, the reputation and the growth of Subud.

### Working Part report

Do we in Subud behave like a cult or sect?

Two workshops were held with 30 to 40 persons from a dozen countries from Asia, Africa, Americas and Europe on the 9 and 10 July, facilitated and reported by Damiri Renard, (damiri AT compuserve.com)

In many countries, Subud is considered a sect or a cult. In many countries, we are faced with opposition from state committees or official religions. We can survey these situations and draw some conclusions. We cannot directly change other people's attitudes. We can change ours. Hence the question: Do we in Subud behave like a cult or sect? We are not a cult but we are not exempt from behaving like one.

I will just give you a few examples collected during the workshops.

The gap between our organization and the members could make us look like a hierarchical cult, controlled by a bunch of privileged decision-makers. The helpers can be seen to behave like a synod.

People who need a stronger reference system to lead their life or to influence others cannot find it in Subud, but they turn Bapak's advice into rules. They say 'this is Subud, Subud should be like this'. They impose these rules on others. This makes them feel righteous, useful, important and safe.

When we find a good solution we naturally tend to think that it could be usefully applied elsewhere. We have here a way of creating unwritten rules, behaviour patterns and habits. We generate rigidity, apathy and prevent free live guidance.

Helpers should not release their kejiwaan responsibilities into rules or verbal photocopies of Bapak's talks.

Subud is an inward looking club. Are we not supposed to look from inside outward or is it too self-evident a question?

We do not share our latihan experience outside our spiritual village. We assume that they will not understand. We are unable to speak a recognizable spiritual language. We speak subudese or bapakese. We behave as if our spirituality was better than any other. We speak about the 'outer world'. We understand the holy books better than others. Such arrogance led to the official banning of Subud in Algeria.

We are so self-congratulatory. Our artists deserve to be the best. We have the best potential artists.

The worm is in the fruit. We have what it takes to make Subud a success. We have what it takes to make Subud a failure: just carry on making rules and frame the latihan in a box.

In conclusion, because of our failings to apply the latihan in our daily life, we expose ourselves to criticisms. We open the door to all sorts of accusations.

We must take full responsibility for our image and reputation. People give us useful feedback. In many countries, we are told that we are getting it wrong. Let us heed their advice. In reality, the latihan is the most powerful source of freedom and spontaneity. In what way are we preventing change?

Subud must be seen as a place of care and support for individual needs, where every human being is considered unique and respected as he or she is, without any judgment - a place where no one has more knowledge than any other.

We must bring the freedom and spontaneity of the latihan closer to Subud and to everybody else.

We propose that WSA distributes the above in the world association and develops a communication strategy outside Subud based on the following suggestion:

Subud is a spiritual culture, which fosters the spontaneous awareness of individual inner needs and the identification of the qualities to fulfil them in a safe and supportive environment.