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When women do well, business and economy do better

TRIENNIUM REPORT
HEALTH COMMITTEE
2011-2014

This triennium as Health Chair of BPW International is drawing to a close, and I look back with satisfaction at all which our Affiliates have been able to accomplish.

From the start I have advocated for the promotion of women's health from an economic point of view: because I truly believe that when women do well, economy and business do better. And, both in my BPW position and as a trained medical doctor, I think this crucial fact helps the struggle to improve women's health even in the minds of skeptics. Besides, I'm sure you'll all agree that Empowerment and Equality count for nothing when your Health is lacking. In coordination with our President Freda Miriklis I have been supporting the Women's Empowerment Principles outlined by UNIFEM from the Health point of view, and in particular WEPs 2, 3 and 4:

- Treat all women and men fairly at work.
- Ensure the health, safety and well being of all women and men workers.
- Promote education, training and professional development for women.

The Clubs in the various Regions have used the guidelines in the Action Plan to develop their own Health-related initiatives. There has been a lot of interest, for example, in Nutrition and healthy diets from BPW Italy, or separate projects addressing maternal and post-natal health from BPW Turkey and from BPW Africa.

Over the last three years I've alternately promoted certain aspects of the Action Plan for greater visibility. For example there has been a campaign that I started during my Triennium 2008-2011 as Representative in the Health Committee European Region, "Women in Action for a Better Life", that I presented in Helsinki 2011 and continued into the Triennium 2011-2014 to promote Healthy lifestyles in Active Women.

Healthy Ageing and workplace safety are issues that have gathered the interest of several BPW Clubs, starting from Fidapa-BPW Italy and including the Asia Pacific Region, the North America and Caribbean Region, and the Latin America Region.

Then I've campaigned hard to promote Cardiovascular risk awareness in women, an issue that is severely underestimated and that affects a big percentage of the female population, through The Red Belt Project. The Red Belt was launched at the XVI European BPW Congress in Sorrento in 2012, and will officially end at the 28th BPW International Congress in Jeju in 2014. I personally developed the toolkit that was distributed to all Affiliates (with no copyright registered) that includes the scientific rationale, an Abstract, informative pamphlets, an in-depth scientific presentation with speaker's notes, Italian and English videos (both formal and informal), and data-gathering specific forms. It is in partnership with the Nutrition Foundation of Italy, a world-renown scientific organization that will provide statistical data analysis. The Project aims to raise awareness of cardiovascular risk factors in women, against a silent killer that today is claiming more lives among women than men, and which is still largely ignored; and to collect data on the current state of women's health to produce an accurate picture of the world's cardiovascular situation. The Nutrition Foundation of Italy is currently analyzing the data for the final report that will be presented in Jeju, a report that will be available to International Organizations and Governments alike for strategic planning against non-communicable diseases.

It has taken the interest of other International organisations, like the European Institute of Women's Health in Dublin, and I had the opportunity to present it at the WHO Europe Regional Congress in Izmir with an official BPW International Statement regarding WHO policy on Cardiovascular disease prevention. This is in full agreement with the WHO Global NCD Action Plan 2013-2020 and the "25 by 25" (25% reduction of cardiovascular diseases by 2025) voluntary global target to reduce premature mortality from Non-Communicable Diseases adopted by Governments at the World Health Assembly in 2012.

The Red Belt Project has gathered support from all the Regions, both in the developed and the developing countries; the final Report will include data from such diverse places as BPW Africa, BPW India, BPW USA, BPW Argentina and BPW Italy, among others.

Following the UN Resolution in New York on Violence against Women, and the BPW Australia Resolution 2 in Helsinki 2011, I'd like to promote Project C of my Action Plan in the year 2014, to prevent and protect women and children against cyber-bullying.

Violence against women is a broad subject that some BPW Clubs are already working on, in South America, Asia and in Italy, but I believe this could benefit from a concentrated effort of the Health Committee on an International level. Disseminating information is an area that we, as BPW members from every walk of life, can bring to any number of efforts. Communicating in schools with the new generations, which is being done in BPW Latin America and BPW Europe, is an excellent initiative that has the full support of the Health Committee.

Of course, focusing on one issue should never mean that other things are left behind: the efforts of BPW North America and Caribbean, of BPW Europe and BPW Asia Pacific against long-standing female issues such as breast and cervical cancer should not and will not be abandoned: instead we hope to lead by example, providing everyone with a fully detailed Yearly Report where each Region can see what the others have done and be inspired, as well as receive due recognition for their own efforts.

But to be more specific:

The European Region, thanks to the efforts of Regional Coordinator Sabine Schmelzer and Health Standing Committee members Livia Ricci and Gabriella Canonica, has always reported a

great deal of activities from a long list of Clubs which have enthusiastically taken up the fight for women's health.

I wish in particular to thank the FIDAPA-BPW Italy members for the truly spectacular amount of work they have poured into their wide-range of activities; over the last three years it is the area that has probably worked the most, and a complete list of all their activities would take an entire report on its own. Suffice to say that they've had far-reaching aims, from the more pleasurable healthy eating and diet to the serious like cancer awareness, pain therapy and palliative treatments, psychological issues, maternity and menopause, Healthy Ageing, plastic surgery and beauty treatments, all the way to Osteoporosis and other non-communicable diseases, including cardiovascular diseases. From the National Health Congress held in Milan, to the IV International Conference on the Education of African Women held in Rome; there were several Conferences held throughout the territory, including: Fighting back against violence against women and children; The issues of menopause; Healthy Eating; Local Food Local Remedies; Violence against women workers; Pain management; Oncology prevention; the Heart's health; Quality of Life; Cosmetic surgery; Stalking and Violence against women; Food disorders and healthy eating; the Ethics of Science; Fund raising for Gynecology.

In addition to this, many Clubs also embraced The Red Belt Project, contributing with data gathering and disseminating information.

I had the pleasure of meeting BPW Turkey's Arzu Ozyol at the WHO meeting in Geneva organized by our President Freda to strengthen BPW International's ties to such an important global organization, and she unveiled some very interesting projects that have been developed in her country. An awareness project in line with WEP 4 which promotes women's business, reproductive health and body integrity; a project to support children with chronic illnesses and their families at home; and the fight for any type of cancer in women. All of these were coordinated by the president of BPW-Konya (and vice president of BPW-Turkey) Cemile Oztin Ogun, who also sent a report about the psychological issues and social problems arising from the tradition of child brides being given away by their families to much older men, a study that hopes to encourage stronger legislation at a governmental level to oppose this barbaric practice.

I then had the honor of attending the 63rd World Health Organization European Regional Congress 2013 in Izmir, Turkey, and to give a statement on behalf of BPW International precisely on the fight against cardiovascular and other non-communicable diseases. It was a great opportunity for BPW International's voice to be heard among the many NGOs collaborating with WHO.

I reconnected with BPW Turkey's Arzu Ozyol at the WHO meeting in Izmir. Cemile Ogun informed us of two very worthy projects, one called "Our Children" targeting children with chronic disease who have to be educated at home, and their family members (especially focused on the mothers) by giving information on illness; supporting self-care, mentoring on management the illness state, measuring the level of stress with psychological tests; determining supportive psychological therapy. The other aimed to promote awareness of increasing cancer types in women by giving information about cancer types including lung, breast, colon and cervix cancers; teaching risk factors and scanning tests; teaching the self examination of breasts; timing the smear test; genital hygiene, healthy foods and feeding; teaching when to suspect and scan; how scanning and examining works and which specialist is the best choice for each cancer type; where to go for scanning. This project produced informative brochures; twelve symposiums; four live TV programs; a web site collecting all of the educative materials; pre and post tests for measuring the awareness of women before and after the symposiums. It has reached at least 5000 women, especially 800 university students attending the Health Science faculty.

More minor projects included working on the problems arising from marriage at early age; obesity; contraception methods; the importance of education in girls and women.

An interesting contribution was also made by young BPW member Dechelle Miette from the Central and Eastern Europe Cluster with a series of events to raise awareness and train BPW members to lobby successfully at high levels, as per WEP 4, skills which will undoubtedly be useful to advance medical research and women's causes.

BPW Sweden's Solveig Staffas highlights the numerous activities promoted by www.1.6miljonerklubben.com an association that involves BPW clubs also from Norway, Finland, Germany and Russia, and guided by Alexandra Charles, BPW Woman of the Year 2008; they organize medical seminars and workshops to raise awareness of a wide range of health issues, including stroke, cancer and Alzheimer disease, and they produce a newsletter for all members. If you're in Bruxelles this coming November check out their event at the Swedish embassy on diabetes. Every year they organize a breast cancer awareness day, and a cardiovascular disease awareness day.

BPW Spain's Carlota De Dios reports that they have started a collaboration with a company that works to promote and develop health in the workplace, contributing to WEP 3.

BPW France with the French Federation of Cardiology has focused on cardiovascular health, as it is of prime importance for French women. Gisele Nissak reports of multiple events organized by BPW Paris, BPW Lille, and BPW Chartreuse; the aim was to inform women and to raise money for research.

BPW Member Giselle Nissak, though French, is of African origins and has worked this year also on a Project targeting African women, CARMMA: a campaign aimed at accelerating the reduction of Maternal, Newborn and Child Mortality in Africa. This campaign is based upon a series of measures of prevention, meaning: - educate, sensitize, and train. In general educating girls and boys in reproductive health, and to know and protect their body as an anatomical entity. Education of parents of any age. Sensitize: the entire population, working or not, within the formal or informal sectors, rural and urban population, health being a crucial issue everywhere, and particularly in Africa. Training: medical, paramedical staff and other health workers. It is known that many deaths are avoidable, and that most of those dying have had previous contact with the health system. Specifically: Management of emergencies in maternity, to raise the number of skilled birth attendance in the countryside areas by training health workers, give them skills to improve management of labor and delivery, in order to provide mothers and children with a better chance of survival. Neonatal resuscitation: dealing with emergencies and care during the first days of life.

Some Northern European countries reported that the goals of the WEPs 2, 3 and 4 have already been achieved and therefore they saw no need for further effort in that direction.

I would like to point out that in these times of financial crisis and austerity programs that we are living through, work and health care are directly influenced and as always women, more than men, bear the brunt of this, and that all European countries are openly affected.

When I attended the 15th European Health Forum in Bad Gastein I saw that, among all the problems addressed by the policy makers, those stemming from the crisis were deemed dramatic for public health care:

The "austerity experiment" has failed as an answer to the financial and economic crisis, according to experts at the European Health Forum Gastein. The consequences have been recession instead of

growth and dramatic effects on public health - but ideological attitudes are proving stronger than evidence of those effects. Experts are calling for stimulus measures in place of austerity programs, and more involvement of health politicians and health experts in the debate on how to deal with the crisis.

“Europe's politicians have to realize that stringent austerity policies are harming their economies as well as the health of their populations,” Prof Dr Martin McKee from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine told the European Health Forum Gastein (EHFG). “There is an alternative to austerity programs, but I fear at the moment ideology is triumphing over evidence.” In many European countries, austerity measures are having a dramatic effect on health budgets. The current OECD Health Data 2012 report shows that, in 2010, after years of increases in health expenditures, deep cuts were made in a number of European countries: minus 7.6% in Ireland, minus 7.3% in Estonia, minus 6.5% in Greece. Other studies show a 25% reduction in the health budget in Latvia between 2008 and 2010, and a cut of 30% for the Czech Republic. “The troika even demanded that Ireland further reduce its health expenditures. That is a very dangerous proposition,” according to Prof McKee. “The European institutions, especially the Commission, have a duty to assess the effects of such measures on the health of people. The human cost of austerity has been largely invisible so far.”

The **Asia Pacific Region**, thanks to the tireless efforts and superb coordinating established by Past President Faye Gardiner, despite many pressing personal matters, strived to promote Health activities in her Region.

The Singapore Club has addressed WEP 3 by targeting Healthy Ageing through diet and exercise for working professional women. In partnership with the Singapore Council of Women's Organizations, they organized a Forum on "Getting to Know Breast Cancer Better". The event was held in conjunction with Breast Cancer Awareness month in October. A panel of three breast cancer doctors, the President of the Breast Cancer Foundation Singapore, and a breast cancer survivor gave presentations.

BPW New Zealand and Pacific Islands have also targeted Healthy Ageing, and diabetes, cancer, support for rape survivors, diet and exercise, and WEP 3 with Affiliate Katherine Archer's personal business of ensuring health and safety at the workplace. They are very active advocating on a political level to change the laws to protect and benefit women. On a national platform they have worked on discrimination against women and girls with disabilities; funding to the Women's earthquake refuge in Christchurch; extending the period of Paid Parental Leave; reducing liquor outlets, raising the age at which alcohol can be purchased, and lowering the level allowable for driving a vehicle; allocating public funds for medications; funding for girls self-defense classes; protecting funding to essential family violence programs; funding of Specialist Sexual Violence Social Services; preventing child abuse and improving children's health outcomes; advocating on Victims' Orders Against Violent Offenders, curbing predatory lenders (loan sharks) who target low income families with high interest/high fee loans; exploitation of immigrant workers, many of whom are women; Harmful Digital Communication; changing the way female victims of violence and sexual assault can be questioned for evidence.

Local Clubs there are encouraged to work on the needs and issues of local women. For example: BPW Central Hawkes Bay breast cancer and the ensuing treatment; keep children from a low socio-economic background fed and nurtured; hypnotherapy to treat a wide range of conditions such as stop smoking, bed wetting, shyness, etc; support for poor young women having babies.

BPW Franklin Talk from Physiotherapist; Workshop with local chiropractor; supported women with breast cancer and educated members about breast cancer; talk from retired nurse on changes in maternity services over the years; health and well being focus for older people; workshop on autism; workshop on osteoporosis.

BPW Gisborne conferences with: project manager at Tairāwhiti District Health Board; regional manager of Canteen, and a young woman whose sibling had cancer; local woman who is a massage tutor and member of Hawaiian massage Hall of Fame.

BPW Tamaki “Invisible Violence Against Women”; women prisoners, their wellbeing and their needs; Women’s Refuge, the needs of the women and families, and their education programs for women about violence and how to deal with it.

BPW Australia has covered all three WEPs, number 2 with harassment at the workplace, number 3 with diet and health of working women, number 4 with specific training to encourage women to take up positions of power on decision-making boards. They have also worked a lot with schools for cancer awareness, body-image issues, domestic violence, gynecological problems, incontinence, and alcohol fetal syndrome.

Most recently they have issued a kit to address cyber violence against women, an important issue that was highlighted by the UN commission for Women last year, and which will probably be a focus for all of BPW in the coming years.

Even BPW Ormoc in the Philippines has been working on WEP 4, specifically targeting poverty and promoting financial empowerment; they held conferences on women’s issues and legislation directly affecting women throughout 2013.

North America and Caribbean Region has an active Committee there (comprised of Young BPW Anastasia Safarian, Janet Basset and Kathryn Ciccolini), that has organized events focusing on Healthy Ageing, the fight against breast cancer and non-communicable diseases, as well as gender-based violence. Nurse Ciccolini also developed a local website to communicate more efficiently directly with the Affiliates, at bpwnorthamericahealth.worldpress.com.

The New York Club organized ‘2013: The Year of the Healthier You’, centered around Women’s Empowerment Principles #3 and #4. It featured a NYC Health Coach and an NYC Yoga Instructor who provided guidance and personal anecdotes on healthy eating, yoga practice, and life balance and priorities. The event concluded with an engaging round of Q/A—inspiring the room to make healthier decisions in 2013.

Throughout the Region Clubs have also participated in and supported The Red Belt Project, taking measurements, surveys and sending all the data (anonymously) to our partner, The Nutrition Foundation Of Italy for the statistical analysis.

As reported by Vice President Nicole Alleyne, BPW Barbados in particular has worked on many initiatives, such as Girlfriend Expo 2013, an annual event celebrating women in business and an opportunity for women to display their many skills; BPW set up a where they introduced the “Red Belt”. Women attending the booth embraced the concept and allowed their measurements to be taken as Chronic Illnesses continues to plague women across every section of society. Women were encouraged to seek medical advice and attention and to also continue the regime that their doctors placed them on; by doing this small act they are investing in their health. Sexual Education Night, to educate women about their bodies and their partner’s bodies. The aim of the session was to dispel any misconceptions or ideas as sex affects us all, and the more we speak about and express our feelings, the more truths about the subject matter will prevent women from being misguided. Cervical Cancer Screening – “Reducing the Risks of Cervical Cancer” presentation. Cervical

Cancer is the second most important cause of death in women, and is the only preventable cancer; it is approximately 95% treatable. The Ministry of Health will embark on vaccinating sexually naïve girls in the secondary school from September 2013. BPW has also committed to partnering with the Ministry of Health and BFPA in educating women across the island through its Health Committee. Cervical Cancer – E Petition this has been established through the Healthy Caribbean Coalition (HCC) to raise awareness throughout the Caribbean on screening and prevention of Cervical Cancer. Women, Power & Potential: Opportunity Through Enterprise Conference included a Health component within the conference exploring the impact of women's health on women's economic empowerment; focused on the impact of Heart Disease and Stroke, with a presentation from the CEO of Heart and Stroke Foundation; focused on "below-the-belt" cancers including Ovarian and Cervical Cancer with a educational display and discussion at the conference. Reduce Gender Based Violence and HIV Project. The Heart and Stroke Foundation of Barbados is a partner in this two-year project, as the project is located in an annex of the Heart and Stroke Foundation. BPW Barbados will launch the Red Belt initiative as part of the Heart and Stroke Foundation's Go Red for Women Campaign, which will focus on heart health in women, advocacy and prevention of heart disease and stroke in women. Throughout the year BPW Barbados Member Health Committee Member Celia Collymore plans and promotes healthy lifestyle and empowerment events supported by BPW. The fitness events seek to enlighten communities to take charge of their lives, stand tall in the face of adversity and get moving towards a longer, safer, happier, healthier and active lifestyle.

The Latin America Region coordinated with the Chair throughout the Triennium in the person of Sara Louzan, reporting from Argentina. They worked hard and addressed WEP 2 in the fight against violence on the place of work, and the abuse of women; cancer, maternity issues, stress, transfusions and transplants. A big project involved displaced teens and the psychological effect of emigration with the collaboration of Liliana Ferrero.

They then embraced the issues of Cardiovascular disease and have done a great job with the Red Belt Project, both in terms of data gathering and information dissemination. They paid particular attention to young people, and plan to continue to distribute information on this important issue in schools. Naturally all the material available for the Red Belt is without copyright, so the affiliates that wish to continue to use it, and indeed take the initiative to bring it one step forward, are more than welcome and should hold Argentina as an example.

We owe a big thanks to Graciela De Oto during her term as the Regional Coordinators for greatly facilitating communication here, and Marta Solimano after her..

From **the African Region** I initially received only an indirect report through Amélie Leclerque from Rwanda and Professor Shirley Randell. The governments there have been heavily investing in education and Health Care, also through the collaboration of foreign countries such as France and the US, and they've put in place laws to promote equality in the workplace that are getting important results: women make up 45% of the Rwanda government now. Among health initiatives that directly target women, the aim to bring family planning to 70% of women by 2015 seems achievable, given that they are already at 52% up from only 4% in 2000.

After that there was a significant increase in communication, thanks to Regional Coordinator Adenike Adeyanju Osadolor. From Nigeria, BPW Garki Club has collaborated annually with the National Blood Transfusion Service Abuja to mark the World Blood Donor Day in the month of June every year. This is a date set aside by the World Health Organization (WHO) to create awareness on the need of safe blood and encourage voluntary blood donation. Members were encouraged to donate and come with at least two people. They also organized Cervical/Breast Cancer Screening, where over 200 women were screened in various different locations, cutting across religious, political and professional groups across the city of Abuja. De-worming Exercise

for Children; 550 children in a local community, Pyakasa, were successfully de-wormed in July 2013. To ensure members have healthy life-styles and to promote healthy living, there were various wellness seminars, including: Go for the five's and fight Diabetes- by a senior consultant physician and pulmonologist; Breast cancer awareness by an oncology officer and palliative caregiver from the Federal Ministry of Health; a health talk "Live well to live long" by a retired nurse/midwife.

BPW Kenia organized the event "Cancer touches on everyone, whether directly or indirectly". It aimed to create awareness in the community of the rapidly growing situation of cancer in Kenya and let them know that cancer is a global problem and everyone is affected in one way or another. Children shared their experiences as survivors and caregivers at their tender age. The function was attended by more than 400 children and 120 Adults from Nakuru Country. This event gave an opportunity to the patients and their families to interact with other children and the public to dispel isolation and stigma associated with life limiting illnesses. It was an opportunity that enabled patients and their families to receive spiritual care and psychosocial support & counseling, and seeing it's success, it was declared an annual event.

The latest news from the Health Committee is that the scientific information gathered for The Red Belt Project about cardiovascular risk factors and their prevention will be presented at the International Expo in Milan in 2015 on the theme of Food and Lifestyle, with its very own booth, for the entire six months of its duration, and available to the expected 20 million attendees.

We are also pleased to report the beginning of BPW India, with Chapters opening in [Hyderabad](#) and New Delhi thanks to the efforts of BPW Goodwill Ambassador to the UN H.R.H Princess Fay Jahan Ara, whose Rach Foundation has long been advocating for the improvement of Women's lives, including their Health. We look forward to the contributions these new Clubs will give in the fight for women's health and violence against women.

I wish to thank all of BPW International Affiliates in the Clubs for the great amount of work they have undertaken in these three years both in relation to the WEPs and other important women's issues.

And finally, I would once again like to thank all the Regional Coordinators for their contributions and their work, and President Freda and Vice President Huguette Apklogan Dossa for their unfailing support, along with Princess Fay Jahan Ara and the President's Office. What we achieved this year would not have been possible without them.

It's been an honor to work with all of you these past three years to promote the Women's Empowerment Principals on a global scale, and to strive towards Equality, Wellbeing and Empowerment for all Women of all Nations.

Thank you and see you in Jeju.

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