

Minutes Annual General Meeting

Association Montessori Internationale

Saturday 10 April 2021





**Minutes Annual General Meeting
Association Montessori Internationale
Saturday 10 April 2021**
Hosted on the Forumm online platform

Words of Welcome

AMI's President, Philip O'Brien, opened the meeting at 14:00 hrs (Amsterdam time) and thanked everyone for joining this online event which, given the situation around COVID, was the only option open for organising our annual meetings. The President was delighted to note that 400 participants, from 60 countries, had registered, which made it a truly global meeting.

Three new affiliates and their representatives were welcomed, having recently signed their affiliation agreements:

- Anam Hassam, Association Maria Montessori de Côte d'Ivoire
- Laura Ferrara, Montessori Italia
- Sueyan McPherson and Marwa al Quibaisi, United Arab Emirates Montessori Association

AMI's board members were briefly introduced via a special slide showing their portraits. A word of condolence was sent to board member Henk Franken on the recent death of his wife, Helen.

Apologies for Absence

Henk Franken, Jenny Höglund, Karmini Karpur, Prabha Karthik, Ruby Lau, Marikay McCabe, Mary Caroline Parker, Rukmini Ramachandran, Hemalatha Rangarajan, Maria Roth, Aicha Sajid, Ramiya Sradhar.

Minutes of the 2020 Annual General Meeting

These minutes were adopted as a correct record on the proposal of Louise Livingston, seconded by Victoria Barrès.

Matters arising from the Minutes of the 2020 Annual General Meeting

No questions had been received until the start of the meeting; the president invited participants to send any pertinent questions via the chat or email.

AMI Financial Report 2020

Ian Stockdale, AMI's treasurer, highlighted some key developments and figures, stating that if members were interested to see the full report, they could request a copy from AMI's secretariat. The AGM papers included expenditures, revenue, and balance sheet.

Mr Stockdale informed the meeting that the auditors had given an unqualified report on AMI's accounts.

The surplus for the year 2020 was Euro 220,630 which was ahead of budget and 184,000 higher than the previous year. The Board would be designating Euro 160,000 of this surplus to a new Archival Repository Project, which will host the AMI and NAMTA publications, archives, and collections. Euro 55,000 will be added to AMI's unrestricted reserves.

While AMI had noted considerable reductions in travel and meetings costs during 2020, income was below budget due to the AGM moving online, and the deferring of various important events such as the Educateurs sans Frontières Assembly and Training of Trainers seminars, and the slowing down of some designated projects.

The organisation's main source of income remains the income from course fees. The treasurer observed that AMI had seen a steady growth of course income since 2014, which was reflected in the overall growth of AMI courses worldwide, and the range of courses.

The AMI Board is committed to having a reserve that can cover expenses and obligations for a period of six months in case of seriously adverse situations.

The following members proposed and seconded a proposal to approve the 2020 Financial Report: Judi Orion, Jethryn Hall, Guadalupe Borbolla and Eder Cuevas.

Board Elections

Philip O'Brien would complete his second term as President in 2022. For this reason, AMI was about to initiate an active search for a new president; a profile for this position was to be circulated via AMI channels shortly after this AGM. Mr O'Brien indicated he would be available to speak to people about what he considered most rewarding work in a dynamic and growing organisation. He invited the participants to share the profile further afield and alert the AMI Board to possible "matches"; he was hopeful that we could attract a good range of candidates.

Lynne Lawrence thanked Mr O'Brien for his excellent service to AMI and appreciated the privilege of having worked with him.

Annual Report: Some 2020 highlights and 2021 projections — Updates by AMI's Executive Director

Lynne Lawrence presented the meeting with some of the highlights of the past year and expressed her delight that the growth and spread of Montessori had continued even during the pandemic. She expressed thanks to experts and volunteers in the community who help AMI preserve and continue to innovate and expand impact in all parts of the globe and amplify our influence. While AMI staff mostly are based in Amsterdam, we hold dear the partnerships around the world with individuals and organisations who share our vision. We especially appreciated the community during this year facing multiple challenges; they proved flexible and showed solidarity, standing up together for human rights to live in a more just and more equitable world. AMI had connected more regularly with friends and stakeholders to share challenges and successes.

Work of Committees and Subcommittees

Lynne Lawrence thanked the various committees that greatly support AMI's work and mission. She thanked Carol Hicks, outgoing member of the AMI Scientific Pedagogy Group (SPG) for eight years of service to this group's work, and welcomed Anahita Gandhi (India) and Nia Seale (USA) as new members. Ms Lawrence also thanked Ginni Sackett for heading the SPG for the past three years.

AMI had continued organising bi-monthly online meetings with the training community, which were beneficial to help progress discussions around innovative course delivery, and course options, addressing the needs of training staff and students. AMI has a number of Memorandums of Understanding with several universities, outlining collaborations, such as with the Hartford Center of Montessori Studies and the University of Virginia in the US through the connections we have with Angeline Lillard. The University of VIC Barcelona, Spain, was about to appoint a chair of Montessori Studies. Other universities seeking collaboration also connected to AMI through the SPG.

The Scientific Pedagogy Group was ultimately responsible for several newly formed subcommittees that focus on specific levels of expertise, such as the *Dementia and Ageing Committee*. One of this committee's most urgent objectives was to grow the number of trainers for this level, and spread the knowledge more widely. AMI greatly values the importance of being of service to elderly populations, and Ms Lawrence stressed that elderhood deserves respect of their human rights. In this regard AMI had recently begun a project with the T.H. Chan School of Public Health (Harvard University) and the Culinary Institute of America, entitled "Minding our Future, Healthy Ageing, Food and Lifestyle". AMI was also working with the Y2 Foundation and the Taipei Medical University of Nursing who were interested to learn of the Montessori approach and embed the knowledge into their research in this area.

Ms Lawrence then spotlighted the *12-18 Adolescent Subcommittee*, which is working towards increasing the 12-18 trainer workforce, and delivering three new offerings: workshops, orientations and diploma courses. Thanks were given to the executive study team which represented pedagogues and practitioners boasting many years of experience in this field. Their collaborative effort was instrumental in being able to launch this level of training. In parallel AMI signed an MoU with the Amsterdam Montessori Secondary Schools (the Netherlands) and work is ongoing around the development of a competencies model.

A long-standing committee of AMI is the *Training Group*. Currently they support and encourage 157 trainees around the world via the offerings of seminars, mentoring, feedback on papers and defining and redefining the processes of the Training of Trainers programme; our trainers are globally acknowledged for the depth of their knowledge and commitment to the Montessori vision.

Ms Lawrence thanked the group for their hard work. Ms Orion, who chairs the group, had recently retired from active training and was now able to work full time for AMI. Ms Lawrence gave a word of thanks to outgoing member Pamela Nunn for her service and welcomed Tessie Schjetnan (Mexico) and Ann Velasco (USA) to the committee. She added that candidate members of this group have a year's time to familiarise themselves with the work before formal appointment.

The AMI *Global Research Group* is chaired by Tricia Miller; the group had explored channels gathering resources helpful to Montessori research; collaboration with the University of VIC, Barcelona and other universities will offer exciting opportunities.

Legacy

In Remembrance

Ms Lawrence acknowledged the great work of Montessorians who had passed in the past year: Grazia Honegger Fresco, Jayne Arellano, Estela Palmieri, Sara Concas Spoleti and staunch supporter Lew Haines.

150th Anniversary of Maria Montessori's birth (1870-2020)

Various events and occasions to celebrate Maria Montessori's 150th birthday would continue until 31 August 2021. On the "big date" of 31 August 2020 AMI's social media launched a digital marathon that generated tremendous engagement. A historical film clip was watched by 86,700 people; our special birthday video reached more than 170,000 people, with the AMI birthday message reaching close to 100,000.

Ms Lawrence highlighted some of the events and occasions that were organised worldwide to celebrate Maria Montessori's birthday, in spite of the restrictions imposed by COVID regulations. For instance, the song "My Hand in Your Hand" was sung by many children across the world.

Tulip

The Montessori Tulip, named for Maria Montessori in 2020, will continue to be available. AMI published an exquisite companion book on the Tulip offering activities and stories for all ages.

Maria Montessori Study, Amsterdam

The study of Maria Montessori in the AMI building at 161 Koninginneweg had seen repairs of furniture and pictures, in a general effort to keep this a welcoming and attractive place. The Montessori-Pierson Publishing Company made additional funding available for this commitment. Ms Lawrence thanked Alexander Henry for his great support over the past years in promoting Maria Montessori's legacy in various significant ways.

Communications and Social Media

The new social media strategies successfully amplified the message of the worldwide Montessori community. In collaboration with BrightVibes three videos were made that met with much interest, each reaching over one million viewers. They focused on the life and work of Maria Montessori; dementia and elderhood; and how Montessori education prepares children for a life of caring.

BBC StoryWorks also created two short videos, together with our training centre of St. Paul Minnesota, which were used to attract students to our US training courses, showing the great appeal of Montessori education. Ms Lawrence thanked donors and friends who had helped make these two videos a reality.

Over the past eighteen months AMI had seen exponential growth of its online community, with vastly increased numbers of followers on LinkedIn, Facebook and Instagram.

Via its portal *AMI Digital*, AMI had made available for download free classified cards, available in twenty languages, as well as other paper materials for use in homes and schools. This service proved to be very welcome, especially during the pandemic. AMI considered it important to have these cards available in mother tongues, and was grateful to the many volunteers who had added "new" languages over the year. Ms Lawrence invited the participants to help augment the number of languages that can be offered.

The *Aid to Life* website, extremely useful to parents in the early days of parenthood, was able to offer additional languages, which now totalled thirteen.

Publications

AMI published its traditional Treasure Article, sharing insightful and pertinent material from the Maria Montessori Archives. The 320-page 2020 AMI Journal was entitled "Passages to Montessori Adulthood", which publication was a valuable resource on thinking across the development planes, offering both history and context, and contemporary contributions.

The *Montessori-Pierson Publishing Company* brought out two new publications: *Maria Montessori Writes to Her Grandchildren* (Letters from India) and the *Montessori Approach to Music*.

Montessori-Pierson Publishing Company continues to connect with multiple foreign publishers in their effort to support the availability of primary Montessori texts in many mother tongues.

Repository

As part of the Montessori legacy, AMI would launch a momentous project: an open repository, and knowledge hub where people can have a look at the framework of thinking of Maria Montessori. While seeking additional funding for this project, the Board had set aside an initial Euro 160,000. The repository will offer perspectives of history, and many contemporary writings. It will offer open access to collections belonging to AMI, NAMTA and others across the world. Ms Lawrence stressed the importance of investigating and understanding the nuanced application of ideas beyond the Montessori community. In the first instance, the infrastructure and technical build

were to be developed; with archives, publications and digital artifacts to be added in the last phase. Ms Lawrence was grateful to Mary Boehnlein and David Kahn for beginning to map the knowledge structure.

Capacity

Courses: Ms Lawrence reported that AMI had seventy-five Training Centres in thirty-three countries; the reach of AMI's courses was much wider as many of the centres offered satellite trainings, and access to shorter courses had grown tremendously due to digital delivery.

Trainers: AMI currently works with 161 trainers, which number had also grown with thirteen trainers and five auxiliary trainers including those for the newly introduced 12-18 level.

Course Formats: The Montessori Core Principles Course had completed its pilot trajectory and had served 224 teachers and trainers. We had three offerings: one for AMI Trainers and two for the general public, of which 32% was working within the US Public School Sector. The Core Principles Course had been developed to enable people to understand the basic overview of Montessori ideas across the different age levels, from early childhood to elderhood.

With the **Blended 3-6 Format** pilot being completed, AMI would be delivering courses in the future both in person and in a blended format, which was expected to help increase accessibility. Two teams have been set up to develop a similar format for the 0-3 and 6-12 age levels.

The **Montessori Dementia and Ageing (MDA)** Programme had delivered 20 courses. AMI was pleased to have five MDA trainers, and had welcomed 599 participants. There had been 46 certified graduates, which number was down over expectations due to the "COVID closures" of residential homes, which meant students had not been able to complete the practical aspects of the course.

AMI had worked with seven trainers who deliver the **Administrators Courses**, which had awarded 147 certificates in the year past.

Outreach

Ms Lawrence reported on the strength of AMI's commitment to providing quality Montessori education to at risk populations. **Corner of Hope, Kenya**, had completed its first decade, which milestone was also celebrated with the creation of a special website, including timelines and interviews to record this special legacy. Some slides were shown to document the progress that had been made over the years. Closure of the school due to COVID had enabled Corner of Hope to renew the roofs and make other improvements. What was originally a camp for internally displaced persons has now grown into a village. Over these ten years Corner of Hope had trained 80 teachers at the primary level, and 20 at the elementary level.

The Corner of Hope work in New Canaan and Kisima also proved inspirational to the peoples of the **Samburu**; together with the Sarara Foundation AMI had helped establish three sites for the pastoralists of the Samburu. Around two hundred children are served daily in this area. Eight teachers from the local community had completed or were undergoing training, with talks having commenced to explore training at the elementary level.

AMI was spearheading a new initiative in **East Pokot**, a complex region in Northern Kenya, with little infrastructure, also in the field of education. Thanks to the donations of the Montessori Growth Fund and many individual donations the first three people from that community could be funded to go through a training programme.

Inspired by these initiatives, *Mother Earth Uganda* — led by Marcellina Oti — had sent teachers to Kenya to be Montessori trained equipping them to build a Montessori community upon their return to Gulu in northern Uganda. It was hoped this could be a step towards recovery in what had long been a war-torn region where the need for quality education is high.

In collaboration with the Arthur Waser Foundation, who provided full funding for fifty students, AMI had been able to deliver an international 3-6 course in *Tanzania*. Two new fully funded international courses were being planned, a second 3-6 course and an additional 6-12 course.

To see how Montessori in *Ethiopia* could be strengthened, new opportunities were to be explored with the support of the Arthur Waser Foundation. It was hoped AMI could also work along with an organisation in Norway to further this work.

AMI's partner the *Peter Hesse Foundation* had continued their work during the pandemic, and set up schools in Senegal. They also remained highly committed to their work in Haiti under very difficult circumstances.

Community Rooted Education (CoRE) had evolved from the work of the Educateurs sans Frontières Assembly in Hyderabad, India. Driven by Helen Mohan Elias and Uma Ramani, CoRE had benefited the children and Angawadis (rural childcare centres) where it had taken root.

The first CoRe initiative outside of Hyderabad was about to be launched in *South Africa* by the Indaba Institute, which would run a pilot programme in collaboration with the local government, and partners. The training will take place in the suburb of Kayamandi, Stellenbosch. The starting points are the dreams, wishes and needs of the community. While AMI curates the course, it is not a full diploma course, but at this stage intended to sow seeds and offer pathways into Montessori knowledge and practice. Lynne Lawrence invited the participants to connect to Educateurs sans Frontières for more background if they were interested to implement a CoRe initiative in areas that need this kind of support.

AMI Talks AMI had brought the physical “Maria Montessori House Talks” to an online environment, sharing insightful talks: Erica Moretti had spoken on Maria Montessori's foundations and early influences for peace; Silvia Dubovoy and Ama van Dantzig had spoken on human right, children's rights, and women's rights on International Women's Day.

Voices of EsF AMI's EsF team was going to launch a series of talks on the theme of “Child, Community, Cosmos – From Independence to Interdependence” over the next twelve months; invited speakers from around the world would speak on the social mission of Montessori, to help inspire further conversations among participants and their focus groups.

UN Partnerships AMI is represented at UNESCO and the UN and Ms Lawrence thanked Victoria Barrès, Evelyn Greenberg and Sharon Lickerman for engaging with those institutions. Through UNESCO we collaborated with seven other NGOs during COVID to produce an important report on “Solidarity in response to the pandemic” which included news on how AMI endeavoured to support communities in remote and rural regions.

AMI participated in the Geneva Peace Week and there were other ongoing collaborations that supported the UN Sustainable Development Goals and UNESCO.

Montessori Sports was growing, but because of COVID also had to move online. In the year past they reached 400 students in 51 countries. Together with Montessori Sports, AMI was building a fund to enable children in underserved communities gain access to Montessori principles through Sports.

AMI's *Montessori Architecture* Project was about to be completed. The online website would launch shortly and offer free resources to anyone looking at the twenty-eight Montessori "patterns" that had been identified. The website will also offer suggestions on how some of these patterns might be achieved, whether this be through simple indigenous materials or more complex approaches. A companion book will be published at a later date. Ms Lawrence showed a few slides of two schools currently being built in Tanzania (Arusha region, and the Maasai and Meru territory) designed by national architects, following those twenty-eight patterns.

AMI's global network of affiliates had grown from 42 to 45. Ms Lawrence welcomed the three new affiliated societies and looked forward to being able to expand the Montessori work in those countries:

- Anam Hassam, Association Maria Montessori de Côte d'Ivoire
- Laura Ferrara, Montessori Italia
- Sueyan McPherson and Marwa al Quibaisi, United Arab Emirates Montessori Association

The 45 affiliated societies worked hard during COVID in a bid to continue serving their communities, realising great impact.

Ms Lawrence thanked Alan Preece in the *USA* for assuming ad interim the responsibilities of the Executive Director of AMI/USA, bridging the gap and welcomed the appointment of their new Executive Director, Dr Ayize Sabatar. Ms Lawrence also welcomed Sarah Cummins, the new chair of the *Montessori Society (UK)* and Francesca Kipsoi, who would be taking over from Hillary Korir to lead *Montessori for Kenya*, with Hilary becoming the chair of Montessori for Kenya. Anne Laws stepped down from her position at *Montessori Canada*, and was replaced by Brianne Kelsey. Delphine Martinie had been appointed as the new president of *Association Montessori de France*, filling the shoes of Anouche Hovnanian who previously held the position. The German umbrella organisation had changed its name to *Montessori Bundesverband Deutschland e.V.*, taking effect in April. *Portugal* had a new board and new strategic plan and Sofia Ramires has joined them as the outreach coordinator.

Via a slide show Ms Lawrence quickly highlighted some of the work done by the affiliated societies, ranging from quality assurance programmes to governments accepting Montessori programmes; she congratulated the societies on their frequent and impactful online presence, adding thanks for their untiring work to spread the Montessori message.

A formal Framework of Cooperation had been signed with the *Office of the Basic Education Commission Thailand (Education Ministry)* at an online ceremony on 7 April 2021, in the presence of Mr Amporn Pinasa, Secretary General of OBEC, Dr Benjalug Namfa, Senior Specialist, OBEC, and Dr Kanchulee Punyain Educator, OBEC and President of the Montessori Association Thailand, Dr Kannekar Butt. AMI wished to express its gratitude to the Thai government for their commitment to ensuring that children in their schools experience a Montessori education. Ms Lawrence stressed that the Thai government are leading in the field of public Montessori education, which AMI greatly values, additionally promoting the development of Montessori in the Asean region.

In that light it was fitting that the next International Montessori Congress would be hosted in Bangkok, Thailand, in 2022, themed "Education for a New World".

A final word of thanks was given to AMI's materials sponsors Nienhuis and AGAWorld, as well as the Montessori-Pierson Publishing Company and the Montessori Global Growth Fund. AMI also acknowledged the contributions from Friends and Foundations, some of whom wish to remain anonymous.

Adoption Report

The President asked the meeting to formally adopt AMI's Report of Activities over 2020, which proposal was carried by Guadalupe Borbolla and seconded by Diana Bradley.

Mr O'Brien thanked AMI Executive Director Lynne Lawrence for giving the participants a "grand tour of the world" and thanked the AMI support staff for the organisation of the meeting.

Any Other Business

No questions had been sent in.

Date and Time of Next Annual General Meeting

The weekend of 8-10 April, 2022.