

Overall Review of Zonta International

Zonta International has a proud history of more than 100 years of working to advance women's rights. The current membership, governance and operational arrangements have served the organization well but as Zonta International entered into its second century, it seemed timely to undertake a study to ensure Zonta International is set up to meet the challenges of the future and that Zonta International is in the best position to remain a leading global organization for empowering women and girls.

During this biennium, the 2020-2022 Zonta International Board worked on an organizational review of Zonta International, focused specifically on strategy, governance, membership and advocacy (Resolution 2). Zontians are passionate about the work they do, but there are certain rules and regulations or practices in place that do not make it easy enough to get involved, lead and help support Zonta's overall mission in empowering women and girls. In this report the findings identified during the review and recommendations for changes are discussed.

The Executive Summary issued as part of the Club Mailing is included in the Appendix. The Resolution 2 Working Group will host a webinar to provide information on its findings on 26 April 2022. There will be a workshop at the Hamburg Convention for a deeper discussion of the findings on 25 June 2022.

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Resolution 2 Report

Background

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:

- **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 (Figure 1). In addition to the club member decline, the number of Zonta clubs has also decreased in that same time frame, from 1,229 clubs in 2000 to 1,143 clubs in 2020. One-third of the clubs are below the threshold of 15 club members to charter a new club (Figure 2). More people need to be engaged.

Figure 1: Zonta's membership has declined since 2000

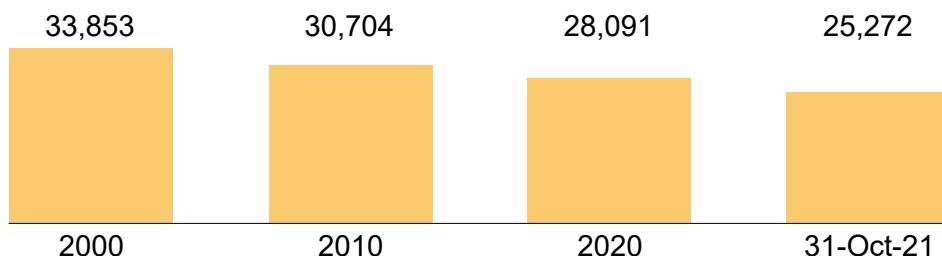


Figure 2: 30% of Zonta's clubs have 14 members or less, as of October 2021.*

33 clubs	247 clubs	510 clubs	185 clubs	124 clubs	19 clubs
50 to 67 members	30 to 49 members	15 to 29 members	11 to 14 members	6 to 10 members	1 to 5 members
70%			30%		

*Based on 1,123 Clubs that were either paid in full or partially paid at the end of October 2021.

- **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 address these identified 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.

For this organizational review President Langenbeck established a working group led by the appointed Chair, Vice President Salla Tuominen.

Terms of Reference

The first task of the Resolution 2 work was to create a Terms of Reference, which defined what was being looked at and the approach to this work. It broke the work down into stages, with an outline of what activity would occur in each stage and the approximate time frame that work would happen. It also identified seven workstreams to study—Strategy, Governance, Membership, Advocacy, Programs, Fundraising and Operations. However, it also prioritized the first four topics to be addressed during the 2020-2022 Biennium.

The Zonta International Board formed four workstreams for those topics. The participants were as follows:

Strategy:

- Souella Cumming (chair)
- Florence Fischer-Herber
- Ina Waesserling

Governance:

- Souella Cumming (co-chair)
- Ina Waesserling (co-chair)
- Dorte Olesen
- Mari McKenzie
- Salla Tuominen (until 17 June 2021)

Membership:

- Ute Scholz (chair)
- Hortense Chékéte
- Fernanda Gallo Freschi
- Akiko Kinoshita

Advocacy:

- Salla Tuominen (chair)
- Florence Fischer-Herber
- Akiko Kinoshita

The Terms of Reference also outlined what the Resolution 2 review was not tasked to do. The mission and objects of Zonta were out of the scope of this study, as was changing Zonta from a membership organization. The challenge was to analyze “how to best deliver service, advocacy and educational programs within a membership organization construct.”

The Terms of Reference set out a phased approach to this project as follows.

Stage 1: Planning

- Develop the scope of the study.
- Identify key stakeholders and mechanisms for receiving their input.
- Conduct a Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal and Environmental (PESTLE) analysis to understand how these factors are impacting the work of Zonta International, the climate within which Zonta does its work as well as Zontians' ability to further Zonta's mission of empowering women and girls.
- Identify an external advisor to facilitate the PESTLE analysis and provide constructive input into the working group.

Stage 2: Information Gathering

- Review the results of the PESTLE analysis.
- Review both internal and external documentation (including looking at how similar groups operate).
- Engage with identified stakeholders through surveys, focus groups and various Zonta meetings (including inter-district meetings, district conferences, etc.).

Stage 3: Analysis

- Analyze the information gathered for preparing a position paper for each workstream for discussion within the Board.
- Consolidate position papers for a Board-level discussion of findings and recommendations to bring to the 2022 Zonta International Convention and for the club mailing.

Stage 4: Reporting

- Document the conducted study.
- Inform Zontians of study content and recommendations in pre-convention sessions.
- Present of the report at the 2022 Zonta International Convention, with some of the findings being implemented in the 2022-2024 Biennial Goals and a proposed resolution to be voted on to continue the work of Resolution 2, to complete the work on fundraising, operations and education awards.

Discovery

PESTLE Analysis

The Board participated in a session with Association Laboratory Inc. to do a PESTLE analysis so that it could understand the world in which Zonta is working and how those factors impact Zonta, and to better plan and address these items. Although it was agreed that the workstream conversations should have an eye toward these identified issues and Zonta International's continuing roles in helping women and girls both navigate and solve those issues, the bulk of this analysis will be used in the next stage, the strategic planning process.

During the PESTLE analysis, the 2020-2022 Board was divided into two diverse groups to consider the following questions and to come to consensus:

- What issues will impact women and girls over the next three to five years?
- How do the factors agreed upon in the first question impact Zonta International?
- How do these factors impact the workstreams of Membership, Strategy, Governance and Advocacy?

Issues Impacting Women and Girls in the Future

Although a variety of issues were brought up and discussed, it was decided that the issues below were the most substantial forces that would impact the future of women and girls.

Political – Although many governments were pursuing policies to improve women's rights pre-COVID-19 pandemic, there were also an increasing number of governments that made it difficult for women and girls to have both autonomy and equal rights. The pandemic both escalated this negative trend and created a policy leader environment that was more inward looking as well as delayed policy innovations that could have benefited women and girls. In addition, the impact on the workforce created economic and social pressures for women to return to more traditional roles, added or strengthened resistance to women in decision-making roles and created barriers for women gaining education in the skills they need to participate in those decision-making roles.

Environmental – Climate change is having a disproportionate impact on women, yet they are often not part of the discussions on how to deal with this crisis.

Social – The pandemic highlighted the fragility of women's position in the workplace, the economic divide and how much of the burden of unpaid care work falls on women. It also highlighted the opportunity that governments have in supporting women in their efforts to adapt. However, violence against women and girls was heightened during the pandemic, removing the social structures and communications channels that were in place to help women and girls deal with, seek help on or escape from these situations.

Technology – The use of technology is essential to participating in the economy and has opened doors for women and girls to have independent lives, access to information and provide for their safety and security. However, there are still worrisome disparities and access and training that is essential.

Document Review

Each workstream also reviewed key activities of Zonta International, including past and current biennial goals, various data points from the organization, the results from the pulse survey, the feedback received during the various focus groups of the club presidents, governors, past international presidents and Headquarter staff, international committee chairs where appropriate and a literature review of best practices in its workstream area.

In addition, each workstream looked at other similar organizations to understand what those groups are doing differently, similarly and what Zonta International can learn from those differences.

Pulse Survey

In July 2021, Zonta International sent out a short survey to all Zontians via email. This survey had questions from each workstream that would help guide their recommendations. Approximately 3,000 Zontians responded to the survey, from 57 countries, representing approximately 32 districts, in addition to responses from 17 individual members. Data specific to the pulse survey responses are used throughout this report.

Focus Groups

Each workstream had questions for the district governors and club presidents, so a series of focus groups were scheduled via Zoom in October 2021. The governors and club presidents participated in separate calls, but each group's calls were grouped around membership and then another on governance, strategy and advocacy. There were two calls scheduled for each topic to provide participants the ability to participate when convenient for them and to accommodate time zones. In addition, there were separate invitations to past international presidents and to Zonta International's senior staff to participate in a Zoom call to provide feedback. Also workstreams discussed with the relevant international committee chairs/committees on the relevant topics.

Each session was facilitated by Association Laboratory Inc staff, and notes were provided to each workstream on discussion themes.

High-level Insights

As a result, and in light of the innovations made during the pandemic—that business can be conducted electronically but also that these means cannot 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. Actions taken this biennium included a comprehensive review of a 10-year financial forecast and the implementation of the Zonta International Operating Reserve, Foundation Program Reserves and Foundation Operating Spending Policies. But more needs to be done.

Steps must be taken to identify new ways for individuals to connect with Zonta's mission while creating new revenue sources for Zonta International and funding sources for the Zonta Foundation for Women. This is critical to create a vibrant community of members and supporters while also funding projects and programs to support women and girls.

Strategy Workstream

Findings

In addition to its review of all the material mentioned under Document Review, the Strategy Workstream also reviewed other organizations' approach to strategic planning.

After the review process, the Strategy Workstream assessed and identified risks and options.

The key findings from this workstream were:

- There is no current long-term strategy for Zonta International outside its mission statement. Although a review of the biennial goals over the past five biennia shows that the goals have been largely consistent, specific initiatives and projects vary from biennium to biennium, which does not allow for continuity or momentum and enthusiasm to be built and creates communication and timing issues when Zonta International engages with the international committees, districts and clubs. In addition, a long-term strategy would help Zonta International Headquarters better plan budgets and longer-term programs.
- The responsibility for the development of biennial goals sits primary with the president-elect. There is no consistent approach from president-elect to president-elect as to how these goals are devised, and although there is discussion with many relevant parties, including the staff and other Board members, the selected projects and/or initiatives are often based on personal priorities and in support of a "theme" of the biennium.
- The role of the international committees/districts/clubs/Headquarters in strategy development and implementation is not optimized.
- The timeliness of communicating and implementing the biennial goals at all levels is affected by the approach taken to the development of the goals. Since they are voted on at Convention, there is a lag in districts and clubs learning about them and then creating the infrastructure necessary at their level to fulfill them. At the club level, there might only be one year of actual work toward the goal, and then the goals change again. There is desire at the club level to align with Zonta International goals, but it just takes too long to get the structure in place when they change so often.
- Measurements of key performance indicators are not identified or monitored.

Solutions

The Strategy Workstream recommends that in order for Zonta International to successfully fulfill its mission, it is in Zonta International's best interest to develop a dynamic longer-term strategic plan that not only continues the vision (objects), mission and values of Zonta International but also ensures a dynamic and coherent development of the organization's strategy and goals, the resource strategy and goals, and the delivery strategy and goals. This would be a first step to truly being able to match the resource, volunteer energy and staff time to the projects and programs that will move the organization forward.

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, currently 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.

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

A lot of work has been done already to gather the information that would be necessary to create a strategic plan, so the focus should be on:

- **Defining** the issues to be dealt with in the strategy.
- **Defining** responsibilities to survey/engage Zontians and further develop the strategy.
- **Developing** the framework guide to enable future Zonta International Boards to use in future strategic planning.

Alongside the development of the strategic plan work will be undertaken to define a core set of values that underpin the Zonta spirit.

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

The Strategy Workstream recommends the Zonta International Board adopt a consensus approach of Board led with Zontians' input to provide a longer-term perspective and an opportunity for all Zontians to participate. It also provides clarity for those layers responsible for delivering the strategy. This is a key next step in being able to address the recommendations of the other workstreams, to ensure that the recommendations implemented are working together to move the organization forward.

In addition, Zonta International should provide districts and clubs with a discussion guide to help them have conversations necessary for them to create their own goals within that strategic framework.

Governance Workstream

Findings

In addition to the documents outlined under Document Review, the Governance Workstream also spent extensive time understanding the impact of the Bylaws of Zonta International and how information flowed throughout the tiered system, from clubs to districts (and sometimes areas) to Zonta International and back again. What this workstream identified was the following:

- The complexity of the layers of the organization creates a perception of bureaucracy.
- The term of office defined in the Bylaws for Zonta International Board members do not allow for a sufficient continuity of knowledge on the Board.
- The current governance arrangements place a focus on a two-year (biennial) cycle without allowing for continuity or alignment with the longer-term strategic direction of the organization.
- The role of Headquarters in the delivery of goals or strategy is not clearly defined.
- There are a number of overlapping roles and responsibilities among the international committees and Headquarters, as well as the committee structures of the districts and clubs.
- There is a large time commitment to participating in Zonta at every governance level because of the volunteer nature of the organization and the mix of governance and operational responsibilities assumed by boards.
- The role and size of districts varies considerably so there is a need for a comprehensive review of the role, size and composition of districts with input from governors to be completed.

Solutions

The Governance Workstream suggested some potential changes to streamline Zonta's governance system, but with the caveat that a strategic plan should be developed first to ensure that the governance structure could serve as the foundational support of that plan.

Some of the suggested changes of the Governance Workstream are already being proposed as amendments to the bylaws at the 2022 Convention. Delegates at the 2022 Hamburg Convention will vote on these proposed amendments.

Some of the other suggested changes include the following, with the recognition that there would need to be amendments to the bylaws in the future to implement any changes.

- **Prerequisites** - Reduce the prerequisites for eligibility into governance roles at the district and international level to attract younger candidates.
- **Board Tenure** – There is often no guaranteed continuity of Zonta International Board members from biennium to biennium outside of the president-elect, who typically is a person having served on the previous Board, and potentially the treasurer/secretary, who can serve two terms maximum. Although some training normally occurs at the first meeting of the Board, there is limited time to get up to speed with the issues governing an international organization before the Zonta International Board has to start immediately making decisions. The two-year term impacts the continuity of the Board's knowledge of issues facing the organization as well as their ability to take a longer-term focus. Allowing re-election of directors would presumably lead to some of them getting longer terms, and this would allow for institutional knowledge to remain on the Board in support of the incoming president's work.

- **Board composition** – In addition, it would make sense to also evaluate Board eligibility to increase the diversity of the Board and ensure that elected members have complementary competencies, skills and experiences and age. Once that is done, update the nomination process accordingly and then create an education process that orients members of the Zonta International Board to their roles and responsibilities.
- **Timing of elections** – Reconsider the timing of Board elections to allow for onboarding and transition time from Board to Board and with that, reimagine the role of Convention and conferences in governance. One of the positives of the pandemic is that it forced, via emergency powers, both Zonta International as well as many districts to use electronic voting because of the restrictions in place around meeting in person. Moving some of the business portion out of the convention and conferences would allow more time for discussion and debate of women's issues, motivational keynote speakers, and inspiring Zontians to deliver on Zonta's vision and mission.
- **International committees** – In order to reflect modern governance practices and allow for committees to be organized around strategic priorities, as well as to make use of more project-based task forces, the bylaws would need to be amended.
- **Role, size and composition of districts and areas** – Complete a comprehensive review of the size and composition of districts, with input from governors, to ensure the district structure is optimal and to 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** – This would allow more time to focus on services and advocacy.
- **Flexibility for clubs and districts** – Increased flexibility in how clubs and districts are organized would lessen the administrative burdens on clubs and streamline reporting requirements.
- **Club as member** – This is another point that needs more research. Allowing individuals to be the member of Zonta International would make it easier for individuals to pay their dues directly and care for their own data. In addition, removing the administrative burden would free up club boards to focus on local activities.
- **Redefine the role of the president** – The Zonta International Bylaws outlines that the president is also the CEO of the organization, which can lead to the president being much more involved in day-to-day operations that could be better handled by the executive director. In this scenario, the president could spend more time collaborating with Board members and international committee chairs to ensure the long-term strategic work of the organization.
- **Redefine the role of international treasurer/secretary** – The current role of the treasurer creates a large time commitment of that position and limits the potential field of candidates because of the financial skills necessary to manage Zonta International's finances. This needs more exploration.
- **Better define the role of Zonta International staff** – As association professionals, Headquarters staff bring valuable knowledge of how best to operationally run the organization and can provide historical knowledge and context around programs and services. The role of Headquarters staff should be to partner with the Board and international committee chairs to advance Zonta's mission in the most efficient way possible as well as to provide resources to the clubs and districts to carry out the work of Zonta. As the Executive Committee roles get defined, there needs to be more clarity on the roles and responsibilities of Headquarters' staff.

Membership Workstream

Findings

The Membership Workstream examined detailed membership numbers and trends as well as the situation and the membership strategies of like-minded organizations and the feedback from Zontians on the pulse survey. As stated at the beginning, there has been a 20-year trend in declining membership, both in terms of club members and number of clubs. For the financial budget, Zonta uses a yearly 3% to 5% membership decline. This trend has not stopped in spite of a variety of different strategies. None of the membership goals in previous biennia have been met. There is no reason to expect this trend to reverse itself unless there are changes made to the membership model, to provide alternate pathways for people to participate in Zonta's work of empowering women and girls.

33

The average length of years of membership in Zonta.

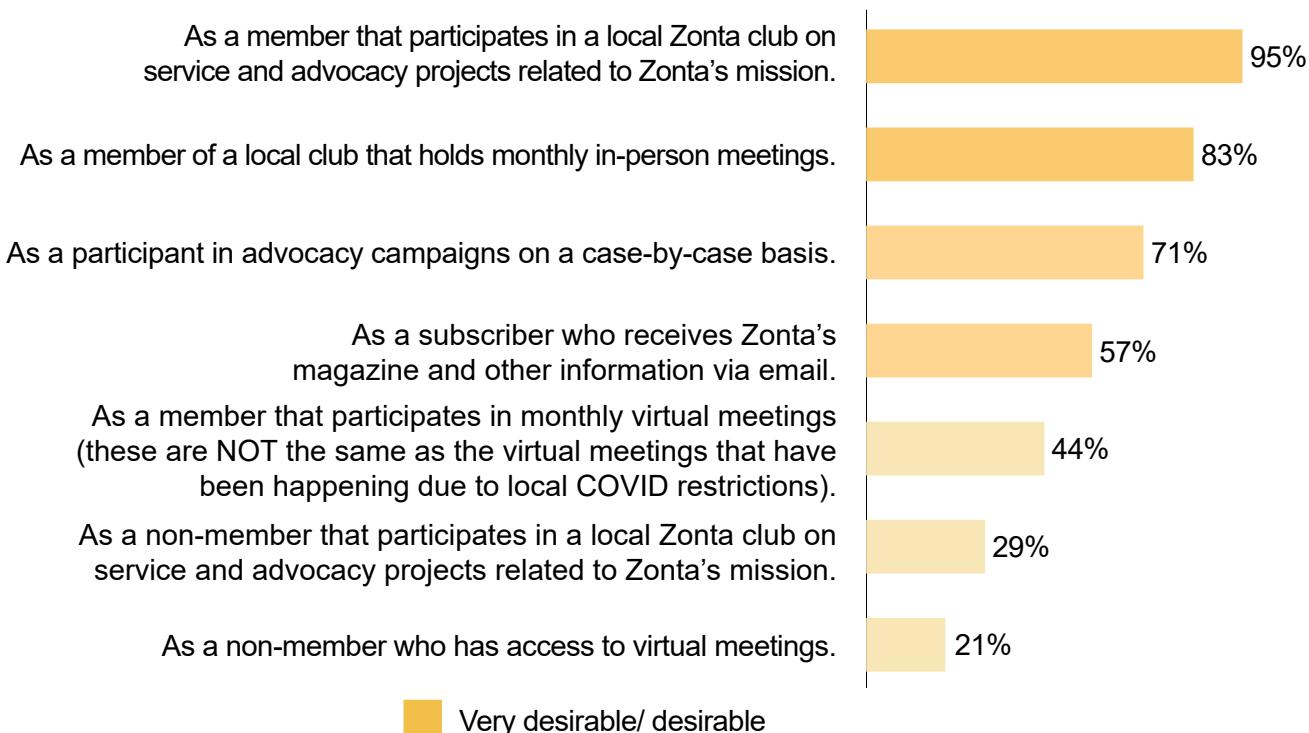
54%

Amount of Zontians who joined Zonta in 2016 who have since left the organization.

In addition to the declining membership, there is also an aging membership concern. 93% of respondents in Zonta's pulse survey were 46 years of age or older. The average length of membership in Zonta is 33 years, according to Zonta International's membership data. Engaging young people is difficult with the present value proposition, especially where the current club demographics are older. Integrating new members in clubs seems to be a challenge: 54% of Zontians who joined Zonta in 2016 have since left the organization. Without providing flexibility in ways to participate in Zonta, the organization risks losing Zontians to other, more flexible groups/networks that are working to empower women and girls.

In fact, members were asked on the pulse survey how they are most interested in interacting with Zonta, and although 95% said "as a member that participates in a local club on service and advocacy projects," 71% are interested in "participating in advocacy campaigns on a case-by-case basis," something that is not currently being promoted (Figure 3).

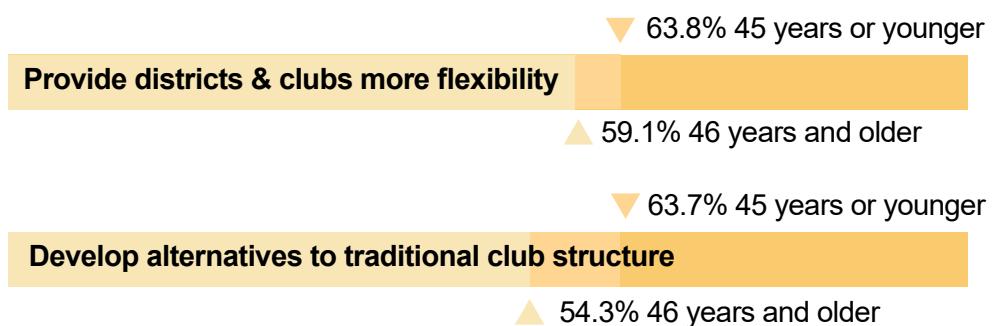
Figure 3: How are you most interested in interacting with Zonta



In addition, Zonta asked: "As a global organization, how important are the following aspects to ensure membership growth in the next 10 years?" When we look at it by age, broken out by those older than 46 years of age and those 45 years and younger, those members 45 years or younger placed greater importance than those older than 46 on:

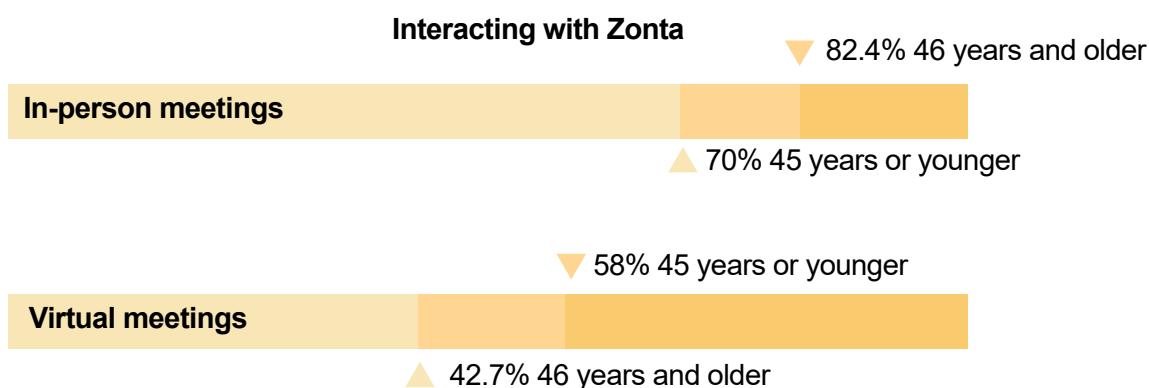
- Provide districts and clubs more flexibility to organize themselves, 63.8% vs. 59.1%.
- To develop alternatives to traditional club structure, 63.7% vs. 54.3%.

How important are the following aspects to ensure membership growth in next 10 years



On the other hand, the traditional club structure suits older members more than younger. With reference to the chart above, when asked, "How are you most interested in interacting with Zonta?" younger members placed less interest in holding traditional meetings in person:

- Monthly, in-person meetings: 70% vs 82.4%.
- Monthly, virtual meetings: 58% vs. 42.7%.



These younger members are more interested in hands-on service. In response to the question, "Why did you join Zonta?" 79.4% of those 45 years or younger responded, "to do service in my community," vs. 67.8% who were 46 and older.

Why did you join Zonta?



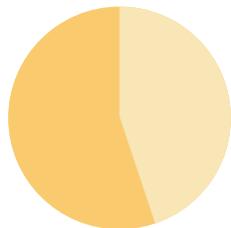
Zonta has taken steps to address some of the membership issues by introducing e-clubs for those individuals who want to participate in a club structure but do not have a club in close proximity to them. Zonta has also introduced the individual membership. At the 2022 Hamburg Convention, delegates will vote on a proposed amendment the Zonta International Board proposes a motion to rename it as “independent members” and make this category permanent. This would allow for a greater marketing push to get those who cannot participate at a club level, or who do not have a club near them, to still join Zonta. This membership category should not be interpreted as detracting from the club experience but to offer more options to people interested in Zonta’s mission. Often, there are time and money constraints, especially for people earlier in their career and/or have a young family and the current club-only structure might be keeping these people, who might feel strongly about being an advocate for empowering women and girls, from getting involved.

A true pathway to a Zonta club for younger people interested in Zonta’s mission would be for a less time- and cost-intensive entryway to educate them on the spirit of Zonta and how the organization is working both collectively through Zonta International as well as individually through its local clubs to create a more equal world. There are currently more barriers to entry and to get engaged and collaborate than there are pathways to participate in Zonta’s work.

In the pulse survey several open answers reflect on personal conflicts at club level that can lead to tension within clubs and resignation of its members.

Some other findings of the Membership Workstream include:

- **Lack of pride in being a Zontian** – Only 47.7% of respondents are likely to recommend Zonta International to a friend, college or associate, according to the pulse survey although 92 % of the respondents agreed on the importance of raising the visibility and profile of Zonta and 45 open comments gave suggestions how to increase and modernize our visibility.



47.7% of respondents are likely to recommend Zonta International to a friend, college or associate

- **Lack of diversity** – There were many responses to the open-ended questions on the pulse survey that pointed to Zonta’s lack of inclusiveness to welcome a diversity of Zontians of all backgrounds, regardless of age, race, color, ability, religion, socio-economic status, sexual orientation or gender identity at the club level.
- **Lack of connection to Zonta International** – Zonta International does not have the contact information of every club member and as of 21 March 2022 there are at least 1,074 Zontians who do not have access to the members-only My Zonta section of the Zonta International website. Therefore, they are not receiving all information about webinars or any activities happening at the international level in which they may participate. Each biennium there is still a certain number of clubs that have not provided any information about their club officers (president and treasurer) to Zonta International, meaning those clubs are essentially cut off from the rest of Zonta.
- Language barriers for those who are not native English speakers are also an important matter that means that Zontians are not directly connected to Zonta International and do not attend webinars or read newsletters in English language.

Solutions

Zonta needs to differentiate itself from service clubs working to empower women and girls with a clear value proposition so Zontians can easily talk about Zonta and its mission to help with recruitment. The meaning of “service” and “advocacy” is not easily understood by many people and has no appropriate translation in many countries. The reminder of Zonta’s shared purpose will help Zontians recognize the importance of Zonta’s work and have pride in their role. This includes creating a specific value proposition for education awardees, Golden Z club members, and young club members as well as for the individual membership category – and then marketing it.

This goes along with cultivating the value propositions of empathy and friendship among Zontians and cultivating this as the “Zonta Spirit,” so they feel even more joy being a Zontian. Happy club members are proud of being Zontians and will more likely make Zonta visible in everyday life.

Happy club members should concentrate on Zonta’s mission to build a better world for women and girls. Therefore, the workload for Zonta officers at all levels should be evaluated and streamlined so that more club members want to get involved.

Once a value proposition is in place, create and sustain a membership-drive program that allows for flexibility at the club level so they can customize to their specific environment that is maintained over multiple biennia to gain momentum and allow for results. In addition, help create district-level groups with experienced Zontians to help support the lieutenant governor and vice area directors in their efforts to open new clubs and recruit new club members. Simplify how to charter a new club, making it possible also for potential members to join Zonta by forming a new club without the assistance of existing clubs or Zontians. Creativity and flexibility is the key on this path. The numbers show that membership decrease is different in various geographical areas. There is the need to differentiate the membership-drive strategies according to regional areas.

Although the club model is successful in many areas, Zonta needs to reduce the barriers for people to participate in the work of Zonta and instead allow creativity for groups to organize themselves according to their needs and passion. This could be clubs of education awardees, of students instead of a Golden Z club, virtual clubs with members of the same advocacy passion, the same hobbies or of the same professional background.

In addition, there are other suggestions from the Membership Workstream:

- Raise Zonta’s visibility around a more modern profile that showcases Zonta’s knowledge on issues facing women in the world.
- Use other organizations, which have created successful membership strategies, as a template for membership strategies for Zonta International.

Advocacy Workstream

Findings

Basis for advocacy within Zonta

The mission of Zonta International is to be a leading global organization of professionals empowering women worldwide through service and advocacy.

In Zonta International's Advocacy Policy, updated May 2020, Zonta defines advocacy as: "Advocacy is the expression of support for or opposition to a cause, argument or proposal. Advocacy may include influencing laws, legislation or attitudes. Zonta advocacy is an action taken in the public interest or for the greater good with respect to advancing the status of women and girls and their human rights."

The Advocacy Policy also encourages Zonta International, its districts and clubs to express themselves about and become involved in issues that (i) improve the legal, political, economic, educational, health and professional status of women (ii) advance understanding, goodwill and peace through a world fellowship of executives in business and the professions; and (iii) promote justice and universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Zonta International handles its advocacy work through a variety of channels, including:

- General Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council.
- Participatory status with the Council of Europe.
- Coalitions such as the Coalition to End Violence Against Women and Girls Globally and the ERA Coalition.
- Zonta International Statements.
- Advocacy campaigns such as Zonta Says NO to Violence Against Women.
- Local advocacy work.

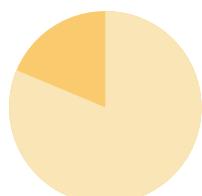
The Zonta International Advocacy Committee recommends actions on issues in accordance with the objectives of Zonta International and develops and provides information and supporting material on advocacy to the clubs, often via the district's advocacy chairs/committees.

There are a variety of levels that have advocacy committees. There is the international committee, district committees, sometimes area committees and club-level committees.

Districts, areas and clubs are encouraged to advocate for empowering women and girls in the way that is best suited to their geographic area. For some districts covering only a part of a certain country, this means they work together in caucuses or unions on a national level to better allow several districts to speak with one voice on a national level.

Advocacy as a priority membership motivation

In the pulse survey sent in July 2021, Zontians were asked, "Why did you join Zonta?" The majority of respondents said "To advocate for women and girls" (81.6%). When the Advocacy Workstream looked at the data by age, that percentage rose to 85.5% for those Zontians 45 years or younger (Figure 4).



81.60% joined Zonta to advocate for women and girls.

Figure 4: Why did you join Zonta? Choose all that apply



In another question, members were asked: “As a global organization, how important are the following aspects to ensure membership growth in the next 10 years?” The top response was “to increase advocacy efforts at the country level” at 82.2% (Figure 5).

Figure 5: As a global organization, how important are the following aspects to ensure membership growth in the next 10 years?



Based on the member feedback, advocacy is regarded as the most common reason to join Zonta as well as seen as an important area of operations to Zonta. Therefore, Zonta International should pay more attention to the advocacy operations, processes and activities going forward.

Other Findings

The word “advocacy” is not fully understood in all areas of Zonta, as evidenced by the conversations with the governors, club presidents and chairs of the international committees. For some countries, advocacy has a political connotation that does not fit with Zonta being a non-partisan, non-sectarian organization. For instance, participating in support of legislation feels political in some parts of the world, even though it is based on supporting legislation that will help women and girls and not supporting a specific political party or candidate.

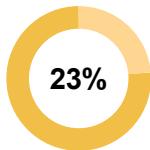
In other areas of the world, the word “advocacy” does not translate easily, so there is not a clear understanding of what Zonta means by advocacy work because there are language barriers.

Further, there are potentially other ways the Zontians want to participate, outside the current club structure. For instance, in the pulse survey, 71% expressed interest in participating in advocacy campaigns on a case-by-case basis.

A part of the membership is challenged on how to advocate for Zonta International’s priorities. According to the pulse survey, when it comes to the biggest challenge in terms of participating as an advocate on behalf of Zonta International:

- 23% responded “I need more tools to speak on the issue.”
- 20% responded “I am unclear on the best way to contribute.”
- 15% responded “I need more information about the issues for which Zonta advocates.”

Biggest challenges in participating as an advocate



I need more tools to speak on the issue.



I am unclear on the best way to contribute.



I need more information about the issues for which Zonta advocates.

Zonta also needs to make sure that advocacy priorities are relevant to local areas, as the issues impacting women and girls differ by country and sometimes even city to city. Although Zonta International should create strategic guidance around advocacy efforts, there needs to be club- and district-level flexibility to determine specific priorities and actions.

Further, Zonta International’s role with the United Nations and Council of Europe is not well-known to all club members, and the prestige of being recognized by these institutions and having a role in the work they do could help to broaden Zonta’s branding and reach as well as help club members see their role in the larger picture of empowering women and girls.

There may not always be a clear line of communication throughout the various channels, which would be helpful so that all levels are working together. Zonta International needs to make sure there is more information provided to clubs and districts about the tools and information already available through various channels.

Solutions

Based on the above examination of how advocacy is currently delivered at all Zonta levels, the Advocacy Workstream has recognized the following strategic solutions for advocacy, through which it is believed Zonta International could be prepared for the future. The recommendations listed below are not exhaustive, and many more actions could be taken; however, the following are considered as the key priorities for short- and long-term planning.

1. Concept of advocacy to be crystallized to all Zontians

In order to reach the aims of Zonta's mission it is important that Zontians are more familiar with the concept of advocacy. Crystallizing the concept of advocacy, how advocacy is linked to the objects of Zonta, why advocacy is important to Zonta and providing Zontians the tools to act more easily are all important in successfully increasing the weight of advocacy.

As noted above, it is clearly defined in the Article III Policy of the Bylaws of Zonta International that Zonta International, its districts and its clubs shall be non-partisan and non-sectarian. At times Zonta's activities seem political, and it is inevitable that there will be disagreement in the Zonta world on the stance to take on some issues, but we must make sure Zonta is not seen as simply taking the side of any political groups. Zonta's role is to advocate on issues related to empowering women. Therefore, it is important Zontians are aware and understand the Policy of Zonta International and the difference between acting in favor of a political issue and the fact of being non-partisan.

For credible advocacy work, it is important that Zonta International, its districts, areas, clubs and individual members remain non-partisan and non-sectarian when advocating in the name of Zonta. Members would need constant education and reminders of this issue.

2. Role of advocacy within Zonta

Zonta is the advocate for women's rights and gender equality. The founding members of Zonta aimed at accomplishing true gender equality; however, it has not yet been reached and there is still plenty of work to do. Reaching for gender equality through Zonta's mission and therefore advocacy is for the majority of Zontians the most important reason or purpose for the organization. Therefore, long-term, effective advocacy is necessary in addition to service projects providing financial support in specific focus areas in certain geographical areas. Advocacy with a clear focus should be included as a foundation for Zonta in its long-term strategy. As an effective advocate for women's rights, Zonta must adhere to strategic and evidence-based decisions but be creative and time sensitive on ad-hoc initiatives needed for the topical matters.

Effective advocacy strategies should be clear, concise and consistent so that alignment of actions can be reached globally, including at the district and club levels.

It would be important that each district has an advocacy committee that coordinates the work of the district's advocacy actions, ensuring a united voice, disseminating information and for reporting purposes. It would be recommended that in multinational districts, such an advocacy committee should always have representatives from each Zonta country in the district. Further, district committees could also handle the training of district members on what clubs can do in the field of advocacy, how to select an advocacy topic, how to organize advocacy activities, how to measure the impacts, how to address politicians, etc. It would also be important that each club has a team working on advocacy matters and disseminating information to the club members, teaching about how advocacy differs from service and how the two complement each other.

Further, it could be considered to establish unions or caucuses in countries that cover multiple districts or with a certain number of clubs to strengthen the advocacy efforts on a national level (where such bodies do not yet exist).

3. Advocacy focus areas

There are a lot of issues that harm women and girls, and Zonta can easily become stretched trying to solve them all. There are also a lot of organizations turning attention toward women and girls. In order for Zonta International to differentiate itself and use its resources more efficiently, the Advocacy Workstream recommends Zonta International focuses on the following areas:

- Violence against women and girls (which includes all forms of child marriages).
- Education.
- Women at work and in decision-making (covering widely equal pay, harassment at work, women in leadership, possibilities to participate in decision-making and parity in parliament).
- Climate change (always from the human rights approach and therefore from gender equality perspective focusing on its effects on women's and girls' rights and well-being).

In addition to the global and general focus areas, pressing local issues need to be recognized and considered, and Zonta should leave room for districts, areas and clubs (and unions and caucuses) to focus on such topics deemed to be barriers for gender equality on the national and local levels, too.

In order to stay topical, Zonta International should also be vocal and react on the topical burning issues created by conflicts and political action. The issues to which Zonta reacts should always be tied to its mission and advocacy areas, as it was in these examples: Turkey denouncing the Istanbul Convention, women's status in Afghanistan which turned into worse in August 2021 after Taliban took over and calling attention to Ukraine and how war increases the risk of gender-based violence.

Zonta International also will need to create a framework on how it decides what it supports to ensure that the work they pursue to improve the lives of women and girls fits into these focus areas and initiatives are prioritized to decide where Zonta can have the most impact. In addition, this protects the Board for decisions that cause controversy. If the decision-making process is defined and applied, there should be no surprise as to the position Zonta takes in a number of areas. Because Zontians' buy-in is so important to both the advocacy and the service sides, Zonta needs to find a way to allow Zontians' input into the process for deciding both advocacy efforts and service projects, so they feel invested and proud in the work Zonta International is doing.

It would also be important that Zonta's international service projects always have a clear connection to Zonta's advocacy focus areas so that Zonta can ensure that the short-term effects of the projects align with the long-term advocacy goals.

4. Possibly rebranding of Zonta International as a human rights organization for women and girls

Because the word "advocacy" has so many negative connotations or lacks an equivalent word in some languages, the Advocacy Workstream recommends researching whether it would make sense to talk about Zonta as more of a human rights organization for women and girls, rather than as a service club organization. It is critical that the mission of the organization is understood not only by Zontians but also by the general public, without additional explanation.

Human rights as a concept is understandable worldwide without further explanation, unlike the words "service," "advocacy" or "empowerment." The aim of this would not be to change Zonta International's focus from women and girls to more general human rights, and the aim is also not to leave out service. Instead, the purpose is to bring more attention to the long-term implications Zonta International wants to achieve with regard to women's and girl's rights. It also could be an opportunity to modernize Zonta International to make it more appealing for younger generations.

There are many implications to consider, including whether the club model would need to be changed, whether there are tax status implications and whether this is a fix that would create a better understanding of what Zonta is as an organization.

5. Communications in the field of advocacy

Since advocacy is part of Zonta International's mission statement, it needs a stronger communication effort behind it so that Zontians understand what work is being done, how they can talk about it and how they can be part of it. Zontians need more tools and direction on how they can work on Zonta International's priorities, and those efforts need more promotion both inside and outside of Zonta International and could also play a larger part in gaining recognition for Zonta International and the work that it does to advocate for women and girls. In addition,

Zonta International needs to stress that its efforts are not partisan but rather an effort to further Zonta's mission to empower women and girls. For instance, Zonta International's efforts and relationship with the United Nations and Council of Europe could be communicated more clearly and more often, so Zontians can feel proud of those efforts and part of a larger movement.

Zonta can use its position statements, like one of the most recent ones on climate change, and other advocacy efforts to attract Zontians who might be interested more in the advocacy side than service side of participating in Zonta. Climate change is also an issue which younger generations are interested in and keen to solve the challenges.

The Zonta Says NO campaign is a great example of a standing advocacy program that has been allowed to build momentum, provided enough tools to clubs to create some uniformity in participation but allow for flexibility and creativity from the clubs to make it their own. This campaign should be a standing campaign and used as a template to build other advocacy efforts around Zonta International's other advocacy priorities.

Another possibility could also be starting a partnership with well-known spokespeople for advocacy to make Zonta more visible in its advocacy work. Such persons could also be role models, especially for the younger Zontians and potential Zontians to get inspired.

Resolution 2 Continued Work

Biennium 2022-2024

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 or are being taken up in the biennial goals for 2022-2024. 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 suggested governance-related changes are included in proposed amendments to the Bylaws of Zonta International. 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) such as (but not limited to):

- **Addition of independent membership under membership category.**
- **Removing standing committees from the Zonta International Bylaws** (Bylaws and Resolutions Committee and Finance Committee would remain as standing committees in the Bylaws).
- **Improve leadership and club participation** – flexibility for conducting business including electronic voting.

The next step in this process is strategic planning. The work done in each workstream laid the groundwork for this process, in terms of gathering the research, identifying issues that Zonta will need to solve and what is working well within Zonta. To complete the strategic planning process, the next step will be to validate some of the recommendations by a more in-depth outreach to Zontians. The goals created as part of that plan will drive what recommendations make sense and what might need more research before implementing them. Any suggested changes to the governance structure would then work as the foundation of supporting the strategic plan.

The strategic plan includes other considerations that will need a substantial discussion in the 2022-2024 Biennium with a view to continuing to simplify the Bylaws of Zonta International, as well as removing barriers for those interested in participating by dedicating their time to leadership, such as (but not limited to):

- **Review Zonta International Board composition** – To define the competencies and responsibilities of Directors. In addition, there needs to be more research into the role of the vice-president, treasurer/secretary and Executive Committee.
- **Review district and club communication strategies** – To provide governors and club presidents a more streamlined way to receive more information from Zonta International as well as providing clubs with more opportunities to participate in decision-making.
- **Reimagine convention/conferences** – To ensure that these events are inspirational to participants and compellingly communicate Zonta International's vision and mission, as well as being financially sustainable.
- **Reconsider the membership of Zonta International** – To consider the pros and cons of only individuals being the Zonta International member rather than the club, as it currently stands.
- **Redefining the president's role** – To allow that position to be more strategic and less focused on operations.
- **Redefining the staff's role** – To allow staff to support the Board and focus on operations and execution of programs and services.

Biennium 2020-2022

At the 2022 Convention delegates will vote on Resolution 2, which is called "Resolution on Continuing an Overall Review of Zonta International," so that there can be continued research into areas of programs, fundraising and support operations that were not addressed in this biennium.

Prior to the Hamburg Convention, the Zonta International Board will be hosting two 90-minute sessions 26 April 2022, one at 10 a.m. CDT (Chicago time) and one at 4 p.m. CDT (Chicago time). These sessions will provide an opportunity to learn more about the organizational review, the key areas for change and some of the solutions that have been identified.

In addition, there will be a workshop during Convention on 25 June 2022 before the report on the Resolution 2 is presented at the Convention.

Acknowledgement

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.

Timeline

- Project voted on: July 2020
- Project group created: Fall 2020
- Terms of Reference finalized: March 2021
- PESTLE Analysis session: July 2021
- Zontian survey sent: July 2021
- Various district and area meetings Board members spoke at about Resolution 2: Fall 2021
- Governors' focus groups: October 2021
- Club presidents' focus groups: October 2021
- Past international president's focus group: October 2021
- Headquarters staff conversation: November 2021
- Workstreams meeting with chairs of some international committees: Fall 2021
- Board discussion on white papers: November 2021
- Club mailing sent: March 2022
- Information sessions on Resolution 2: 26 April 2022
- Workshop at Convention on Resolution 2: 25 June 2022
- Report, new resolution and biennial goals presented at Convention: 28 June 2022

The below section was originally shared in the March 2022 Club Mailing

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, 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.

Vision	How will the world be different if Zonta International is successful?
Mission	What role will Zonta International play in achieving the Vision?
Mission Goals & Strategy	How will Zonta International achieve this role?
Resource Goals & Strategy	How will Zonta International finance and sustain this role?
Delivery Goals & Strategy	How will Zonta International activities be implemented?
Governance	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 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 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 – 24 June 2022 at Hamburg Convention

Acknowledgements

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