

Dear President of BPW Argentina, Mrs. Flora D' Antonio
Dear BPW members,

It's a pleasure for me to have a chance to address you today on the occasion of BPW Argentina National Conference. As growing membership is crucial for BPW, I would like to take this opportunity to answer one of the frequently asked questions when you are recruiting new member. The question is "What is BPW?"

To answer this question, I would like to compare BPW to a tree. If BPW International is a tree, our root is in "Advocacy", our trunk is in supporting women to "Develop Professional and Leadership Potential for Women at all levels," and we expect that our work will bear fruit in "Equal participation for women in power and decision making."

OUR ROOT in Advocacy is evidence through our work with United Nations. BPW International should take pride in lobbying for the formation of Commission on Status of Women, in receiving *Peace Messenger Certificate* from UN Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar in 1987 and having Esther Hymer, the first Chairperson of NGO CSW who was named as one of the three women who had played a significant role in the work of the UN Commission by Secretary-General Kofi Annan in 1997.

OUR TRUNK, or the main body of our work, focuses on mentoring, leadership training and giving women responsibilities so that they can advance in their careers and become leaders in their fields. Our members contribute back to society by "helping women to help themselves". BPW projects world-wide include vocational training, micro credits, career guidance, helping women in crisis to regain their worth and economic independence, mentoring and much more. We recognized that creating enabling environment for women development, addressing interrelated key factors of education, work and health in partnerships with governments and other NGOs are crucial to our success.

For our efforts to bear FRUIT in equal participation of women and men in power and decision making roles, it's important that we PRIORITIZE the known issues and ACT on them. To us, the lack of gender-disaggregated data takes highest priority. Without it, discrimination and obstacle become invisible. Data on RETURN ON INVESTMENT when more women become executives, both qualitative and quantitative data, can be used to persuade companies and organizations world-wide that it's financially beneficial to have more women participating in power in decision making roles.

I would like to call BPW Argentina to join efforts with other BPW world-wide in collecting case studies for our new web section "RETURN ON INVESTMENT WHEN WOMEN BECOME TOP EXECUTIVE" Also, if possible, lobby to make statistics women participation at top management level in corporations available – at least for public listed companies.

Let's our ACTION define the answer "What is BPW?" In so doing, we can make ourselves stand out among other women organizations and make our influence well known for decades to come.

Chonchanok Viravan
BPW International President