

## 2 An ORGANIZATION as a TOOL to reach the BPW goal

### 2.1 General aspects

If the future of BPW is at issue, we have to ask the question if an international, democratic structured organization with voluntary working officers and members is still a good tool to reach the BPW goal. Or are other formats better especially in context with the digital age?

To answer this question we have first to look closer at the different criteria and their pros and cons in our BPW organization.

Criteria	Advantages	Disadvantages
<b>1 Is an NGO still an appropriate tool?</b>	The legal structure of an NGO is well received in society and with our constitution no taxes have to be paid. The independence of any government or political party is basic. NGOs are acknowledged by the UN and other international organizations.	An official NGO has to be registered, has to have a constitution and must follow certain rules. An NGO does not have free will regarding all decisions.
<b>2 Why only women?</b>	A women’s organizations still has the vital advantage of the absence of men who like to dominate, to compete or to take the lead. Therefore women are forced to practice effective leadership. Like many men who unconsciously try to dominate, women unconsciously automatically step back in the second row and hand over leadership to men. That’s why the absence of men is important and has a very positive effect on women. A place without men is a protected environment where women are forced to become pro-active and to take the lead. However, leading a women’s organization is not easier then leading a mixed group of women and men.	Leading a mixed group of men and women cannot be experienced in BPW. A leader of a women’s organization is very much confronted with female reproduction behaviours. Learning to deal with typical behaviours of women, brings important insights but doesn’t replace leading a group with both sexes, men and women.

<p><b>3 Democratic culture</b></p>	<p>Women learn to deal with the political model of democracy which many countries use as their governmental model. Gender equality is an important issues in all governmental models.</p> <p>Women train for political participation and for taking responsibility and leadership in politics.</p>	<p>As democratic structures are adapted to parliaments, some structures do not truly work in an organization like BPW, e.g. the Standing Committees which are chaired by elected members. It's not the fault of the Committee chairs or members that these Committees do not work in a satisfactory manner. As the structures of the Standing Committees cannot truly work the structure encourages the participants to play games. The main attractor for a Committee Chair is often not the task but becoming a Delegate and getting a vote. Committee Chairs normally ignore the senseless working conditions which may even damage BPW. New members who are motivated to work on the international level and join a Committee find that serious work is impossible. Therefore responsible and honest leaders or members should have the courage to draw attention to damaging structures.</p>
<p><b>4 Internationality</b></p>	<p>As a sustainable evolution of gender equality in professional life and society is an <b>international issue</b>, women around the globe should be involved in working on the issue.</p> <p>As <b>globalization</b> is a fact, dealing with women from different countries and cultures gives members the opportunity to act in a global network, to gain individual insights by personal contacts and to improve their <b>intercultural understanding</b>.</p> <p>As a BPW member can be <b>active on local, national, "regional" and international levels</b> she has many choices and can choose what attracts her most.</p> <p>Many members have to be encouraged to attend national or international events and to work on these</p>	<p>If women are not motivated to cooperate on the international level out of fear, of prejudice against other cultures, lack of courage, jealousy, personal interests or by following their unconscious reproductive behaviour looking for a small nest, gender equality takes more time to advance around the globe.</p> <p>It is important that each women can become active in the environment she feels most comfortable. We can encourage BPW members to attend events on international level, but women who feel more comfortable in their local environment are welcome to contribute where they feel secure.</p>

	<p>levels. But those who have the taste for it have the opportunity to work and make friends around the globe.</p>	
<p><b>5 Voluntary work</b></p>	<p>A voluntary working organization is still a successful model where women invest a huge amount of time and skills to reach gender equality. While money is not a motivator, position and prestige can still be attractors. Therefore electors have to be able to perceive the true motivation of a candidate. Winning words or a shiny surface are not the essential criteria for a good leader. Her performances, her team work competences and the ability to perceive and respect others, are the important criteria.</p>	<p>The huge financial commitments of BPW leaders and officers has been ignored. The private sponsoring of an international president can exceed ½ mil. US\$. We women are our most generous sponsors and we have to be aware of that. Even the value of voluntary work is huge, the motivation to invest in fees must change. When men support their projects or goals they know that finances are basic and they are ready to invest. Unfortunately, a majority of women still kill financial investments by their very poor and often not conscious penny pincher mentality. We have to become aware of this obstructive mentality. E.g. today, successful fundraising is no longer a voluntary job, it requires a professional fund raiser at a cost of 100'000 US\$ a year. A professional fundraiser is able to organize at least 200'000 US\$ a year. The goal of BPW is ideal for soliciting funds and the majority of our delegates should overcome their gender behaviour of thinking and acting in small circles and avoiding any risk. Hiring a successful professional and investing 100'000US\$ to get 200'000US\$ back is not even a huge risk but would be an necessary investment. A taskforce of experienced women should urgently prepare for such a step.</p>
<p><b>6 Women from all professions</b></p>	<p>If an organization includes women of all professions, not only a special group like the business women, the organization offers members the entire know-how and network in our society. Even businesses cover an important part of our society, politicians, scientists, lawyers, medical professions, educators, civil servants and artists are very important professionals too. Working in a network which includes all fields of our society offers optimal values and opportunities.</p>	<p>Professional women's groups have very important agendas, but they cannot replace a network which includes all professions. It is good if women have a broad choice and the opportunity to belong to different organizations.</p>

<p><b>7 Why is BPW not a Service club?</b></p>	<p>Our founder was very aware of the nature of women as helpers and supporters who do not need to learn or train to be charitable. What they need is leadership training.</p> <p>Women have to learn to take the lead and become proactive. They have to show how integration and cooperation is often a better solution compared to hierarchies or inappropriate competition.</p> <p>BPW members do all kind of projects but these activities are not declared as “services”. Words show an inner attitude and the use of words influences. Here an unbelievable example which should be eradicated:</p> <p>There are still women who raise children and organize a household and when asked what they do, they reply: “I’m not working”.</p>	<p>Because charity is not an activity meant to absorb the energy of our members, BPW International has never had a philanthropic Taskforce with the exception of one term. Out of lack of knowledge or for personal interests such a taskforce was founded.</p> <p>BPW International had to put the expression “philanthropic” in its constitution in order to prevent paying taxes.</p> <p>In fact BPW supports society very much, but promoting a society which needs less services is a more suitable and sustainable solution.</p>
<p><b>8 Leadership differences in salary work or voluntary/democratic work environment</b> See special TEXT</p>	<p>As the BPW goal is very different from a business goal many leadership techniques we learn in trainings do not support leadership in a voluntary working organization like BPW. But a leader who successfully leads a voluntary working organization has a lot of practice in not using power but in perceiving the true nature of a person. A BPW leader can profit from these competences in business environments too.</p>	<p>As we are all involved in salaried work, we unconsciously copy leadership patterns which are valid in a salaried work environment but not successful in a voluntary working organization.</p>
<p><b>9 International languages</b> Training of different competencies, e.g. languages</p>	<p>BPW is an excellent platform for language training and a very efficient language school.</p> <p>We have to be aware that reading or writing foreign languages absorbs a lot of time. Therefore information and messages must be very clear, concise and to the point.</p>	<p>Unfortunately the English language is a barrier for all those who do not have English as their first language which are 75% of our members (statistics 2003).</p> <p>Most members who have English as their first language do not imagine how irritating high speed speaking or a very sophisticated vocabulary can be for members who are not too familiar with English and the different accents.</p>

The comparison of the different criteria shows that our organization is still a very powerful and even an ideal tool to implement gender equality in professional life and society. An international network like ours is an extremely efficient tool, which doesn't only promote gender equality but is a real power platform for women's empowerment.

We cannot expect that somebody from the outside will give us this confirmation. First everyone is busy with their own issues and are looking for confirmation. Second we are the experts who truly know BPW and therefore we are the ones who have to use and develop our organization with consciousness and take responsibility for it.

## **2.2 Specific aspects of the organization**

What supports or blocks BPW in reaching its goal

### **2.2.1 Vertical structure of BPW in Clubs, Federations, Regions**

The structure of BPW which consists of **Clubs and Federations** is well proven and provides members excellent functioning platforms. Compared to the Clubs and Federations the Regions are not legal but administrative entities.

Regions have guidelines but no constitution and the leader of a Region is not a "President" but a "Coordinator of a Region". By being a member of the international Executive Board a Regional Coordinator has the responsibility to integrate the Region into BPW International not to pull it away from the international level. A Regional Coordinator is an intermediary or liaison between Federations and the international level. A good contact between Federations and BPW International is basic for the empowerment of BPW.

### **2.2.2 Constitution, guidelines, handbooks, manuals**

Constitutions, guidelines, handbooks, manuals etc. are basic and have to be updated continuously. These documents do not provide progress themselves, they provide structures or rules as guides to maintain the integrity and the well-functioning of the organization. New ideas for the progress of an organization must first be tested and only if proven as an advantage should become part of a constitution.

### **2.2.3 International Congress**

For many years the international Congress is a very reliable and successful tool. Very clear rules guarantee democratically correct decisions. The fact that the electorate has to be present makes sense. Personal meetings are very different from long distance communications.

How digital opportunities could add quality to an already successful event has to be discussed and tested. Good ideas are always welcome.

#### 2.2.4 President's Office and reliable administration

BPW International started to appoint paid Experts and Administrators for different tasks under the umbrella of the President's Office. **This system has to be developed.** Compared to one fixed place and office where all the tasks are done by an Office Director of BPW International, the system with different freelance experts is flexible and provides the best performances for a low investment. But the administration tasks have increased so much that a Director of the President's Office which changes each term with the President, is no longer a good solution. Due to the digital age where all documents and communication are digital, a special office is not needed anymore but it needs a freelance Director of the President's Office and is the over-viewer and passes on the administrative know-how from term to term and can be hired for more than one term. Whereas a Personal Assistant of the President is in charge of the personal tasks of the President and can be changed each term. Paid experts (fixed compensation) for different well defined tasks is still a very good model as changing an expert is much easier than changing a person who is responsible for all tasks.

**The President's Office is requested to forward a list of all paid experts with their financial contributions.**

#### 2.2.5 International Standing Committees, Taskforces and Projects

For a long time it has been well known that Standing Committees not chaired by an Executive Board member do not really work. The problem is not with the inability of the chair but it is because of the impossible structure and conditions. Standing Committees probably still exist because a Committee Chair gets a vote and some Federations collect additional votes. If we want BPW to grow and be reliable and functional, we must have the courage to make the necessary changes.

The idea of having Committees comes from the democratic culture. Whereas Committees work very well in a parliamentary situation with members in proportion to the force of the political parties, however it doesn't work in an international organization where people cannot meet regularly during the sessions and tasks are not delivered by parliamentary activities.

**Reasons why the Standing Committees, not chaired by Executive Committee Members, have not had a positive impact on our organization:**

- Chairs who do a good job may only serve 2 terms even though they may be willing to continue. The BPW constitution prevents them to continue after two terms in order to profit from their experience and commitments. The reason for the two terms is of course their vote. BPW which has no budget for experts should collect and keep experts in a structure where they may continue to contribute. Then, if a specific commitment is needed, the President and her Executive Board Members have the resources readily available.
- At the beginning of her term a president has no capacity to give out tasks which make sense to the Committee Chairs. A President realizes very quickly that imposing tasks which members are not able or willing to fulfil is counterproductive. Tasks which have to be done successfully need the "right" person. Just giving a task to somebody to appease her is disrespectful and poor strategy.
- Tasks that Presidents must give out are usually very specific and the elected chair is normally not an expert in the required area. That is also the reason why the list of the BPW International Taskforces is growing. The only way for a President to get a specific task done is to appoint an expert in a taskforce.
- Taskforces are not limited by terms and typically the chairs perform much better than a Standing Committee chair who is voted into the position. Facts show that a better structure needs to be adapted.

- At the beginning of her term the President must appoint a member of each Region in each Standing Committee. It is a theoretical rule which doesn't work as some Regions do not offer sufficient candidates.
- If a chair has to work with members she doesn't know, there is disappointment on both sides. New members who offer for the first time to commit on international level experience that a common work which makes sense doesn't take place. Members coming from different continents and cultures provide an enrichment but normally they are all on different pages and their term ends before a common ground is found. Therefore the chair is forced to do something in her own country or to think about something she can declare in her report. Most Committee chairs do not speak about their impossible situation as they have what they really wanted, a vote. Having a vote is a satisfying thing. It is not the fault of a chair who accepts that deal, it is BPW International which has the responsibility for this damaging concept.
- Reading the annual reports of the Standing Committee Chairs requires a lot of time. Most of the Executive Board Members, if not all, do not read these reports because the majority of the Committees do not work on an important issues and to invest time in reading the reports is a waste of time.

At Congress the PILOT concept “**BPW International Member Projects & Experts**” was adopted which is intended to replace the Standing Committees chaired by members. The “bottom up” approach which allows members to offer their commitments is a very new concept and members and leaders need some time to realize this opportunity.

➔ See “**BPW International Member Projects & Experts**” article at the end of this paper.

The evaluation of the PILOT concept for Congress 2017 revealed a very astonishing fact. Why does BPW International ignore the projects done by Federations and Clubs? This unfavourable strategy has to be corrected and the PILOT Team decided to add this task to its concept and to offer an online registration to all Club and Federation projects. The numerous projects will be collected in three different lists. A BPW list with 12 items, a list with the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals and a list which shows the projects registered by the different Federations and Clubs.

### 2.2.6 Leaders' Summits

BPW leaders need an annual platform where they can obtain information, exchange their experiences, discuss what needs improvement and propose initiatives to the international President and the Executive Board.

It is crucial that the Executive Board members do not simply show presentations, in order to inform ordinary members, to the participants of the Leaders' Summit, but focus on important leadership issues.

As not all leaders travel to New York, the Regional Conferences are predestinated to host a **Regional Leaders' Summit** the day before the Conference starts.

The **Leaders' Summit fees** should only include the beverages and food of the participants because the participants work for BPW. BPW International should have a budget item for a maximum of 3+5 Leaders' Summits per term to cover the rent of the room, the technical equipment, the documents for the participants and the registration fees of the organizers.

The Leaders' Summit is also an opportunity to get to know future BPW leaders. **As the future of BPW depends on a good succession planning**, leaders who do a good job should be encouraged to be candidates.

### 2.2.7 Cooperate identity (One name – one logo)

Although one single common name and logo should be self-evident, there are still Clubs and Federations who do not follow the rule. The international President, the Membership Chair, the Secretary and all Regional Coordinators should feel responsible for the implementation of the rule and explain to the presidents of Clubs or Federations that create their own logos why a single, common identity is basic. Women obviously like details and like to provide each project with a special logo. But unfortunately a variety of logos damages the perception of BPW. There are plenty of other areas in BPW where creativity is very welcome.

## 2.3 Tools

### 2.3.1 Projects

The organization can promote gender equality through different activities and projects. BPW has organized “Equal Pay Day”, “Women on Board”, “Global Compact” etc. as examples.

With some effort and creativity BPW should be able to find more such fields and smart choose activities which are being done by local clubs.

### 2.3.2 Special Projects

#### 2.3.2.1 “PILOT: Renewal of Committees, Taskforces & Projects”

A voluntary working organization which has no budget to pay experts has to find tools which give the members who are willing to offer an adequate platform. At the international Congress in 2014 the delegates approved a concept, the “BPW International Member Projects & Experts” as a pilot until 2020. This PILOT concept gives project leaders, project members and experts the opportunity to offer their efforts to BPW and to profit from the leverage of BPW International.

#### **We looked at the “overflow” and ignored the main issue**

While writing the evaluation by using the expression “overflow” the question popped up: “But what’s about the source of this overflow?” I was shocked when I realized that Federations present different national projects or even Club projects in their annual reports, BPW International reads these performances but unfortunately up to now BPW International didn’t realize the great value of the numerous Projects our Federations and Clubs. A third tool was added to the PILOT, the Club & Federation Projects. All Federation and Clubs are requested to register the titles of their projects online.

In the meantime the PILOT is called **PROJECT POOL and consists of 3 tools**, the Club & Federation Projects, the Member Projects and the Experts.

### **2.3.2.2 Project “Future of BPW”**

The Executive Board of BPW International needs the support of such a Taskforce. Evaluating which structures in our organization work well and which ones block the success of reaching the BPW goal is an imperative and ongoing task. Improvements should be discussed and tested using “pilots” before proposing amendments to the constitution.

Members of this taskforce should bring good BPW leadership experiences to the task. A voluntary working organization operates very differently from a business or salaried environment. The art of the task is to find the critical points in BPW, to analyse them in their multiple contexts and to implement improvements successfully.

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