



NFU General Assembly 2015

Time: 12th of November 2015, 11.00 – 13.00

Venue: Fafo

Agenda (item 1)

1. Constitute meeting and approve agenda

- Election of General Assembly Chair and two reporters
- Approval of agenda

2. NFU Annual Report 2015

3. Annual plan and budget for 2016

4. Elections

- NFU board and auditor, presentation by the Nomination Committee

5. Incoming business

Item 2. NFU Annual report 2015

(Covering the period December 1st 2014 to November 1st 2015)

1. General

The current year covers the period December 1st 2015 – November 1st, 2015. It should be noted that the General Assembly is as a general rule conducted in connection with the Annual Conference. For practical reasons we have adopted flexible business years for reporting and accounts. Since this year's conference was the Nordic Conference hosted by School of Global Studies in Gothenburg November 5th and 6th and many of the board members did not attend the conference, the General Assembly is held after the conference, at FAFO, November 12th.

2. The NFU Board members 2014-2015

The NFU General Assembly 2014 was held in Oslo at FAFO in December. Following the elections at this meeting, the composition of the NFU Board has been as follows:

Board members

Hanne Haaland, Department of Global Development and Planning, University of Agder (Chair)

Håvard Haarstad, Department of Geography, University of Bergen

Ingunn Bjørkhaug, Fafo, Oslo

Darley Kjosavik, Noragric, Oslo

Cecilie Hirsch, SUM, University of Oslo

Trond Waage, University of Tromsø

Thomas Sætre Jacobsen, NTNU, Trondheim

Ingvild Skage Agedal, University of Bergen

Erlend Eidsvik, Bergen University College

Randi Solhjell, NUPI

Cecilie Hirsh is currently on maternity leave and Arve Hansen is currently representing SUM in the board.

Nomination Committee

Peter Andersen, UiB

Knut Gunnar Nustad, NUPI/UiO, Oslo

Trond Vedeld, NIBR

EADI representative

Darley Kjosavik (Noragric, NMBU)

Auditor

Hans Jørgen Oppi-Christiansen, University of Tromsø (UiT)

Coordinator

Andrea Fritsvold

3. Progress towards Annual Plan for 2015:

3.1 NFU Board meetings

The NFU Board has conducted five meetings since the last General Assembly (February 12th, March 26th, June 10th, August 24th, October 22nd). 4 – 6 board members have participated in the meetings. All meetings this year have been hosted on Skype. This has worked well sometimes, but also caused some difficulties due to varying quality of internet connection. Formal minutes have been written from all meetings by our coordinator. Once we have changed our web platform all the minutes from 2015 and 2014 will be uploaded to the website.

The board has distributed some of its work amongst members this year. An information group comprised of Ingunn Bjørkhaug, Ingvild Skage Agedal and Andrea Fritsvold was established. This group has paid particular attention to how the NFU communicate with its members through the web-pages, regular newsletters and via Facebook. A list of institutional contacts for NFU has been established as part of the work of this group. The list is available for editing for all board members and should be updated on a regular basis.

Much of the board's discussions and communication have also taken place via email. The board has co-produced several texts; one letter was sent to the minister of Foreign Affairs in August 2015, responding to the cuts in funds for development research. The same letter was rewritten into a newspaper chronicle on the budget cuts, published in Dagsavisen in August. In October, the board wrote a comment to the same newspaper, responding to a NORFUND comment to NFUs chronicle. The NFU chair, Hanne Haaland, was interviewed by Bistandsaktuelt in October 2015, concerning the NFUs perspective on the budget cuts. The number of meetings, the interaction through email and our visibility in the media is hence (more than) according to the plan for 2015.

3.2 NFU Membership

NFU had in November 2014 a total of 98 paying members and by October 31st 2015, NFU had 105 members. We continue to have an email list with 266 members. For the past 15 years the number of paying members has fluctuated between 110 and 180. For the period 2014-2015, the board has had a focus on recruitment of members through direct interaction with relevant educational institutions and research institutions, as well as through increased visibility on our website, via social media and participation in the public debate.

The main means to attract memberships to NFU has been to host a relevant and high quality conference that provides the main networking arena for Norwegian development researchers, along with subscription to Forum for Development Studies. Expectations in earlier years were that NFU would see a lower membership payment rate during the years when the conference is organized at the Nordic level. The experience the past three years has indicated the opposite – that paying membership has been higher during the years when the conference has been organized at the Nordic level. This year, with the Nordic conference being hosted by the School of Global Studies, University of Gothenburg, we did not see any

substantial increase in members. This may indicate that the geographical location of the conference is not the main explanatory factor for succeeding to recruit new members. Topic and timing of the conference may be other important explanatory factors for the variations. This year the call was also announced late, which may also explain a limited growth in new members attending the conference.

3.3 Increase the benefits to, and number and activity level of members

In 2015, the University of Gothenburg, School of Global Studies organised the annual conference on development research. This was done with the financial support of NRC, Danish and Finish funds as well as local Swedish funds. A Nordic organising committee contributed to the planning process. Erlend Eidsvik and Hanne Haaland represented NFU in the group. It was NFU's direct contact with the other Nordic partners and the School of Global Studies in particular which catalysed the conference.

Following up the direct meeting between NFU and NORAD taking place at last year's conference in Tromsø, NFU has contacted NORAD several times in 2015, suggesting topics for common seminars and interaction. Despite the enthusiasm from the Tromsø meeting in October 2014, the response in 2015 from NORAD has been limited. Internal reorganisation in NORAD and severe budgets cuts are explanatory factors. With the current proposed budget cuts, NFU will be organising a seminar on the 12th of November: Critical Development Research in Crisis. Both the NRC and NORAD will participate in the seminar, which is open to all. The idea is to inform our members about the potential consequences the budget cuts will have for development research. Politicians have been invited to participate in a panel discussion, but the political participation is low due to the revised budget discussions starting on the 13th of November. The seminar is important as part of increasing benefits to members and actively participating in the public debate.

As in previous years, we have offered Forum for Development Studies to paying members, and have strived to keep the members updated through the website and regular email announcements. The Master's thesis award was offered this year. The deadline was set to the 15th of August. 7 eligible theses were submitted. The evaluation committee consisted of Ingunn Bjørkhaug, Arve Hansen and Hanne Haaland. The winner, Mikael Bergius from Noragric, the Norwegian University of Life Sciences, was announced at the Nordic Development Conference, 5th of November. Once the new web pages are up, the award winner will also be announced here.

In earlier conferences, a specific event has been targeted at master students. This was not done in Gothenburg. Hopefully such an event can reappear on the program for the 2016 conference.

3.4. Procedures and strategy for strengthening the role of NFU in relevant public hearings

NFU was this year contacted by LAG (Latin America groups in Norway) about reacting to the budget cuts. LAG suggested that we met at the hearing in the committee of foreign affairs to comment on the budget cuts. However, we were too late to register. Yet, as outlined in point 3.1., NFU has been active in the public debate responding to the cuts.

3.5 Strengthen and consolidate Nordic and international networking

There is broad agreement that the Nordic conferences should be continued every two or three years. The 2015 conference was hosted by School of Global Studies at the University of Gothenburg, from November 5th to 6th. The overall title was “A changing Global Development Agenda” and about 170 people from the Nordic Countries, the UK, Germany, the Netherlands and from the Global South participated. 100 papers were presented, 5 roundtables were organised and 19 working groups took place.

The NFU is a member of EADI, the European Association of Development Research and Training Institutes. EADI representatives were present at the conference, and a dialogue has been established about the possibility of organising a joint NORDIC/EADI-conference in Norway in 2017. A meeting between Erlend Eidsvik, the Nordic Development Research institutions and EADI took place after the conference in Gothenburg, and it has been agreed to continue the work with such a joint conference. Darley Kjosavik is NFUs EADI representative and has achieved funds for her participation costs from the NRC.

3.6 Improve communication and the visibility of the NFU and development Research

NFU has in the period 2014-2015 used its website, Facebook and emails for updates. The information work has been done by our coordinator, in close cooperation with a small information group. Most of the updates concern NFU events, such as the annual conference, the call for master’s thesis award, relevant conferences and vacancies in relevant institutions in Norway and or in the Nordic countries. In 2015 11 newsletters were sent out, and 40 % of the newsletters are opened.

3.7 Consolidate the functioning of the NFU Board

The past three years the Board has hired an assistant/coordinator to help with administrative tasks, such as updating the accounts, sending out payment reminders, emails, etc. We have recruited a Master’s student for this, and offer a stipend in return. This arrangement has worked well. Andrea Fritsvold has been our coordinator for the past year. She is very proactive and has many good ideas of how to interact with the members. The coordinator job involves quite a lot of work in certain periods of the year. Andrea is currently trying to establish more of a structure for the coordinator’s work, in order to facilitate for a potential change of coordinator.

For the past two years the NFU has had a big board. The size of the board means that the association interacts with many different environments – and always has a critical number of people participating in board meetings. For this year, the work has been divided more clearly between different members, to ensure continuity and a well-functioning board. The size of the board has allowed some members to step down without a replacement. As is also stated in our regulations, it is pertinent that we continue to have a good combination of people representing the different research environments and institutions outside as well as inside of Oslo.

3.8 Accounts 2015

Membership income is slightly higher than last year, although we did not meet our ambitious goal of a membership base of 150.

Despite our Skype meetings some money has been spent on travel costs to cover board members participation in the annual meeting. The costs of Erlend Eidsvik participation in a planning meeting for the Nordic Conference in Gothenburg in February 2015 are also included in the accounts for 2015.

As for our website NFU cancelled in March 2015 its agreement with Custom Publishing, which has so far maintained our website. The cancelling of the contract has led to a reduction in costs, although not as much as planned due to some end costs to Custom Publishing. The webpage which we will start to use from November/December 2015 is based on a word press platform and will hopefully be easier to edit and use. The change in platform has been delayed to avoid any difficulties in distributing information in the period before the Nordic conference.

In 2015 we have not received a bill from Forum for Development Studies which leaves us a bit uncertain about the actual costs of FORUM for us this year. With the general reduction of members over the past few years, we assume that the bill should be reduced accordingly. Since some members report that they do not receive Forum, there is a need to discuss the bill when it finally arrives.

As for the approval of the accounts, we have had a small challenge with the accounts from 2013 due to an unaccounted difference of 4 nok. For 2014, the accounts were approved with a notification by our auditor Hans Jørgen Oppi-Christiansen, due to this previous difference of the mentioned 4 nok.

	Budget 2015	Accounts 2015
Income		
Membership fees	55000	43450
Interest	200	77
Other		
<i>Total income</i>	<u>55200</u>	<u>43527</u>
Expenditure		
Board meetings	7 000	5330
Forum for Development Studies	35000	??
NFU Web-site	1600	4395
EADI/Nordic cooperation	2100	2205
NFU Awards	10000	10000
Award event	0	0
Honorarium auditor	700	0*
Miscellaneous	2600	534,75
Coordinator	24000	24000
Costs Nordic		
Planning/participation	3500	1168
<i>Total expenses</i>	<u>86500</u>	<u>47632,75</u>
Result	<u>-31300</u>	<u>-4105</u>

*see budget

2016

Balances

Incoming balance 30.11.2014: 128 163

Outgoing balance 01.11.2015: 95 177, 05

Annual Plan 2016 (item 3)

1. NFU Board meetings

The Board will have 5-6 meetings in 2016. It will continue to use Skype when appropriate, which is cost- and time effective. It will attempt to have at least one face-to-face meeting, possibly at the conference. The annual meeting should, if possible, be held at the conference.

2. NFU Membership

The Board has the ambition of increasing our membership in 2016, from about 105 to 150. The economic situation of the association requires an active recruitment for 2016 to avoid more deficits.

The current cuts in funding to development research and to development organisations have led to an increased focus on the field of development in general. Given the situation the public visibility of the NFU is pertinent and the board needs to continue to voice the interests of development research. In addition, regular email announcements, an updated and relevant website, relevant events, and the offer of Forum for Development Studies will be key.

3. Increase the benefits to, and number and activity level of NFU members

NFU will continue to offer Forum for Development studies to its members. Since there still seems to be a problem coordinating membership payments and FORUM this must be looked into, involving Routledge and the editors of FORUM.

The NFU will continue to maintain an updated website, offer regular email announcements, and take part in relevant events. We will continue planning for the next Norwegian conference and a call will be sent out immediately after the seminar held in November on "Critical Development Research in Crisis". We also aim to organise a separate event if possible, similar to what is planned for the seminar "Critical Development in Crisis". We will continue with the master thesis award, but with a small change; 3000 will be allocated for the best bachelor thesis award and 7000 for the best master thesis award. All candidates must have a recommendation from their supervisor in order to submit a thesis to be reviewed for the prize.

A main task for the Board will be to try to secure funds for the conference. With the current suggested budget cuts the situation does not look too promising. We have been informed that this year's NORDIC conference was secured by "old" funds. However, the NFU will continue its dialogue with the financing institutions and try to get a Norwegian research environment to take on the responsibility of organising the 2016 conference.

As for the arrangement of permanent panels at the NFU conferences, this is an arrangement which should be discussed in 2016 – possibly opening for a new set of three-year panels from 2016.

4. Procedures and strategy for strengthening role of NFU in relevant public hearings

The NFU will continue to provide input to hearing documents when we are asked for input, and will aim to be better at drawing on the broader membership in providing this input.

5. Strengthen and consolidate Nordic and international networking

We will continue our communication with the Nordic development associations and now also with EADI concerning the potential joint EADI conference /4th Nordic conference 2017.

6. Consolidate the functioning of the NFU Board

Maintaining a coordinator function is intended to help the Board continue to strive towards a more efficient and handling of membership, our relationship to Routledge/Forum and our external communication. With the help of a coordinator NFU must aim to continue to have an updated website and regular newsletters. A clear division of work within the board, as has been the situation for 2015, will also ensure a well-functioning association.

7. National council on development studies (Nasjonalt fagråd)

In 2015 there was no interaction with the national council on development studies, a council that has not been very active of late. With a potential revival of the council, NFU will aim to strengthen its interaction on matters of common interest.

8. Forum for Development Studies

NFU will dialogue more closely with the editorship of Forum for Development Studies, and consider reinstating the Best Article of the Year Award in collaboration with the Forum editors. We have invited the editors to join our board meeting at least once a year.

9. Budget

The past few years NFU has run with a deficit. This has been done to revamp the website and restructure the Board activities with a coordinator. We have been able to cut costs, such as the EADI meetings and the Best Article award. The change of the web platform also implies a cut in costs, but this will be visible in the accounts only from 2016.

NFU has had a healthy bank balance, but it has been gradually reduced the past few years. We are now striving to balance the budget. The large deficit in 2014 is for the most part (though not completely) due to costs incurred in 2013 (when there was a surplus). Payment to Routledge for Forum for Development Studies creates some uncertainty, as we have not received a bill for 2015. This means that we have budgeted for a larger deficit for 2016. Some costs for printing, communication via regular post etc are postponed for next year (about 4292 nok) which explains a rather large post budgeted for other/miscellaneous. However, the board/coordinator should consider having most of its communication with its members online in order to reduce costs. In the long run, if the economic situation does not

improve, we need to look closely at our relationship to Forum, and discuss whether this relationship adds sufficient value to continue offering the journal as part of the membership.

	Accounts 2015	Budget 2016
Income		
Membership fees	43450	55000
Interest	77	70
Other		
<i>Total income</i>	43527	55070
Expenditure		
Board meetings	5330	6000
Forum for Development Studies	??	35000
NFU Web-site	4395	1800
EADI/Nordic cooperation	2205	2400
NFU MA thesis award	10 000*	10000
Honorarium auditor	0	2100*
Coordinator	24000	24000
Other/miscellaneous	400	6000
Planning Nordic		
Development conference	1168	
Event Critical Development		5000
Research in Crisis (2015)		
<i>Total expenses</i>	47632,75	92300
Result	-4105	-37230

*The award to Connor Joseph Cavanagh (awarded in 2013) was not paid before February 2015.

** The auditor was not compensated in 2014 or 2015, hence the budgeted 2100 nok for 2016 (annual payment 700 nok)