



## Chapter 8

### The Past, the Present and the Future<sup>1</sup>

Let us have three sentences in mind. The first is: “If you want to understand today, you must research yesterday”. The next, written in 1999 by Jane O’Brien, Zonta International Director, is: “the future of Zonta...is not some place we are heading, but one we are creating” (*The Zontian* 1998–2000 Biennial Issue 6, p. 9). The third is: “What got you here, won’t get you there” (Lynn McKenzie, 2012 in *The Zontian*).

The world of 1999 was very different from the world of 1919; but the differences between the world of 1999 and that of today are even greater. To thrive, Zonta has accomplished many changes, and changes must continue to ensure that the organization is relevant as we move into the next 100 years.

#### **(a) The organization: Clubs and Members**

From 1919 until the Yokohama Convention 2018, all Zontians were members of a Zonta club, and all Zonta clubs were members of Zonta International. The Yokohama convention introduced a new category: Individual Member.

From its inception, Zonta was a single-sex, classified organization. This changed in 1988 when the Bylaws opened membership to men by club option. Zonta remains a classified organization but the classifications have been adjusted to 21st century business and professional jobs.

While male members in Zonta are still few, many women joined Rotary, when membership was opened to women in 1987. The Zontian reported, as early as 1990: “Clubs in the United States must address the fact that Rotary has admitted 16,000 women into their clubs, women who should have been Zontians” (March–May 1990 Issue, p. 3).

That this has continued was evident at the Yokohama convention in 2018 where a former Jane M Klausman awardee reported how much the Zonta award had meant to her and her career – but also reported that she was a member of Rotary!

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<sup>1</sup> Research compiled by Eva Nielsen

Women are now found among Rotary leaders. However, while male Zontians have served on club boards, they have only recently begun to stand for election as district governors. Why? Has it to do with prestige? Or something else? No studies have investigated this problem.

The core membership category is and has always been Active Membership (called Classified Membership since 1982). Zonta was for women who were active in business or the professions:

- active membership shall consist of but one woman in each classification of business or professions (ZI Bylaws, 1921)
- membership shall terminate when a member...abandons the business or profession through which she secured her classification for membership, or when a member joins another organization in which membership is based on similar classifications (Bylaws, 1939).

Between 1921 and 1939, the very strict rule of only one woman per classification was loosened a little by introducing the category of Associate Membership. This consisted of additional representatives from a firm which was already represented in a club. An Associate Member had no rights to vote or to hold office.

Between 1921 and 1939, the Bylaws also allowed for Non-resident Members. These were members who moved to localities without Zonta clubs. They were able to retain membership of their former clubs without paying dues so that they could transfer their membership without paying a "new member" fee if a new club was formed near them.

In 1939, Zonta was not ready to let go of retired members with five or more years of membership. Consequently, a new membership category, Past Service Membership, was introduced. To remain an organization for business and professional women, it was felt that this category should be a small group. By club option, it was restricted to a maximum of 10 per cent of the active membership.

To understand the organization, we must also look at Membership Qualifications. They are clearly described in the *Official Classification Guide to Zonta* (1954) with clarifications added from 1956:

It is not the purpose of Zonta to get as large a membership as possible, but to have recognized businesses and professions of the highest type represented in Zonta by women of the finest caliber who are the most truly representatives of those businesses and professions.

As it was felt this wording might be misunderstood, it was changed in a *General Information Sheet* (1956) to: "It is the purpose of Zonta to secure as large a membership as possible composed of women of the finest caliber representing recognized businesses and professions".

To be a Zontian you needed to be an executive – "a person who formulates, determines or influences the administrative policies of a business". Typical executive positions represented in Zonta are owner, co-owner, an officer of a company, director, or department head.

In 1966, Zonta had the following membership categories: Active, Senior Active, Merited, and a redefined Associate Member category.

Senior Active members had to have been active members for more than 10 years, and could be officers and represent the club. For each Senior Active member, the club could invite a new Active member with the same classification. This category disappeared in 1980.

Merited members were Zontians in good standing who had given noteworthy service to Zonta but who had lost their classifications because of retirement. They could not be officers or represent the club.

Associate members were members who had held active membership for at least five years but for whatever reason had become ineligible for Active membership. They could not be officers or represent the club. Non-active members could not exceed 20 per cent of the Active members.

The Standard Club Bylaws in 1982 changed the designation Active Member to Classified Member and allowed two members of the same classification per club.

The provision in the 1921 Bylaws to have a Classified Member from each of the media outlets (newspapers, radio, television, etc.) was still effective. If the territorial limits of the club embraced more than one community, the club was able to admit a maximum of four members in a classification provided that no more than 10 per cent of the total membership of the club was in the same classification.

The 1986 Bylaws edition reinstated the Non-resident Member category, now called: Member-at-Large, which could be granted to a Classified Member who relocated to an area with no Zonta club. Such membership allowed the member to receive *The Zontian* and to attend club, district and international meetings without a vote. A Member-at-Large remained on the roster of the originating club.

In 1990, club composition was made more flexible by an amendment to the Bylaws. The requirement since then has been that “each club shall have members actively engaged in a variety of classifications. The minimum number of classifications shall equal one-fourth (1/4) the total number of members in the club”.

According to the 1990 Bylaws:

to be invited to membership, a candidate shall be actively engaged in a recognized business or profession in a decision-making capacity....A classified member is a decision-maker accepted for membership under a major classification as shown in the Zonta International Membership and Classification Manual. Eligible for membership are executives and professionals, women (and men, at club option) in decision-making positions willing to support and implement the Objects of Zonta International. Membership candidates should be sought among the community leaders in varied business and professions.

The 2008 convention body changed the criteria for Classified Membership, giving senior citizens and those who had left their jobs to study or to care for children or elderly parents,

opportunities to serve Zonta as club presidents, club delegates, governors, etc. The wording of the 2008 Bylaws is: “to be invited to membership, a candidate shall be actively engaged in or have experience in a recognized business or profession in a decision-making capacity”.

This Bylaws amendment created an opportunity for Zonta to use the talents and time of their retired members and gave retired Zontians an opportunity to serve Zonta as equal members. However, depending on the proportion of retired members to members active in business, it also meant a change in the status of Zonta from a business organization to a civil society organization.

Once more, club composition was changed by the 2014 Bylaws, prescribing that:

Each club shall have members in a variety of classifications, described in the Zonta Club Manual and the Zonta International Marian de Forest Membership Manual and shall have a membership composition that is inclusive, diverse and reflective of the Objects of Zonta International.

Gone are the demands for a leadership position and a certain number of classifications per club. What matters now are members’ commitment to the Zonta International goals, and members’ willingness to fight for them.

The 2016 convention adopted a resolution on a pilot category: Young Professional membership. The purpose was to attract mainly, but not only, former members of the Z and Golden Z Clubs and awardees of Zonta International educational programs. The Young Professional members under the age of 30 pay 50 per cent of the international dues. Full district, area and club dues apply unless the district, area or club decides otherwise. They have the same rights as classified members. The 2018 convention adopted Young Professional membership as a permanent category.

The 2018 convention body also adopted a resolution which was a fundamental change for Zonta.

Until 2018, all Zonta members were members of a Zonta club, and all Zonta clubs were members of Zonta International. The resolution at the 2018 convention opened a new category called Individual member with this definition:

An individual member is a person in a recognized business or profession who wants to join Zonta without being committed to a club. An individual member holds direct membership with Zonta International and may later transfer to a club. The individual member is directly connected to Zonta International. They may attend an international convention. They may attend a district conference and/or club meeting with the approval of the district and/or club. They are not entitled to vote at any level of Zonta. They may serve on an International Committee but are not eligible to serve on the International Board. The individual member shall comply with the rules and policies of Zonta International.

The rationale given was that membership was declining and that the new category had the potential to increase membership by attracting women and men who want to be a part of Zonta without being a member of a club, or who support Zonta’s mission but whose personal or professional situation prevents participation at club level. Opponents at the Yokohama

convention drew attention to the fact that the organization might face difficulties controlling this new membership category, and that that it may affect district, area and club income as well as the operation of Zonta International, because of the additional work required by Headquarters staff.

The 2020 Convention shall decide if the individual membership category shall continue.

**(b) The organization: The international level**

Since Zonta's inception, the highest authority has been the international convention, held annually until 1952 and biennially since then. The voting members are the members of the Zonta International Board, past international presidents, governors and club delegates. In 1920, the international Board included the officers: the Confederation President/International President, three Vice-Presidents (two Vice-Presidents as of June 1934), and the Treasurer, elected at the annual convention, plus the district chairmen (called district governors as of 1949 and elected at the annual district conferences). As of 1921, the Executive Secretary was a member of the Board, without voting rights.

More than once, the organization chart was scrutinized. However, no changes were made until the international convention in Sydney in 1984, when the convention body adopted several changes effective from the end of the 1986 convention.

A district revision, including the creation of more districts, was needed because of the increasing number of clubs. Governors' membership of the Zonta International Board was an issue for this change, so it was absolutely necessary to change the composition of the Board.

As of July 1986, the members of the Zonta International Board were: Zonta International President, Zonta International President-Elect, a Vice-President, a Treasurer and seven International Directors, with election of officers and directors to take place at the Zonta International Convention. The elected Nomination Committee, with a geographical balance, put together the slates of candidates and ensured that the best candidates were nominated. Staggered terms for directors were introduced in 2000 to secure a better continuity between boards. However, the inconveniences were felt to be stronger than the advantages and staggered terms were dropped in 2009.

The International Board and the club delegates have always been voting members at international conventions. Since 1986 the governors, no longer members of the international Board, are voting members as well.

The official levels of the organization were, and are still, three: club, district and international. However, as districts grew to hold more clubs, and distances between clubs in some districts were very large, the decision was made to divide the districts into areas with area directors as leaders. Area directors are members of the district board, but have no voting rights at convention, and the line of communication is from club to governor to Zonta International Board liaison. For many years, area dues were paid in some areas, but were not included in the Bylaws until the amendment at the Rotterdam convention in 2008.

As part of the reconstruction of the organization a resolution was passed at the 1984 international convention in Sydney authorizing the establishment of the Zonta International Foundation. The Foundation was incorporated in the State of Illinois on 15 January 1985.

The Zonta International Foundation has one corporate member (Zonta International), its own Bylaws and its own board. Since 2009 the Zonta International Foundation Board membership is the same as that of the Zonta International Board – candidates stand at convention for both roles.

In 1986, the Zonta International Foundation purchased a building in West Randolph Street, Chicago and Zonta International administration moved there in 1987 after renovation had taken place. The renovation was a bigger and more expensive project than anticipated and the building was put up for sale in 2008. The sale of the building at West Randolph Street was effected before the 2010 convention but the sale and the circumstances around the sale, as well as the renting of new offices, caused a crisis in the organization.

### **(c) Zonta districts**

Zonta districts have existed since 1920. When governors were no longer members of the Zonta International Board, there was no impediment to new districts being created – and they were! In 1984 when the changes were adopted, Zonta International had 19 districts. In 1986, after the changes to the Bylaws, the first new districts were created when District XIII was divided into Districts XIII, XX and XXI. Later district revisions brought the number of districts to 32. (As of August 2018, there were 31 districts plus Region South America.)

The side-effects of splitting the big District XIV, effective from 1994, were the establishment of European Inter-district Conferences, weekend seminars, and European Inter-district Seminars, starting in 1995. Zontians in North America and Asia were inspired to create similar events. The European Inter-district Seminars and the North American Inter-district Meetings have become popular events where many Zontians participate in important debates and enjoy Zonta fellowship.

As of 2019, every continent except Antarctica hosts Zonta clubs, the continents with the smallest Zonta representation being South America and Africa. The goal of having Zonta clubs in all commercial cities of some size has not yet been met, and clubs in many smaller towns have faced difficulties and have had to close. However, new technology has brought new opportunities such as e-clubs, which might create an increase in the number of clubs and members.

At the time of writing, there are no thorough investigations of what sort of organization business and professional women are looking for. However, it does not seem to be service organizations, because they require a lot of time and work as well as commitment to the mission.

### **(d) Themes**

1923: Fair and Square, Every Time, Everywhere

1988: Successful Executives Serving the World

1992: A Worldwide Service Organization of Executives in Business and the Professions  
Working Together to Advance the Status of Women

1997: Advancing the Status of Women Worldwide  
2014: Empowering Women through Service and Advocacy  
2018: Honor and Empower (Centennial motto).

**(e) Important issues in the 1920s and 1930s**

(Mara Dodge in *The Zonta Woman*, p. 89, article from *The Zontian* 1983)

**i. Service**

In 1920, Zonta clubs voted to take for their specific aim “educational and constructive work for girls and young women” (Clara H. Witt, *Early History of Zonta, The Zontian, November 1929*). *Vocational Education for Girls* was Zonta’s first US service program, adopted at the 1928 convention. The program, which was closely adhered to over the next decade, recommended: (1) that vocational guidance be considered in its broad interpretation, that is, to include adults as well as youth and (2) that Zonta clubs prepare accurate documentation about occupations open to women and furnish it to prospective workers.

During the Depression the cause of the mature older woman became a special concern. At the 1930 convention, delegates adopted a program for a national survey on age discrimination.

In 1939, the Amelia Earhart Memorial Scholarship Award was inaugurated, encouraging the entry of women into new fields.

**ii. Status of Women, Advocacy**

Defending the right of women, especially married women, to work was a major focus throughout the 1930s. The issue of protective (read: discriminatory) legislation pertaining to women was heatedly debated at conventions in 1927, 1928 and 1929. The 1929 convention body adopted a resolution:

that women in the professions, in business and industry shall be free to work and be protected as workers, on the same terms as men, and that all legislation and regulations shall be based on the nature of the work and not upon the sex of the worker.

At the 1929 convention, attention was drawn to the issue of nationality rights for women. Clubs were encouraged to send letters to US President Herbert Hoover and their state legislators asking them to secure absolute equality in nationality rights with regard to women and children.

In 1935, a new object was adopted, and a Status of Women Committee was established and empowered to make all proper use of the resolutions in influencing legislation – to be done through the local clubs. At the 1936 convention, two Status of Women resolutions were adopted and in 1937, convention delegates resolved: “To oppose all legislation state and federal discriminating against women’s rights to gainful employment, married or single”.

It was the duty of the state chairman<sup>2</sup> to mobilize all Zonta clubs in her state to act upon legislation which is harmful to women. The 1938 convention adopted a resolution on Equity of Men and Women in the Civil Service without regard to marital status as well as a resolution on the National Labor Relations Act.

During the decade, local Status of Women committees conducted studies of discrimination against women and arranged programs on issues such as the role of the older women in business, minimum wage legislation for women, married women's right to work, the status of women in foreign countries, and women's contributions to peace.

### iii. World Affairs

The 1930 program asked Zonta clubs to study the League of Nations and the Kellogg Peace Pact "which tends toward the establishment of permanent peace". In 1931, Zonta's objects were amended to include work for peace, and the 1933 program asked clubs:

- (1) How and what can women do to combat present economic conditions...and help women from losing out in times like this?
- (2) Disarmament – in its various phases and its effect on the Depression
- (3) Getting the membership interested in government affairs and active in helping to create a better type of leadership.

The last topic was reselected for the 1934 program.

In 1939, World War II became a reality, and Zonta clubs were asked to develop a public affairs program "on the neutrality laws of the non-warring countries" and a second program based on "an analysis of war news and rumors".

The December 1939 issue of *The Zontian* asked "How Can Women's Participation in Public Affairs Contribute to World Peace?". The committee requested all answers to be based on "what your individual club has done this year, not in wishful thinking but in definite action".

### (f) Important issues in the 1940s and 1950s

(Mara Dodge in *The Zonta Woman*, p. 90, article from *The Zontian* Feb./Mar. 1983)

During the war years, the International Relations Committee undertook comprehensive studies of the "sound fundamentals of international trade", the "international aspect of airways", raw materials, and natural resources. Reports on these issues were presented at conventions.

In 1942, a "women's peace resolution" was adopted, followed in 1944 by a resolution endorsing the proposal "that job opportunities in the postwar world must be open to men and women alike without discrimination in rate of pay because of sex".

Delegates to the 1946 convention voted to return Zonta's service program to "the original broad plan of educational and constructive work for girls and young women" and, in 1947,

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<sup>2</sup> Author's note: This is the only reference found to a "state chairman".



Zonta clubs voted to support the Western Pacific Area Teacher's Scholarship initiated by the Zonta Club of Honolulu. In 1948, the first Z club was established.

However, there were many areas of concern on the Zonta agenda in this period: civil defense, registration and the vote, juvenile delinquency, the older woman, television, problems of the displaced persons, traffic and safety, career information and vocational guidance. Zontians recognized: "whether we like it or not, we are going to be forced into taking a stand on many problems of political significance". Consequently, in 1948, a Resolutions Committee was established, empowered to investigate public issues and prepare position statements in the form of resolutions to be voted on at international conventions. Three major resolutions were adopted in the 1950s:

- (1) provisions for children and youth (1951)
- (2) public safety (1954)
- (3) equality for women (1954).

"The general problem of equality for women is closely related to the...level of living standards, the opportunities and the social welfare of a country" (1954 resolution).

Zonta cooperated closely with the United Nations from its founding in 1945, sending observers to conferences, spreading information and publicizing its activities in *The Zontian*. The 1950 convention adopted the UN Resolution and the 1956 convention delegates expressed their concern over nuclear developments: "Resolved. That Zonta clubs support the efforts of their governments toward peaceful uses of atomic energy, especially as these efforts may be made through the framework of the United Nations".

During the 1950s, Zonta's International Relations Committee continued to follow United Nations activities while working to expand Zonta's own international character. The Friendship Project began in 1952 and helped to promote international friendship and understanding among Zontians.

### **(g) Important issues in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s**

(Mara Dodge in *The Zonta Woman*, p. 91, article from *The Zontian* April/May 1983)

In recognition of Zonta's international stature and international service projects, Zonta was granted consultative status with the United Nations through ECOSOC in 1963. Zonta's UN observers attended meetings and reported regularly on international affairs in *The Zontian*.

During the 1960s, Zonta clubs became concerned with the great threat of war posed by the growing arsenal of nuclear weapons and their vast destructive power. Many resolutions and program guides focused on the issue of disarmament.

At conventions during this era, it was resolved that Zonta clubs:

- support a campaign of public education to understand the subject of disarmament (1962)
- strive to increase their understanding of the subject of disarmament (1964, 1966)
- study the relationship of disarmament to world peace (1968)
- support the promotion of the peaceful uses of outer space (1982).

During the 1970s, Zonta clubs actively promoted the United Nations. Zontians pressed for the inclusion of women, and the recognition of women's economic contributions to society, in developmental planning and aid programs.

Because agricultural work is largely the task of women in most developing countries, a meeting of women's NGOs (WINGO) in 1972, chaired by Zontian Leota Pekrul, sent a recommendation to ECOSOC asking that: (1) "women and girls be given equal access to education" and (2) "women be included in all technical cooperation programs in the field of agriculture".

Zonta was also concerned with human rights and the issues of racial discrimination and apartheid. Clubs were encouraged to monitor progress and human rights violations in their countries.

#### **i. Status of women**

During the 1960s, Zonta worked to advance the status of women through close cooperation with the UN Commission on the Status of Women. In 1962, equality was defined as a basic human right for women and it was stated "that Zonta take an increasingly active role in furthering the advancement of women everywhere".

Increased political participation for women was a special focus. Zonta conventions in 1964 and 1966 resolved:

that Zonta clubs urge women to: (a) keep informed on public affairs; (b) accept their full responsibilities to participate in government at all levels; (c) serve in appointive and elective offices; and (d) endorse and support qualified women in elected positions.

Zontians recognized that "the work for equal rights, improvement of the status of women, and equal opportunities for education and employment steadily increase the need for adequate childcare facilities". Zonta clubs were encouraged to work to establish nursery schools and daycare centers "in the interest of the wellbeing of children and the improvement of the status of women".

Throughout the 1970s, Zontians repeatedly voiced their full commitment to equality between the sexes:

Resolved. That each Zontian recognize that her membership connoted her opposition to all forms of discrimination against women and commits her to work actively for the elimination of all discriminatory laws, practices, and attitudes in any part of the world (Conventions of 1970, 1972, 1974, 1976).

Zonta clubs were asked to:

- (1) sponsor workshops to prepare women for more active participation in politics at all levels
- (2) work with labor unions to promote equal participation of women in the labor union movement
- (3) make available stipends or scholarships for mature women who want more schooling.

Access to family-planning services was also seen as central to improving the status of women. The Status of Women Committee stated: "Family planning is necessary in every Zonta country. Zonta clubs can make a study of family planning and evaluate the problem in their own communities. They can work with established programs or create their own" (Conventions of 1972, 1974 and 1976).

During the 1980s, Zonta International identified the issue of women and aging as "the most urgent and crucial women's issue of this decade". The world's aging society is predominantly female. In a statement before the NGO Forum at the World Assembly on Aging (1982), Zonta argued that:

- (1) public policy towards the aged can often be linked to biased cultural practices towards women throughout the lifespan,
- (2) economic security for aging women begins with equitable treatment of women in the workforce, and
- (3) resources of older women need to be identified and activated.

Zonta's service efforts expanded dramatically during the 1960s and, during the 1970s and 1980s, service work became increasingly international in character.

Zonta was actively engaged in the UN Conferences on Women in 1975, 1980 and 1985, and published *Attitudes and background of European Career Women* and *The Zonta Woman*.

#### **(h) Important issues in the 1990s**

Zonta International continued cooperation with the United Nations and service projects were in cooperation with UNIFEM and UNICEF.

In 1995, Zonta's participation in the UN Conference on Women in Beijing encompassed:

- (1) a panel discussion entitled: *The UN/NGOs: Empowering Women for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, and
- (2) workshops on six topics.

In the same year, Zonta International held a Summit on Violence against Women in Washington D.C. and, since 1998, the Zonta International Strategies to End Violence Against Women (ZISVAW) program supports international service projects that promote and protect the human rights of all women and girls and work to end gender-based violence worldwide.

Advocacy and service focused on ending female genital mutilation.

Zonta's strategic plan encompassed service to youth and new educational programs were adopted:

- (1) Young Women in Public Affairs Program (YWPA) in 1990
- (2) Jane M. Klausman Women in Business Scholarships in 1998
- (3) Michael J. Freeman Scholarship for Irish Women (established in 1988 and restructured in 1996).

## **(i) Important issues in 21st century**

### **i. Zonta and the UN**

Zonta International, districts and clubs advocate at the international, national and local levels on issues related to human rights and gender equality.

At the international level, Zonta International advocates on global issues primarily through the United Nations and the Council of Europe.

At the national level, Zonta districts, areas and clubs take action in support of, or in opposition to, legislation on issues affecting women and girls.

At the local level, Zonta clubs monitor laws and policies and their impact on women, participate in hearings and public meetings with local politicians and administrators, and host speakers and panels to raise awareness about issues affecting women in their local communities.

Zonta International UN Committee teams represent Zonta in New York at UN Headquarters; in Geneva at the UN Office and ILO headquarters; in Vienna at the UN Office; and in Paris at UNESCO. The teams ensure that Zonta's priorities are presented, and that Zonta's voice is clear in mission-related meetings at their respective sites. They meet and work with decision-makers from UN agencies and countries where Zonta has funded projects and/or where Zonta clubs are located.

The current priority area of focus is the Sustainable Development Goals, which set the UN agenda 2015–30, concentrating on Goal 5 and areas that relate to women's empowerment. The teams also monitor and report on ongoing issues such as human trafficking, women's employment, human rights, the gender pay gap, and much more. Team members work in coalition with other like-minded organizations on issues of mutual concern, such as early and child marriage.

### **ii. Zonta and the Council of Europe**

Zonta International is a member of the Conference of International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs), a group of all INGOs with participatory status at the Council of Europe. In 2015, the work of the Council of Europe team focused primarily on the Istanbul Convention, which is the strongest international agreement on ending violence against women. The team has encouraged Zonta districts and clubs both within and outside Europe to learn more about the Convention and to advocate for their governments to sign, ratify or accede to the Convention as appropriate.

### **iii. Advocacy and Service**

Zonta's service and advocacy projects used to cover many issues, among them girls' education and women's rights and health. The trend in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is to narrow the field to girls' and women's education and to focus on women's rights as human rights, including the root causes, particularly from 2014.

All Zonta clubs have been engaged in the *Zonta Says NO to Violence against Women* campaign which started in 2012 and was extended to 2020:

Violence against women is a worldwide pandemic – it crosses every social and economic class, every region, race and ethnicity. At least one out of every three women worldwide has experienced violence during her lifetime. We in Zonta International cannot accept this – we need to use all our energy to eradicate violence against women locally and internationally through service and advocacy (Sonja Hönig Schough, Zonta International President 2016–18).

26 September 2018, in support of ending child marriage, Zonta International President, Susanne von Bassewitz, made a statement on eliminating child marriage in Africa at a high-level side-event at the United Nations General Assembly. The event, organized by the permanent missions of Canada and Zambia to the United Nations, UNICEF, UNFPA and UN Women, engaged African Heads of State and Governments in a dialogue on child, early and forced marriage with the goal of renewing commitments to implement national strategies to end child, early and forced marriage.

President Susanne addressed Zonta International's latest work in ending child marriage through a new collaborative project with UNICEF and UNFPA, which builds upon Zonta's efforts to end violence against women through its global *Zonta Says NO to Violence Against Women* campaign.

The decision to focus on ending child marriage comes from Zonta's experience with UNFPA's *Ending Child Marriage* project in Niger and the fact that UNICEF and UNFPA had joined forces in a long-term commitment to address the issue globally. In the 2018–2020 biennium, Zonta allocated an additional USD\$2 million to ending child marriage – the largest annual contribution Zonta has made to a project to date.

By joining this global partnership, Zonta aims to contribute a lot more than funding; it aims to raise the voice of opinion leaders in order to secure the human rights of millions of vulnerable girls throughout the world.

On 27 September 2018, Zonta International President Susanne von Bassewitz made a statement at the Private Sector and Philanthropic Leaders' SDG5 Forum in New York about the need to reach beyond immediate humanitarian needs to empower displaced women living in refugee camps, as seen in the Syrian refugee camps in Jordan. The forum, organized by UN Women, called upon all private sector and philanthropic leaders to renew their commitment to the ambitious 2030 Agenda which can only be achieved by engaging and empowering women.

Although Zonta International is not a humanitarian relief organization, the opportunity to empower Syrian women in and outside the camps through the *Eid bi Eid* project was a clear way for Zonta to positively affect the women impacted by the crisis. This project will build resilience and empower both Syrian and Jordanian women through livelihood opportunities, improved policies to support women's economic empowerment, and strategies to address gender inequalities and gender-based violence for women living in refugee camps and in the surrounding communities.

In September 2017, Zonta International President, Sonja Hönig Schough, announced Zonta International's support for UN Women's *HeForShe* campaign, a global movement

that aims to mobilize one billion men to accelerate the achievement of gender equality. Through innovative online, offline and mobile phone technology, *HeForShe* identifies and activates men and boys in every city, community and village around the world.

Gender equality is not a women's issue – it is an issue for all human beings which can only be achieved by women and men working together as equal partners. Together we are stronger and by joining efforts with like-minded organizations, we can do even more.

In addition to influencing the making and implementation of laws and general attitudes, Zonta clubs and districts can now extend their advocacy efforts to the business sector. We can foster the adoption of *Women's Empowering Principles* (WEPs) in the practices of our own network, in the practices of our employers, and in the practices of other employers in our communities and countries

#### **iv. Important position papers**

2015 Statement on Women's Rights and Non-state Terrorist Groups

2016 Position Paper on Migration

2016 Position Paper on Prostitution

2016 Position Paper on Trafficking in Persons.

#### **(j) Who are the Zonta members, and why did they choose to be Zontians?**

"Above everything else, we must adhere to our high classification principles and requirements" said Marian de Forest, underlining the point where Zonta's structure broke from the structure of other women's groups (de Langis p. 6).

Members should be experts in their business or profession. Only one member per club was allowed under each classification. Zonta membership was an extension of professional life that signaled the highest ethical and business standards.

During the Great War (World War I), women had been working in businesses and professions because men were away fighting the war. Immediately after the War, many women felt insecure about their future and, as the first generation of women employed at the executive level, Zontians wanted to make a place for themselves in a then male-dominated field. Zonta emphasized the importance of women acquiring the skills necessary for the world of business: cooperation, teamwork and good fellowship, but they were also eager to bring to the business world what were considered feminine virtues.

Twenty years ago, de Langis interpreted Marian de Forest's description of the Zonta woman: in short, (she) was self-reliant and self-actualized, capable and committed. She used what were, according to the custom of the day, women's greatest capacities – understanding, kindness and sympathy – not only to enhance the spheres of the home and the church, but also to improve the business world and civic arena (de Langis, p. 07).

Despite many obstacles, middle class women continued to enter the workforce in unprecedented numbers. The Journal of the National Federation of Business and Professional Women asked in 1921: "Has Modern Women Disrupted the Home?". In January 1923, *The Zontian* put this question "Can a woman do a man's work and at the

same time run a successful home, even a home with children in it?”. The answer was given by Zontian Helen Z. M. Rodgers, a prominent Buffalo lawyer: “What we need in this country is a sane public opinion which will sustain married women who wish to do outside work...there’s nothing in the world so healthy as business for a woman”. This was indeed a radical point of view at that time (de Langis, p. 8).

Celebrating Zonta’s tenth anniversary, Confederation President 1927–29, Katherine B. Sears offered this description of a Zontian:

Zonta is not an organization for the faint-hearted, the small in spirit, the person too busy to render service. It is for those who can accept a challenge to enter the world of affairs, clear-eyed, keen-witted, generous, world-wide in sympathetic understanding and faith in womankind.

Looking back to when Zonta started, two Detroit charter members, Lillian May Egan and Minerva L. Egan, remembered a remark made by a former district chairman: “The strength of an organization such as Zonta lies in the fact that we give value to our lives by attaching ourselves to a club with high motives and sound principles” (*The Zontian* Sept/Oct./Nov 1994 p. 9).

Jennifer A. Loughton found this statement from a charter member of the first overseas Zonta Club, Zonta Club of Sydney: “to be an independent career woman in Australia in the 1920s and 1930s demanded considerable courage and determination and [Sydney Zontians] welcomed one another’s support and encouragement” (Jennifer A. Loughton, *Empowering Women*, p. 16).

The Australian Zontians who joined in the latter half of the 1960s probably joined Zonta for the same reasons

The name change to Zonta International at the 1930 convention indicated the goal: a global organization.

The Zonta idea was exported to Europe with the chartering of the Zonta Club of Vienna in 1930. In the years following the end of World War II, many clubs were chartered in the USA, a few in Latin America and Asia, and several in Europe. By 1960, there were so many active Zonta clubs in Europe that the Zonta International Board adopted Zonta International President Audra E. Francis’s proposal to establish two European districts (Districts XIII and XIV), effective from the end of convention in 1962.

Western Europe after 1945 was characterized by building or rebuilding democratic structures, revitalizing civil society, and establishing friendship links with the USA or far-away countries like New Zealand. Zonta offered international meetings, educational programs, open-house programs, international service projects. Irene Wiese von Ofen, Zonta Club of Essen, Past International Director, offers this interpretation:

After war times with the loss of values and moral integrity – especially concerning German members – after the loss of housing, property and security in their lives and an increasing stream of refugees, after living in autocratic countries, the desire of peace and friendship, of being recognized as members of another generation was an important impulse to join Zonta in the years 1950–80 as an organization

working for peace, understanding and service as well as the advancement of women.

In the 1990s, these reasons also motivated the founding of Zonta clubs in the states of Eastern European States, formerly part of the Soviet sphere (Letter from Irene Wiese von Ofen to Eva Nielsen, November 2017 after the meeting of European district historians).

In November 1984, The Zonta International Board approved conducting a study, *The Zonta Woman*.

Dr. Burleigh Gardner of Social Research, Inc. analyzed the data from questionnaires completed by 10,841 Zontians from 47 countries.

From the examination of both survey statistics and written comments from respondents I developed an image of the Zonta woman: she is energetic, ambitious and determined to achieve her goals. She recognizes the problems of having a successful career in what still remains a man's world yet is not deterred by the efforts required.

At the same time, she recognizes the rewards of marriage and children and accepts the added burdens they impose.

Although she believes in equality for women, she is not militant in her cause. She believes in earning her equality through excellence in her career.

She received encouragement from her parents, and her husband, too, takes pride in her achievements.

To make a broad generalization, I see Zontians as leaders in a dynamic process of social change, which is sweeping the world. As successful careerists, they are proving that women can meet with men, as equals in what long has been a man's world of technical, business and professional careers.

As mothers, they are passing to the next generation values and attitudes in which competence and ability will replace sex, wealth, or heritage as the promising sources of prestige. Thus, these changes will become embedded in society, passed on from her to future generations.

Many of these Zontians realize that the roles they pass on to their children are a major contribution to the changing status of women. As one states: "Women should make sure that sons and daughters are brought up to think of the opposite sex as equal. The children should be taught to do the same chores around their home and be given the same opportunities".

As part of this change, women must make their own decisions and not just follow the customs of the society or demands of their families. To quote one respondent: "If you really want to do something, get cracking and do it. You will find a way to make it happen".

Zontians are also aware that, as women in successful careers, they should encourage other women to be more determined in following careers. Many feel they have a responsibility to advise and help other women to succeed and encourage them to make their own decisions (*The Zonta Woman*, p. 30–31).

Self-esteem was still high in Zonta in the 1990s. Leneen Forde, Zonta International President 1990–92, articulated it this way:



As Zontians we have a special quality which sets us apart from other successful executives and professionals. We are achievers who care. We are conscious of the responsibilities attached to our status. We are concerned enough to contribute to the common good both globally, with our international projects, and locally in our own communities (*The Zontian Program Issue 1990–92*, p. 4).

Shortly before Zonta reached its 75<sup>th</sup> birthday, Zonta International Foundation President, PIP Eleanor Jammal, gave this description:

By being Zontians, we help ourselves. We join in fellowship with our club members in improving women's working and living conditions in our cities, countries and the world. We are fortunate to have opportunity to network with the Zontians in the same or similar professions in countries around the world (*The Zontian June/July/August 1994*, p. 25).

In November 1934, Zonta's first part-time secretary, Clara H. Witt, Zonta Club of Buffalo, described Zonta's growth and the Zontians behind it in these words:

Tolerance, the basis of our international growth, has strengthened the Status of Women all over the world, has increased the demand for the organization of clubs in new territories and has united all women who possess higher education and proven abilities for the betterment of mankind....Our present members do not realize the many difficulties that our charter clubs met and solved. They struggled to retain the high ideals that brought them together in the first place, and Zonta's tremendous growth and harmonious relations have been made possible only because our pioneer leaders, meeting obstacles, had the courage to remove them. (*The Zontian Sept./Oct./Nov. 1994*, p. 8).

In 1999, Jane O'Brien, Zonta International Director, wrote: "We, as Zontians, understand the importance and relevance of being explorers; we embrace new challenges" (*The Zontian 1998–2000 Biennial Issue 6*, p. 9).

Immediately before the start of the new millennium, Zonta International President, Val Sarah, advised Zontians:

What we have in abundance, always, is choice! As individuals and within our clubs, we can choose the commitment we wish to make locally and globally in pursuit of our mission to advance the status of women. What we should always keep in the forefront of our thinking is a profound belief that our chosen commitment makes a difference! If it is to be, it is up to me – the Power of One.

In the July 2018 issue of *The Zontian*, Zonta International President, Susanne von Bassewitz, explains why she joined Zonta:

Although I joined for service and was eager to do projects in the community, the fellowship in the still young club truly amazed me. Very early on, a club member that I had just met helped me solve an urgent problem in my job. And since I was new in Nürnberg, the open house evenings offered a wonderful opportunity to connect. And then there was a very open exchange, also on job challenges, that did not exist in my professional life. We empowered ourselves. When I joined Zonta, I was still the only woman in a director's position in my company. And then there is

the fact that Zonta is an international organization (*The Zontian* 2018–2020 Biennium Issue One, July 2018, p. 5).

For almost 100 years, the things described in the Zonta Objects have attracted women to Zonta: fellowship, networking, empowering women through service and advocacy, and working for peace through the United Nations and through personal friendships.

Even if many changes have taken place, the world of 2019 still has a long way to go to reach these goals:

- women’s rights are recognized as human rights and every woman is able to achieve her full potential
- every woman is literate and has access to education, health care, legal and economic resources on an equal basis with men
- the world is free from violence against women.

The word ‘disruption’ is used more and more often when consultants try to describe what is now going on in the world. What disruption will mean to Zonta we do not know; we can see declining membership, yet increasing influence. Zonta will need talented, courageous women to adapt the organization to what women in the 2020s look for in order to make their lives more interesting at the same time as they are empowering women and advancing the status of women worldwide with “conviction, commitment and courage” (PIP Maria José Landeira Oestergaard’s motto, 2014-2016).