

# Overall Review of Zonta International

## Executive Summary

Zonta International is at a crossroads. The 2018-2020 Zonta International Board recognized some historical concerns that would need response in order for Zonta International to thrive in its second century. These include, among others:

- Limited Brand Awareness – In many countries Zonta International and its critical mission of advocacy is not well known or understood. Educating more people about Zonta International is necessary for success.
- Membership Decline – There are fewer Zontians working to implement Zonta's mission and support Zonta's work at a district and local (club/country) level. More people need to be engaged.
- Reduced Leadership Engagement – Fewer club members are willing to be club and district leaders. New leader recruitment is critical.
- Uncoordinated Advocacy Efforts – Although Zonta International has strong global relationships at the United Nations and Council of Europe, advocacy efforts at district and country level are often not as coordinated as they could be. A common approach to advocacy, customized as needed, should be established.
- Financial Sustainability – The effects of a decline in membership means that additional revenue opportunities need to be explored.

To start the process to address these historical concerns, the 2018-2020 Zonta International Board introduced a resolution for Zonta International to conduct an organizational review. This review would include an assessment of its membership base, governing structures and operational framework. The goal was to identify areas in need of reform and to make recommendations for potential changes. The resolution read:

*“Entering the new century, Zonta International needs to make bold decisions to ensure that the organization is in the best position to remain a leading global organization for empowering women and girls. The time is right to analyse whether a simplified framework for membership, governance and operations would help Zonta meet the challenges of change. In recognition of work initiated in this biennium, the Zonta International Board proposes the overall review of Zonta International's organizational structure to be conducted under the leadership of the Zonta International Board for the 2020-2022 biennium. The Board will engage with the membership as it conducts a review of Zonta International, including its membership base, governing structures and operational framework, with the goal to identify areas in need of reform and to make recommendations for potential changes. A report to the Zonta International Convention 2022 along with potential recommended changes will be presented.”*

The resolution was approved in 2020 with overwhelming support of 97% of voting members.

To implement this resolution, the 2020-2022 Zonta International Board conducted the organizational review, with workstreams focusing on four areas: strategy, governance, membership and advocacy.

The process for the organizational review included:

- Assessment of internal and external research, including industry best practices and a review of the challenges/opportunities facing similar service and membership organizations.
- Facilitation of Board discussions of the environment facing Zonta International and its clubs.
- Collection of Zontians' input through a pulse survey.
- Discussions with Zonta International global leaders such as club presidents, governors, past international presidents, relevant international committees and Headquarters' staff.
- Engagement of a global consulting firm to advise on modern best practices and facilitate the analysis.

As a result, and in light of the innovations made during the COVID-19 pandemic that business can be conducted electronically but doesn't replace friendship on a personal basis, the strategic modernization process should allow for the following:

- Increased club member input into decision-making.
- Improved responsiveness to club member priorities.
- Improved customization of Zonta initiatives by region.
- Expanded reach into new audiences.
- Simplified governance processes.
- Continued ethical stewardship of organizational resources.

Progress has also been made toward ensuring that Zonta International and Zonta Foundation for Women are financially sustainable after review of a 10-year financial forecast and the implementation of the Zonta International Operating Reserve, Foundation Program Reserves and Foundation Operating Spending Policies. Next steps include identifying new funding sources so Zonta Foundation for Women can continue to fund projects and programs to support women and girls in accordance with its mission.

## Strategic Planning

The most important conclusion upon review and discussion of the collected data was the need for a more formal Zonta International Strategic Plan to guide the future direction of the organization.

The following Strategic Planning Framework will be developed at the beginning of the 2022-2024 Biennium with Zontians' input. It should be noted that through this process, there is no plan to change the current vision and mission of Zonta International but to ensure that goals, strategies, resources and delivery mechanisms are aligned, and that the governance structure allows for flexibility to meet those goals.

<b>Vision</b>	How will the world be different if Zonta International is successful?
<b>Mission</b>	What role will Zonta International play in achieving the Vision?
<b>Mission Goals &amp; Strategy</b>	How will Zonta International achieve this role?
<b>Resource Goals &amp; Strategy</b>	How will Zonta International finance and sustain this role?
<b>Delivery Goals &amp; Strategy</b>	How will Zonta International activities be implemented?
<b>Governance</b>	How will Zonta International make decisions and monitor progress?

Once this strategic plan is in place, the 2022-2024 Zonta International Board will review the identified opportunities and recommendations from the 2020-2022 study about membership, advocacy and governance, as well as continue the work to study areas not addressed in depth in this initial organizational review, such as programs (service projects and education awards), fundraising and operations.

The 2020-2022 study identified these opportunities and recommendations in the areas of membership, advocacy and governance:

## **Membership**

- Define core values and promote an organizational value proposition to create shared understanding of Zonta's purpose and values as well as define how we want to be seen by those outside of Zonta.
- Allow Zontians and Zonta clubs more flexibility to organize themselves to encourage membership.
- Diversify membership strategies according to the needs by geographical regions.
- Raise Zonta's visibility around a more modern profile that shows Zonta's knowledge on issues facing women in the world.
- Focus on member recruitment, forming new clubs and opening new countries.
- Create a team of experienced Zontians in each district to support the district leadership and help them in expanding Zonta in their geographic area.
- Use other organizations, which have created successful membership strategies, as a template for membership strategies for Zonta International.

## **Advocacy**

- Create and communicate a shared concept and definition of advocacy.
- Specify the focus on Zonta's advocacy efforts on the following areas: violence against women, education, women at work and climate change.
- Increase the visibility of Zonta's advocacy efforts and relationships with the United Nations and Council of Europe.
- Evaluate re-branding Zonta International as a human rights organization for women and girls.
- Ensure each district has an advocacy committee and each club has a team working on advocacy matters to disseminate information to club members.
- In countries with more than one district, those districts should consider forming caucuses or unions to strengthen those advocacy efforts on a national level.
- Partner with other organizations on advocacy.
- Consider the value of recognizable spokesperson to improve public awareness of Zonta.

## **Governance**

- Reduce the prerequisites for stepping into governance roles at the district and international levels to attract younger candidates.
- Evaluate board eligibility to increase the diversity of the board and ensure that elected members have complementary competencies, skills and experiences; update the nomination process accordingly, and create an education process orienting members of the board to their roles.
- Review board tenure to ensure appropriate/effective continuity.
- Reconsider the timing of board elections to allow for onboarding and transition time from board to board.
- Ensure the board's role in setting strategy and monitoring performance is clearly defined.
- Complete a comprehensive review of the size and composition of districts with input from governors, and create a clear description of their role in the governance of Zonta International.
- Reduce and/or simplify the work of Zonta's club and district officers to allow more time to focus on service and advocacy.
- Lessen the administrative burdens on clubs by providing more flexibility in how clubs organize themselves, and by streamlining reporting requirements.

# Implementation

Many of the recommendations referred to above would not need any changes to the Zonta International Bylaws and operational changes in manuals and guidelines will be sufficient. However, a broader discussion with the membership and stakeholders will be needed during the 2022-2024 Biennium for considering more extensive changes.

Some of the governance related potential changes are included in proposed amendments to the Zonta International Bylaws. Delegates at the 2022 Hamburg Convention will vote on these proposed amendments (see “Report to Convention of the 2020-2022 Zonta International Bylaws and Resolutions Committee”).

Other considerations will need more discussion during the 2022-2024 Biennium. The focus being simplifying the Bylaws, removing barriers for participating in leadership, improving communication strategies, re-imagining conferences and convention, and reviewing International Board composition and roles

The Foundation support for programs and fundraising will be reviewed as part of the development of the long-term Strategic Plan and the Business Plan as proposed in the Biennial Goals 2022-2024.

## Timeline

- Full report – available 8 April 2022 on website
- Webinar – 26 April 2022
- Workshop – 25 June 2022 at Hamburg Convention

## Acknowledgements

The Zonta International Board appreciates the Zontians who participated in the pulse survey, the international committee chairs and Headquarters’ personnel that made themselves available to each of the workstreams, as well as the governors, club presidents and past international presidents who participated in the focus groups, as this input was key to forming the recommendations. The insights from the various perspectives were invaluable, and Zonta International will continue to ensure that there are continually touch points along the way to allow for this type of feedback on an ongoing basis.