



Business & Professional Women's Club of Port Moresby



Newsletter

PRESIDENT'S CORNER



The International Women's Day (IWD) Breakfast was an outstanding success with over 300 people attending. Susil and I were very proud to see so many people attending to support our work and celebrate IWD. This was our third breakfast and each year it grows and expands. Thank you to the many women who make IWD such an enjoyable and successful event. Dame Meg Taylor's challenging and moving address was a highlight for us and we extend our heartfelt thanks to her for honouring us with her presence in the wake of her mother's recent death.

Jo Roach has organised the breakfast for the past 3 years and we will miss her organisational skills and abilities in 2012 as she leaves PNG later in the year. But in true style she has recruited a replacement and we thank her also for that act of commitment to BPW.

This newsletter includes a brief history of IWD and a longer history of BPW in PNG. As you read both articles it is instructive to reflect on the commitment shown by so many ordinary women who have worked to improve the lives of women and the significance of IWD in 2011.

As we move closer to the 2012 election the role of women in leadership in PNG becomes a critical issue for the women of PNG. At the April meeting we heard about human trafficking in PNG and I think many who attend were shocked to hear the reality for some women but equally were glad to know that we are not afraid to talk about these issues anymore. This requires leadership from all of us.

At the Annual General Meeting, in May, Dame Carol Kidu will be talking about the 2012 election and I encourage all women to attend. Having a representative parliament is an elusive goal in most countries. In PNG we must increase the numbers of women in our Parliament. It will take time to achieve and we need to keep up the discussion about how to achieve this.

This is my last message as President as we can only serve 2 year terms in this role. I have enjoyed the experience and feel very privileged to have had the opportunity. I have learned so much and thank the Executive for their support. Seeing young women progress into work through their education is a great joy. The work of BPW over the past 29 years is testament to the many young women who have taken up scholarships and advanced their education often in the face of very difficult circumstances.

Thank you members for your ongoing support, our monthly meetings have grown to the extent that the average attendance is now around 50 women each meeting. Finally thank you to Susil Nelson for her support as Vice President and I look forward to supporting BPW in 2011 in another role.

Michaela Dion
President

THE HISTORY OF BPW IN PNG

BPW is the Business and Professional Women's Club of Port Moresby, or BPW for short.

BPW Port Moresby was established in PNG by a small group of expatriate women including Dame Carol Kidu and Susan Baing from New Zealand. It is a non-government organisation and is a member of BPW International and has strong linkages to other women's organisations in PNG. It aims to promote the interests of women and encourage cooperation among business and professional women in Papua New Guinea and we work for equal opportunities and status for women. The original focus was in Port Moresby but over time the Club has expanded to include activities and embrace women in other provinces. The women who established BPW in Port Moresby were all volunteers and this remains so today.

The current Executive Committee of 12 women is comprised of PNG national women, expatriate women who are now PNG citizens, and expatriate women who are currently living and/or working in PNG. All are committed to maintaining the aims and aspirations of BPW.

How it began in PNG?

BPW was started in PNG in 1982 by a small group of expatriate women with an interest in supporting girls to go to school. Dame Carol Kidu was instrumental in getting BPW established. Many families in PNG rarely had the money to pay for education and if they did what was available was used for boys' education.

BPW Port Moresby is a member of the international movement of BPW's founded 80 years ago by Dr Lena Madasin Phillips from the United States of America. This movement grew rapidly and today across the world there are clubs in 80 countries across 5 continents. 2011 is the 80th anniversary of BPW International. The aim was to promote and empower women in business and the professions.

Mary Gole, a PNG potter, has been involved with BPW since 1983 and reflected on some key moments for her. Meeting in people's houses, fund raising for basic amounts of

money to allocate for scholarships, and trying to find creative ways of getting money are Mary's main memories along with the fun and fellowship of women working to empower other women.

Mary joined BPW to achieve her desire to use funds she raised as an artist to help young PNG women. She observed that women involved in the early days used their own funds and did a lot of fund raising just to keep the club going.

We do not have early data on how many young women have been assisted by the scholarship program but we estimate that BPW has probably helped over 1,000 women into education since 1982. From 2007 onwards we are keeping better data.

Early memories:

Mary Gole remembers that meetings in the Holiday Inn were a common event. Members met on a Saturday of every month (a tradition still practiced today but at POM International School). Meeting on verandas, cake stalls and other fund raising events, fun, sheer hard work and dedicated commitment were what enabled BPW Port Moresby to begin awarding scholarships to young girls and young women who could not afford to take up or continue their education.

Mary Gole saw 2003 as a turning point for BPW when Tessa Te Mata, a New Zealand Maori woman working at the New Zealand High Commission, organised an art exhibition for PNG women artists. During the exhibition it was decided to donate some funds raised to BPW. This event raised the profile of BPW amongst artists, the public and business houses in Port Moresby.

Zen Alaluku became involved at the second meeting in 1982 and recalled many of the women who were part of the small group of women involved at the time. She responded to a small article in the local paper and remained involved until she went to live in Alatu in 2001. Zen noted that there were only a couple of women's organisations in PNG in 1982 and BPW provided a forum for women to meet, network and work on improving the lives of PNG women. Zen remembered the many fund raising events as there was little corporate or business support at that time. Early fund

raising included cake stalls, fashion shows, and the annual Moresby Arts Theatre Gala performance which the club members catered for themselves and gained a reputation for their fine catering efforts. Over time local businesses did begin offering support. The scholarship program was the main focus of that early work and they found a strong need for the service.

Zen and Jocelyn Leahy were the first women to represent BPW at international conferences in Bangkok and Venice in the mid 1980s. And all of this achieved via continuous fund raising and the use of private funds.

Michaela Dion, our current President, became involved in the mid 2000's. Her adopted daughter was a scholarship recipient for several years before Michaela became actively involved in 2005. In the early days her daughter was receiving around K1,000 depending on her marks. Her daughter is now a teacher and was the longest scholarship recipient (7 years) and was involved with BPW long before Michaela. Her daughter would never have become a teacher if BPW had not helped, she would have had to go back to village. Michaela described it as very challenging being involved and getting the schools involved. It has been an eye opener for Michaela seeing what it means to parents and young women. Disadvantage for women was not well understood.

When she was invited to become involved she went for it. She feels like she wants to be contributing to help other women get a good start in life. It has been a great eye opener and she describes feeling very privileged to be part of this Club'.

Michaela said 'There is a lot to be done to address disadvantage for women. It (BPW) is getting bigger and expanding. I feel part of this group with all of my heart. It is not like any other group and is doing a wonderful job of trying to help women beyond NCD. We are touching lives beyond our boundaries. Women have been coming directly to me and asking "why wasn't BPW there when I was young – my life would be different.'

BPW is a life-saver for many females out there. Women want to be part of it. I cannot thank our expatriate women enough for what

they have given us through BPW – their time, their networking and their skills. I don't think Papua New Guinea women would have gone as far.' Being part of an international organisation is wonderful.'

Key achievements:

Growing the club to the stage where we can allocate funds to over 200 young women in 2010 is a great achievement, supporting women in many provinces including Gulf, ENB, EHP, Western, WHP, Central Province, WNB and NCD. The number of participating schools/institutions has now grown to 34. K28,000 was allocated in 2006 and 2007 for scholarships; in 2010 the club awarded 230 scholarships to the value of K163,000.

Expanding the range of courses and education opportunities funded is a recent achievement. Not only does the club fund secondary school and tertiary fees, they will pay for short courses and other traineeships.

Networking with Principals is another recent achievement and this has improved the process of identifying potential candidates for scholarships and engaging educational institutions in seeking assistance for young women who would otherwise drop out of education. The Scholarship Committee now meets regularly and has expanded its membership to help deal with the requests for new scholarships. A set of criteria was developed to help make decisions and this is constantly monitored and adapted.

In 2007 the club made a DVD with Dame Carol Kidu and young women who were benefiting from the scholarships. This DVD has been a major awareness raising activity and always moves people when they hear the impact of scholarships on young women and their families. Mary Gole said "When the DVD was shown at the first Gala night it touched the hearts of people viewing it and business houses started donating funds to the club". Mary also noted that it took a while to get local women involved and interested but this has changed a lot in the past few years, especially after the DVD was made. The DVD was funded by one of the long-standing members of BPW, Val Salama, as a 'present' to her mother (in lieu of flowers!).

Young women coming back to join the Club as professionals or small business women is a significant achievement and we encourage women to support other women by being part of the club's activities during and after their involvement as a recipient. At most monthly meetings at least 15-20 young women attend.

In 2008 we started a School Leavers workshop for Year 12 recipients covering the basics such as preparing a CV, writing applications, being interviewed for a job. This workshop proved so popular that a number of schools now want to include this in their curriculum.

Since the mid 1980s BPW has hosted an annual Gala Night in conjunction with Moresby Arts Theatre. This has been a major fund raising event for much of the past 25 years. Since 2009 we have also hosted a breakfast for International Women's Day and this has attracted a lot of interest. 2011 will be our third IWD fund raising breakfast.

The Candle Lighting Ceremony is a longstanding event and is a wonderful opportunity for women to join together in a common activity. In a separate item in this supplement we describe the significance to the club of the Candle Lighting ceremony.

BPW today:

In 2009 PNG Sustainable Development funded BPW for 3 years and this has enabled us to increase the number of scholarships available. It has also enabled us to expand into other provinces.

We encourage woman and girls to further their education at every level, and work for equal opportunities and improving the status of women and girls in PNG. We produce a regular newsletter which aims to connect women and to inform our members and supporters about our work. The newsletter goes to over 500 people.

Today the club has over 500 people on its mailing list and meets on the first Saturday of every month at POMIS. The monthly meetings aim to introduce a woman leader in her respective field as a speaker to inspire and inform members, including our younger women who are often also scholarship recipients.

The issues the Club addresses through speakers and other activities include:

- Health and the health system
- Law reform and legal issues
- Violence against women and gender and violence
- Gender inequality
- Social, political and economic development
- Personal development
- Business development and women and business
- Mentoring.

The scholarship program remains the main focus for BPW and in 2010 we exceeded our 2010 target of 200 scholarships awarded to young women to complete school, to attend tertiary education or to take up other forms of education and training. A mentoring program is run by a team of experienced business and professional women who volunteer their time to mentor young women in the scholarship program.

The International Women's Day Breakfast is now our biggest fund raising event and is the highlight of our events calendar with the exception of the August (monthly) meeting which goes directly to the education and support of girls and women. The IWD Breakfast attracts PNG businesses and professional groups and in 2011 we have 7 Gold Sponsors who contribute over K5,000 each and many more entities which purchase a table to support our work. In 2010 we had 30 tables of 10 people per table; in 2011 we have 32 tables. The popular breakfast event is run totally by the volunteer Executive and other volunteer supporters.

A new initiative taken in 2010 was a series of Women and Business seminars which have proved very popular with women in the informal sector. We plan to continue this work in 2011. The seminars aim to support women interested in small business enterprises or in establishing their own businesses.

The other new initiative is a joint venture with the Port Moresby Chamber of Commerce and Industry to set up a help desk known as the Women's Advisory Centre for women in business which will commence in April 2011.

Over the past 30 years we have had tremendous support from many local businesses and organisations. There are too many to name here. Without their contribution we would never have been able to achieve what we have.

BPW is a testament to the energy, commitment and intelligence of the many volunteer women, from all walks of life, both local and international, who have kept BPW alive and thriving for 29 years. Zen Alaluku noted that it was difficult to get local women involved in the early years of BPW and was delighted to hear how this has changed.

To conclude this short walk through the history of BPW in PNG, this needs to be understood in the context of a very mobile population of expatriate women, and Papua New Guinean women whose lives are demanding and whose contribution to PNG includes to their families, clans, communities, districts, provinces and the nation, not to mention other organisations.

Many local women involved have multiple demands on their time and yet make the time to keep BPW a functioning and vibrant entity, just as the women who established it did in 1982. BPW is a model of civil society making a difference and of the power of women working for women.

Want to Get Involved with BPW?

BPW is always looking for women who are willing and available to volunteer and support the group in areas including:

- Being a member of the BPW Scholarship Committee, whether it be in the collection or assessment of scholarships, institutional relationship management or the administrative support in distributing payments to institutions and students.
- Organising and coordinating the BPW Seminar Series which encourage PNG women to develop their networks and strengthen their business skills across a range of topics.
- Coordinating or presenting at our monthly BPW meetings for members and recipients.

If you are interested please email

bpwportmoresby@gmail.com with your details and a member of the BPW will get in touch with you accordingly.

BPW APRIL MEETING

Alithia Barampataz from IOM spoke to the April meeting about human trafficking in PNG and a recently funded project located in Port Moresby to address this. Human trafficking is the term used to describe the range of ways in which people are exploited or used for economic gain. It can include recruiting women and girls into forced prostitution, child labour, enforced labour, moving people across borders as cheap labour etc. There is no hard data on the incidence or extent of human trafficking in PNG and the project will seek to establish some baseline data although this is always a difficult task. A major focus will be educating people about human trafficking and raising awareness of the impact and damage for women and for PNG.

Members found the discussion very disturbing but were very glad that these issues are being raised. Several women present were aware of young women being recruited into prostitution and forced labour.

SCHOLARSHIP SUB-COMMITTEE REPORT

In the first 3 months of 2011 we have awarded over 80 scholarships already and will be working to achieve a target of 300 scholarships for 2011. Julie Goodhart has played a major role in supporting the scholarships committee and leaves PNG soon. We thank Julie for her contribution and wish her well as she prepares for the birth of her child.

If you would like to join the Scholarship Committee please contact us – there is always much to do to achieve our target and we need your help. Email Vivien if you are interested and she will connect you to the committee.

vc Carroll@scholarships.org.pg

HISTORY OF IWD

IWD celebrates its 100th anniversary this year. 100 years of activism, lobbying and challenges marks the importance of IWD to the lives of all women across the world. IWD has its origins in the work and activism of ordinary women in the United States, Europe and Russia fighting for the right to vote. The first National Women's Day was held in America on February 28th 2009. In 2010 at the Socialist women's gathering in Copenhagen the idea of an international day was first raised with over 100 women from 17 countries unanimously supporting the idea.

The very first International Women's Day was celebrated in Germany, Austria, and Denmark, with some other European countries, in 2011 on March 19th. A tragic fire less than a week later in New York saw 140 working women die, mostly Jewish and Italian immigrants in the famous Triangle Fire in the middle of New York city. In subsequent International women's Day events this tragedy was remembered and the fight to improve women's working conditions became an intrinsic part of international activism around IWD.

In 1917 with 2 million Russian soldiers dead in the war, Russian women again chose the last Sunday in February to strike for "bread and peace". Political leaders opposed the timing of the strike, but the women went on anyway. The rest is history: Four days later the Czar was forced to abdicate and the provisional Government granted women the right to vote. That historic Sunday fell on 23 February on the Julian calendar then in use in Russia, but on 8 March on the Gregorian calendar in use elsewhere.

Since those early years, International Women's Day has assumed a new global dimension for women in developed and developing countries alike.

The growing international women's movement, which has been strengthened by four global United Nations women's conferences, has helped make the commemoration a rallying point for coordinated efforts to demand women's rights and participation in the political and economic process. Increasingly, International Women's Day is a time to reflect on progress made, to call for change and to celebrate acts of courage and determination by ordinary women who

have played an extraordinary role in the history of women's rights¹.

In 1975 International Women's Day became part of the annual calendar of United Nations events celebrating and acknowledging significant milestones or issues and raising awareness across the world. It is now celebrated annually across the world with many countries now declaring IWD a public holiday.

Source:

Development Section, United Nations, New York

BPW ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Date: May 7th 2011

Venue: POM International School,
Boroko East

Time: 12 noon with lunch at 1 pm

Event: Annual General Meeting 2011

Speaker: Dame Carol Kidu

Topic: Women and the 2012 Election
Please bring a plate of finger food to share a light lunch.

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Please send in your ideas, questions or topics you would like us to address, answer, cover.