

## **The International Federation of Settlements & Neighborhood Centers**

**From:** Irma Rodriguez

**Subject:** Peace Corps House

**Date:** January 4, 2016, 9:37 AM

**To:** Tom Hebert

Hi Tom,

It was a pleasure speaking with you. Thank you for sharing the draft proposal for Peace Corps House. It comes at an interesting time when new and heightened interest in the effectiveness of the century old settlement house model has propelled discussion of the development of new settlement houses in many varied localities.

As you know, I am the director of the International Federation of Settlements and Neighborhood Centers ([www.ifsnetwork.org](http://www.ifsnetwork.org)) a 90 year-old organization established to bring organizations developed in the settlement house tradition across the world together to share information and best practice in order to strengthen their local work. Member groups of IFS include organizations from Canada, European federations in the UK, France, Sweden, Finland, Hungary among others and from as far as Israel, India, Australia, Venezuela, Honduras and of interest to you, since your Peace Corps service was in Nigeria, Umuebu Neighborhood House is there. IFS also has NGO status and representatives at the UN.

IFS is currently hosted by University Settlement, a 125 year old settlement in Manhattan's lower east side. Our next biannual conference is in the planning stages and will be held September 28th - October 1st, 2016 in Berlin, Germany. The theme is On the Move: At Home in the World - Migrants and Refugees. Do think about attending. Information will be on our website shortly. At that time the offices of IFS most likely will move to Europe as part of a leadership transition.

I would encourage reaching out to the two US organizations we spoke about for additional support. The Alliance for Strong Families and Communities ([www.alliance1.org](http://www.alliance1.org)) is now the federation of settlement houses in the US. The Alliance is the product of a merger of the Alliance for Children and Families and United Neighborhoods Centers of America. Within the Alliance is the Center for Engagement & Neighborhood Building. The Center is a kind of "settlement house think tank," particularly interested in citizen engagement and community building. As I mentioned during our call I think Susan Dryfus, CEO of the Alliance, and David McKinney, Director of the Center, would be both interested in and supportive of the Peace Corps House proposal.

Here in NYC there is United Neighborhood Houses ([www.unhny.org](http://www.unhny.org)), the association of the 38 settlement houses in NYC, including the historic settlements of the Lower East Side and expanding to organizations across the five boroughs of NYC. Including my former organization Queens Community House ([www.qchnyc.org](http://www.qchnyc.org)) where I served as executive director. UNH member groups serve over half a million New Yorkers. Susan Stamler is the Executive Director of UNH.

I have to say I found the details of the Concept Paper incredibly in line with the current work of IFS member groups. Here in the US our members provide a wide variety of social services and programs for community residents of all ages in addition to an overarching focus on leadership development, community building and social justice. More recently groups that were born in the CDC movement have become settlements merging their expertise in housing and economic development with social services. All create space for public discussion of community issues - our members in Europe even have cafes!

I wish you well with this project. I hope that it goes forward in some way. Do feel free to share this letter of support and if I can be helpful feel free to call on me.

Best regards,

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Postscript, January 17, 2016, 9:12 AM:

Well Tom, a lovely job description. It does give prospective executive directors a real feel for the job tasks as well a values, skills needed. If I wasn't winding down my career I'd apply in a New York minute!

Irma