

MESSAGE

LIZ BENHAM
PRESIDENT BPW INTERNATIONAL



In 2010, BPW International celebrated 80 years of operation. Throughout these years, we have continued to develop the professional, leadership and business potential of women on all levels through our mentoring, networking, skill building and economic empowerment programs and projects around the world.

We used this milestone as an opportunity to take stock of our achievements and reflect on how to improve and grow as an organization. Consultations with members from around the world on the Organization Review and Reform reaffirmed that our focus for the next 80 years must be around measures that will see women empowered and equal in the workplace.

New initiatives for the 21st century

To this end, I launched two key initiatives in New York: the BPW International Equal Pay Day campaign in 2009 and an awareness campaign during 2010 on the Women's Empowerment Principles - Equality Means Business, a partnership initiative during 2010.

BPW International has evolved as a strong, internationally renowned and independent non-governmental organisation. Working with our Affiliates, we have led change through many national initiatives, reports to Parliament, ECOSOC submissions at the Commission on

the Status of Women, educational materials and other activities.

Accordingly, the WEPs Toolkit is as much about how we exercise our discretion, how we work as an organization and how we work with others -- the private sector and other key stakeholders -- as it is about what we do. It describes the compelling case for women as powerful drivers of economic development and how, when given the opportunity, women can be influential and make real change happen.

Working with other stakeholders

International conventions and declarations provide an avenue for governments to institute measures designed to accelerate substantive equality outcomes and, as an organization, we continue to reaffirm these through our advocacy. For some functions, like our monitoring of national legislation, it is the work of our Affiliates that monitor equality legislation and ensure that it is adequately incorporated into a country's specific human rights obligations under CEDAW. For other functions like our awareness campaigns, our aim is to work with wider stakeholders (outside of government) drawing attention to the discrimination and injustices as highlighted in WEPs principle No2 that considers



discrimination of the pay gap through national Equal Pay Day campaigns. Our countries and companies will be stronger and more competitive if they have more women operating as managers and decision makers, whether they are in developed, developing or less developed markets. While the WEPs describe what needs to be changed, the BPW International toolkit describes the way we need to communicate the WEPs to have the greatest impact on change in the workplace.

Bringing about change

The WEPs are a means to bring about cultural, behavioural and programmatic changes in the workplace and offer a blueprint for companies. It is up to us to guide this process and work collaboratively by raising awareness of the benefits through consultation and key events. We must advance more women in leadership positions and provide the right environment for new perspectives to be considered and actioned.

As we have learnt from each other, so too companies need to understand how policies and practices have benefited the bottom line and how these measures have been successfully integrated into business. The White House Project's Marie Wilson says that *"Decades of research have proven that adding women to the leadership mix not only begets creative solutions and focus on long-term*

results, but also higher profits. Advancing women is more than a powerful tool for advancing communities alone; it is also a critical tool for advancing the bottom line".

Women: Empowered and Equal in the workplace

This toolkit reflects the strong desire for all affiliates to work more collaboratively and creatively to maximize the impact of the WEPs. Initially, we will focus on strengthening communication so that we can learn from, inspire and build on each other's expertise and experiences with the WEPs. That internal strength will inform the way we work with and influence other civil society groups to join us and the community groups around us. It will also empower us to fulfil our commitment to lead by example until such time that we see a workplace where women are empowered and equal, and a workplace, marketplace and community that are both more prosperous and just for everyone.

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International Federation of Business and Professional Women

