

**Achievement of Market-Friendly Initiatives and Results Program
(AMIR 2.0 Program)**

Funded By U.S. Agency for International Development

Governance and Strategic Planning – BPW Aqaba

Final Report

**Deliverable for BMI Component, Task No. 232.3
Contract No. 278-C-00-02-00201-00**

August 2002

This report was prepared by Randa Al Zoghbi, a consultant for the Center for International Private Enterprise, in collaboration with Chemonics International Inc., prime contractor to the U.S. Agency for International Development for the AMIR Program in Jordan.

Table of Contents

<u>Executive Summary</u>	4
<u>Objective and Specific Tasks</u>	5
<u>Summary of Meetings</u>	5
<u>Member Needs Assessment</u>	6
<u>Board Retreat</u>	9
<u>Findings and Comments</u>	14
<u>Recommendations</u>	15

Executive Summary

The AMIR Program's Business Management Initiative is working to strengthen the management skills and advocacy capacity of Jordan's private sector to effectively compete and succeed in the global economy. The BMI is working with the private sector to enhance their capacity to identify, create and capitalize on opportunities within Jordan and in the global economy. For Jordan's economy to grow rapidly, business associations must play a more active role in promoting competitiveness, productivity, efficiency and diversification. They must also focus on delivering information and services that strengthen the skills of Jordan's workforce and spur private sector-led economic growth. Consequently, BMI will work with business associations, building their capacity to serve their members and contribute measurably to Jordan's economic development.

The objective of this consultancy was to develop for Aqaba Business and Professional Women Association (BPWA-Aqaba) a strategic and time-bound work plan, and facilitate the organization's transformation into a vibrant business organization focused on business and professional women already in business. To achieve the overall objective, several meetings were organized with various stakeholders including BPW Aqaba's board members, current members and prospective members. A member focus group and a board retreat were held.

Key accomplishments by the consultancy include:

- Development of a succinct, workable mission statement with full consensus from the Board members.
- Development of a strategic and work plan for the organization
- Identification and prioritization of key activities that the organization can pursue, based on input from both board members and members.
- Acknowledgement by BPW Aqaba Board of the need for change and a clear idea on what the organization has to do to be more responsive to members' needs and have the association attract more members.

Objective and Specific Tasks

To achieve the aforementioned objective, the consultant was requested to conduct the following specific tasks:

- Interviews with Ibrahim Osta, BMI Component Leader, Larry Milner, BMI CIPE Consultant, and Layali Nasashibi, BPW Aqaba Chairperson.
- Meet one-on-one with at least 3 Board members and get an idea on where they see the organization is going.
- Conduct a focus group meeting with 5-8 current and potential members on what they see the organization's role can be in Aqaba, present results of focus group meeting to full board at a two-day retreat and facilitate board planning of BPW Aqaba's future as a sustainable, business-focused organization targeting business and professional women already in business or currently employed.
- Introduce the concept of strategic planning and incorporate concepts in the discussion.
- Work with Board to start developing a business-oriented strategic plan (vision, mission, objectives, a monitoring & evaluation system) at the full board retreat.
- Following the retreat, meet with Board to explain the necessary changes that BPW Aqaba must go through.

Summary of Meetings

Several meetings were held with AMIR Program management staff, other staff of USAID funded program in Aqaba, and Aqaba government staff to get background and overview of various' stakeholders perceptions and expectations of the Aqaba Business and Professional Women Association.

Mr. Ibrahim Osta, BMI Component Leader, AMIR Program, focused on the need to get the association board members to develop a strategic plan that is realistic and achievable. He pointed out that the association's chairperson and board members need to exercise principles of associational governance, in addition to hiring a full time staff and establishing an independent office space. Mr. Osta also stressed that the association needs to stop the social activities that has been one of the associations' main activities since it started in 1992.

Ms. Alaa El Kurdi, Grants Manager Administrator, Aqaba Technical Assistance Support Project (ATASP), focused on the need to get the association to develop some sound objectives and a work plan that would allow ATASP to provide a grant to BPWA-Aqaba as soon as possible, taking into consideration the timeframe available to the ATASP USAID funded program. ATASP will provide five small grants to associations in Aqaba. Based on the meeting, the consultant believes that ATASP is considering the tourism sector, environment protection and vocational training programs.

Mr. Vince Ruddy, Chief of Party, ATASP, emphasized what Ms. Kurdi mentioned. We exchanged views on the challenges facing USAID funded programs in the region. It was agreed that the approach of the Germans, Japanese, and other international donors has changed with respect to the implementation of the technical assistance programs. Other donors like the Germans associate their technical assistance programs with vocational training centers that are welcomed by the locals and seen as a sort of sustainable assistance. Mr. Ruddy mentioned that ATASP is considering establishing a vocational training center for the garments industry.

Mr. Ibrahim Abu Helil, Advisor, Chief and Board of Commissioners, Local Community Development Affairs, Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority (ASEZA) who is a high ranking bureaucrat, believes that BPW Aqaba has a major role in improving the female community in Aqaba. However, he believes that his commission should take a very active role in BPW Aqaba's initiatives.

Ms. Lina Omar, Senior Officer, Business Development and Marketing, ASEZA, was not specifically concerned with the role of BPWA Aqaba but was helpful as far as providing more information on ASEZA. However, with the lack of information about demographics in Aqaba, she was unable to provide information about number of existing businesses or capital or labor.

Member Needs Assessment

A previous needs assessment for BPWA Aqaba was previously carried out in a very comprehensive manner by Ms. Stacey Revell of the AMIR Program. I have used the findings outlined in her report to expand on her findings. Several meetings were held for the purpose of getting a better idea on members' needs: one of the meetings was with the general assembly of BPW Aqaba and the others were separate meetings with members and prospective members.

During the meeting with the BPW Aqaba general assembly, the consultant explained AMIR Program's expectations to the participants. It was made clear to the general assembly that the association has had enough training sessions and that no institution expects to provide continuous training or assistance without results. The consultant stressed that AMIR itself, as well as any other donor funded program, has a limited timeframe and a set of objectives. If the association does not present a sound strategic plan that ensures BPW Aqaba becomes a modern sustainable business association according to international standards, AMIR will have to look for other associations to partner with and carry on its program. The consultant also emphasized throughout the meeting that local communities should make the best use of the available international funds, while it is available. There was a consensus that the AMIR Program is providing an opportunity for the association to better tackle issues of business and professional women in Aqaba; and this opportunity should not be missed, since other or future funds might not have allocations for business associations.

Profile of BPW Aqaba Members: Out of the 22 members of BPW Aqaba, only one member is technically a woman in business: a painter who sells her paintings in a self-owned shop. Other members of the association are professionals working for

hotels, tax authority, shipping companies, labor office, and schools. None of them is in the field of business, manufacturing or trade. The profile of BPW Aqaba membership is consistent with the type of activities in Aqaba.

Most of BPW Aqaba members are traditional in a religious sense, keeping an Islamic dress code.

Future of Aqaba: With Aqaba expecting to see a change with the operations of the Special Economic Zones and the Free Industrial zone, the consultant presented a briefing on Aqaba economic growth to the BPW Aqaba members, taking into consideration that Jordan now has a competitive edge regionally as a result of its free trade agreement with the US. Participants were requested to consider the prospects of the association in light of the growing and changing role of Aqaba.

Negative Concerns: Some of the participants did not see a positive future in Aqaba, however. The opening of a Casino in Aqaba was a major concern to some members. For many of the BPW's traditional members, the introduction of the casino to Aqaba runs counter to their religion that prohibits gambling. Given the traditional and religious character of the group, they have a tendency to relate modernization and free market economies with a change in cultural heritage and weakening of religious values. These types of concerns were discussed in the context of Aswan in Egypt where tourism is the main source of income for almost everybody. Participants were assured that native citizens of Aswan did not abandon their heritage or religion but rather learned the art of dealing with other cultures and accepting differences with other people's beliefs.

BPW Aqaba Chairperson: As reported in previous consultant reports, the Chairperson is a very influential figure within the association and the community. As the founder of the association, the first single female to move from Amman to Aqaba to work, and the only member who raises funds to keep the association going with very limited membership dues income, Ms. Nasashibi is a progressive woman who succeeded through the last 20 years to earn the respect of the citizens of this very closed society. At this stage, there is no other member who could be considered as a replacement.

Separate meetings with Board Members: Meetings were held with four board members: 1) *Mofida Mady*, BPW Aqaba Board Member and founder, a retired school administrator whose main interests are social activities and charity-type community services. Back in the seventies, she participated with other women in founding the first women's rights foundation in Aqaba; 2) *Aisha Al Masry*, BPW Aqaba Secretary General, an executive secretary at the main shipping company in Aqaba, very energetic, has easy access to a wide social circle, and carries out almost all administrative functions of the association; 3) *Mona Al Zoraiky*, BPW Aqaba Vice Chairperson, a lawyer working for Aqaba Labor Office, new to community work, has the desire to learn more, and has a progressive vision for the organization and the role of women in Aqaba; and 4) *Shahawy Al Hanjoury*, Treasurer, an accountant who works for the Taxation Office in Aqaba, the most religiously conservative member of the group, expressed deep concerns about the future of Aqaba in view of the expected modernization plans, believes that liberal western values is a threat to their historical heritage. Knowing what makes these board members "tick" was important in drawing

an expectation for the future of the association, and whether to expect if the current leadership of the association is able to meet the challenges that lie ahead.

Types of Membership: All four board members believe that the association can introduce different types of membership and that there is room for corporate membership. The group looks at corporate membership as membership by international companies operating in Jordan, and big local companies who have a history of offering donations or sponsorships on ad-hoc basis to fund association activities. With respect to corporate membership, the four board members estimated the annual dues to range from JD 500 to JD 1000 (USD 750 to USD 1500).

Membership Services: A discounted medical and life insurance group policy was considered by the Board members. All four agreed to medical insurance policies while three refused the idea of offering life insurance policy for religious concerns.

A training center and a library is a service that all board members and members believe is essential to provide basic management skills training programs to Aqaba women. They see Arabic on-line training programs as a cost-effective tool to develop skills for Aqaba women. The Board members suggested that the training center be associated with establishing a library to provide the association members with the opportunity to read and enhance their own knowledge. Taking into consideration the average income of a Aqaba family, the four board members estimated the fees for these training services at a maximum of JD 15 per month. They all agreed that the training center should open all day and until 9:00 pm.

Building a website was suggested by members to function as a tool for marketing the association's members' products and services, such as food catering, home delivery, and paintings.

Social activities were considered by most Board members as essential. BPW Aqaba is seen by the group as a social networking opportunity as members expect it to play a role in developing the community. During the meeting with the members and prospective members of the association, 80% mentioned that they joined the association because of the opportunity it provides at social networking.

Promoting Entrepreneurship was considered by members as a useful service to be provided by the association. They expected the association to teach skills on how to start their new small businesses, how to plan, market, and manage a small business.

Independent office and staff: The members and board members recognize the need for an independent office and staff. However their idea of an office is too fancy—based on the consultants' conversations with the group, they perceive the association to have a garden, restaurant, playing area, gaming zones, etc.

Registration of BPW Aqaba: All four board members mentioned that changing the registration of the association from the Ministry of Social Development to the Ministry of Interior is possible and easy. This is in response to a recommendation from AMIR Program and ATASP.

Functions and role of committees and board: All four board members did not have

a clear idea about the functions and role of committees other than the executive committee. They welcomed establishing committees to lead the future activities of the association. Some time was spent in explaining formation, role and functions of committees.

Board Retreat

The board retreat was held at the Dead Sea for two days, August 1st and 2nd, 2002. The chairperson failed to attend the board retreat. Seven women participated in the retreat (six board members and one member). The participants were:

- 1- Mona Al Zoraiky, Vice President, BPWA-Aqaba
- 2- Aisha Al Masry, Secretary General, BPWA-Aqaba
- 3- Shahawy Al Hanjoury, Treasurer, BPWA-Aqaba
- 4- Faizeh Showikini, Board Member, BPWA-Aqaba, and Director, Aqaba Women's Center, Nour El Hussein Foundation
- 5- Mofida Mady, Board Member, BPWA-Aqaba
- 6- Miriam Nussayrat, Board Member, BPWA-Aqaba
- 7- Khalda Al Hanjoury, Member, BPWA-Aqaba

The session was prepared as a roundtable. The consultant used CIPE's Business Association Training program, strategic planning and work plan manual to facilitate the retreat. The materials were provided earlier to most of the retreat participants in earlier training programs provided and hosted by AMIR. Participants were asked to use the information they know about strategic planning from previous training sessions to try within two days to come up with a strategic plan for BPW Aqaba and draw the initial outline for a work plan. Participants were asked to draw a strategic plan that is able to sustain the association keeping into consideration that they are witnessing their membership dwindling from a high of 48 to 21.

A report prepared in May 2002 by Ms. Weimer and Mr. Tarrabey was used to summarize to the participants all ideas mentioned by association board members during a strategic planning session provided through AMIR Program in May 2002. Participants were asked to put together the strategic plan of BPW Aqaba, using all the information they know about strategic planning, comments made by members about expected services, the expected change in Aqaba community, and the capacities of BPW Aqaba.

Mission Statement as developed by participating members: BPW Aqaba is a voluntary non-for-profit association aims at improving the standards of business and professional women in Aqaba to meet the needs of economic development in Aqaba and create a better community.

Results of the SWOT Analysis as defined by participating members:

Strengths:

- 1- In the past ten years, the association was able to establish a good reputation within Aqaba community.
- 2- The ability of the association to raise funds for ad-hoc activities.

- 3- The ability of the association to carry out activities of diversified nature.
- 4- The ability of the association to reach different social spectrums through its current membership.
- 5- The ability of the association to make decisions in a democratic manner by voting for decisions within the board meetings and general assembly meetings.

Weaknesses:

- 1- Working within a community that does not have enough awareness with the need and importance of civil society participation.
- 2- Low income from membership dues.
- 3- Limited number of members
- 4- No independent office.
- 5- No full time staff.
- 6- Lack of ability to retain membership.
- 7- Lack of a tool that enables the association to identify needs of members and Aqaba community.
- 8- Lack of an annual work plan with specific activities, time lines, and a budget.

Opportunities:

- 1- The establishment of the economic specialized zone.
- 2- The establishment of the industrial zone.
- 3- The possibility of attracting new big investments to Aqaba.
- 4- The local community is ready to accept modernization programs.
- 5- The Local community is more aware of the need to provide better education for girls.
- 6- Donors are ready to consider funding the association and provide it with the required technical and financial assistance.
- 7- The availability of local trainers who can deliver training programs in principles of management.

Threats:

- 1- Members do not understand exactly the role of the board and the role expected of an association.
- 2- The possibility of increased number of foreign labor including labor from Amman or neighboring countries.
- 3- The instability of the region and peace is not well established with Israel.
- 4- The inability of the association to carry out a strategic plan and work plan as a result of weak financial and human resources.
- 5- Lack of local trainers who are able to deliver training programs in advanced management,
- 6- Expectations of strong competition from foreign investments and labor.
- 7- Lack of enough awareness with the need to have local initiatives, enough flexibility, and lack of adequate ability to adopt to social, economic, cultural, and global changes.

Objectives as set by participating members:

- 1- Upgrade the professional level of the members of the association in the short run.
- 2- Improve the understanding of the economic changes influencing the local community.
- 3- Increase awareness with the private business culture within a free market economy.
- 4- Upgrade the skills of the members to find new job opportunities and benefit from the new economic environment in Aqaba.

- 5- Promote awareness of the role of the civil society in improving the quality and standards of living.

Sources of information needed to develop BPW Aqaba program of work as specified by participating members:

- 1- A membership survey to identify members needs.
- 2- A survey to investors and business owners to identify their needs of labor.
- 3- Use information available from the Aqaba chamber of commerce related to the profile of Aqaba current businesses (type of business, size of employment, capital, product)
- 4- Possibility of using demographic information available through the general statistics bureau.
- 5- Using information available through ASEZA about new investment laws and type of current and potential investments.
- 6- Personal contacts.
- 7- Information from other NGOs in Aqaba about available employment opportunities and current and future programs.

Activities initially suggested by the participating members:

- 1- Open a bakery in Aqaba
- 2- Establish a management training center
- 3- Establish a language training center
- 4- Open a sewing workshop
- 5- Open a restaurant
- 6- Electronic promotion for members products and services
- 7- Increase number of members
- 8- Produce publications and newsletters to include information interesting to members
- 9- Establish a business services center
- 10- Organize trips
- 11- Organize exhibitions and trade fairs
- 12- Establish a library
- 13- Organize seminars and workshops

Five Way Strategic Planning Test: Participants were asked to rate each of the above suggested activities against the five way test which answers the following questions:

- 1- How does the activity relate to the mission of the association?
- 2- Is the activity meaningful to the society of Aqaba?
- 3- Does the activity optimize the use of financial resources?
- 4- Is there an ability to finance the activity?
- 5- Is the activity new to the community?

Activities as rated by the participants (order by highest rate):

- 1- Increase number of members
- 2- Establish a management training center
- 3- Establish a language training center
- 4- Electronic promotion for members products and services
- 5- Establish a business services center
- 6- Establish a library
- 7- Organize seminars and workshops
- 8- Organize exhibitions and trade fairs

- 9- Produce publications and newsletters to include information interesting to members

Activities to be carried out in the short run as identified by the participants are:

- 1- Increase number of members
- 2- Establish a management training center
- 3- Establish a language training center
- 4- Electronic promotion for members products and services
- 5- Establish a library
- 6- Organize seminars and workshops

Committees to carry out BPW Aqaba Activities: Participating members agreed to form the following five committees: 1) Membership Services Committee; 2) Membership Development Committee; 3) Financial Resources Committee; 4) Education and Cultural Committee; and 5) the Social Committee. Each of the committees will be chaired by a board member as follows:

- 1- Membership Services Committee chaired by Ms. Miriam Nussayrat
- 2- Membership Development Committee; chaired by Ms. Aisha Al Masry and assisted by Ms. Mona Al Zoraiky
- 3- Financial Resources Committee chaired by the Chairperson Ms. Layali Al Nashashibi and assisted by the treasurer, Ms. Shahawy Al Hanjoury
- 4- Education and Cultural Committee chaired by Ms. Faiza Showikini
- 5- Social Committee chaired by Ms. Mofida Mady

Activities were specified to each committee, participants were divided into three subgroups, and each group worked on drafting an outline for its program of work.

Detailed outline for activities to be carried out by BPW Aqaba as presented by participating members:

Activity 1: Increase number of members

Membership Development Committee and Financial resources committee will be responsible to carry out this activity. Ms. Aisha Al Masry made the presentation. It was agreed that membership will be divided into two categories; Category 1: Professional Member, Category 2: Business Member and category 3: Corporate membership.

As of January 2003, the association will increase its membership dues from a flat rate of JD 15 to JD 20 for category 1 and JD 30 for category 2.

In addition to the individual membership, the association will introduce two new types of membership; 1) Corporate Sponsors, and 2) Future Leaders.

Corporate Sponsors will be multinationals such as Fast Link, Microsoft, ALICO, Henkel, Coca Cola, Safeway, Oracle, and Bechtel; and local Jordanian companies such as the Phosphate co., Potassium Co., Woods Co. Multinational companies will pay annual dues that range between JD 1000 to JD 2000 and local companies will pay JD 300 to JD 500. Corporate sponsors will have their logos displayed on all publications or events organized by the association. It is expected to have 15

corporate sponsors in 2003.

Future Leaders will be students from Aqaba region who would like to receive training programs provided by the association and attend events organized by BPW Aqaba. Future Leaders will pay annual dues of JD 5. The group expects to have 100 paying student members in 2003.

Activity 2: Establish a management training and languages center

Membership Services Committee will be responsible to carry out this activity. Ms. Miriam Nussayrat made the presentation. The center will need 5 computers. The center will be used in the evenings as an internet café for girls of Aqaba. Fees will be paid to use the center will be JD 0.5 per hour for members and future leaders students, and JD 1.0 per hour for non-members.

The center will provide English Language courses in the morning and afternoons. It will also provide training programs in accounting, financial management, secretarial works, and office management. In addition the center will provide two-day courses on time management, crisis management, public relations, communication skills, negotiation, developing business plans, and marketing. Cost will not exceed JD 15 per month for members or non-members. Participants mentioned that with respect to training delivery, teachers and instructors are available in Aqaba for English Language and computer skills. Association will also use spouses of foreigners working in Aqaba as teachers. In the evenings, the center will be used as an internet café for girls and women of Aqaba.

Activity 3: Electronic promotion for members products and services

Membership Services Committee will be responsible to carry out this activity. Ms. Miriam Nussayrat made the presentation. An Arabic electronic website will be developed using the domain name www.BPWAqaba.org.jo. The site will provide information about the activities of BPW Aqaba and will also promote members products and services. A membership directory will be displayed for free. As for members who would like to have a homepage from BPW Aqaba, they will pay JD 50 for first time subscription and JD 15 for annual maintenance of the home page. The association also suggested to have a link called “Make Profit from your Used Goods”, or “New and Old Stuff”. It will include ads for any items that members would like to sell, new and old items. Cost of the ad is JD 5 and will remain on display for 90 days.

Activity 4: Establish a library

Educational and Cultural committee will be responsible to carry out this activity. Ms. Miriam Nussayrat made the presentation. The association will start a small library at its office. Users will need to pay annual fees to have access to the library, JD 5 to members, JD 7 to non-members, and JD 3 to students or future leaders. Books will be brought in from universities, members, local and international organizations.

Activity 5: Organize seminars and workshops

Educational and cultural committee will be responsible to carry out this activity. Ms.

Faiza Showaikini made the presentation. The committee will organize the following seminars and workshops:

- a) Labor Laws and the WTO: Impact on Labor in Jordan and Aqaba, a three hours seminar. The seminar will be held at the Aqaba Chamber of Commerce, suggested speaker, Dr. Abu Ghazala, expected participants 100
- b) Mico Enterprise and Small Business, a three hours seminar. IT will discuss how to start a new small business and the elements for the success of the business. Suggested speakers are Dr. Shawky Jawad and Ms. Sabiha Al Maani. Semianr to be held at the Movenpick and attended by 150 persons.
- c) Jordan US Free Trade Agreement, a three hours seminar. Suggested speaker is the chairperson of the Jordanian Exports Association, seminar to be held at the Movenpick for 200 persons. Seminar to discuss the extent of implementing the FTA, its benefits and impact on Jordan's economic growth.
- d) Financial and Banking Services. A three hours seminar to be held at the Central Bank. Suggested speaker will be a bank managing director and will speak to 100 participants about the relation between improved financial and banking sector and the growth of private business.
- e) Micro Credit and Small Business, a three hours seminar. The seminar will be attended by 150 persons and held at Nour El Hussain Foundation. Speaker will be the president of the Business Development Center. Seminar to discuss sources of micro financing in Jordan.
- f) Leadership Skills, a three days workshop to be held at Nour El Hussain Foundation and attended by 50 persons. The training will be delivered by Advanced Management Institute and will focus on meaning of leadership and how to develop the skills of a leader.

Findings and Comments

Lack and inaccurate demographic information: Aqaba is the only seaport in Jordan, a small port with a population of about 70,000 according to a booklet produced by ASEZA (Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority). Members of BPW Aqaba mentioned that other sources estimates Aqaba City's population at around 98,000, of which 90% of the manpower is employed by the government or the private sector. More accurate information was not available on the demographics of Aqaba such as population distribution by age, by gender, by employment status, by type of activity, or by level of education attainment. It does not seem that a census has been conducted for years. This makes the planning process especially difficult as a planner has to count heavily on the locals unscientific estimation and develop proposals based on these data.

Limited business activities in Aqaba: Business in Aqaba is very limited for the time being and is not expected to witness significant expansion or diversification in the short term even with the establishment of the economic and industrial zones. With the current instability in the West Bank and Gaza and the very close borders between Aqaba and Israeli Eilat Port, the possibility of a substantial expansion in business in Aqaba is limited.

BPW Aqaba membership: Taking into consideration the current type of business

activities in Aqaba, one can understand that BPW Aqaba can not attract more business women to join the association because business, by standard definitions, are not available in Aqaba. Main companies in Aqaba are state-owned: one is the shipping company and the other in the cement sector. Other than government offices, all businesses in the community are very small, such as bazaar owners, small retail traders, small grocers, etc. Members and board members of BPW Aqaba, as part of the Aqaba community, share the belief that education and training of Aqaba's human resources should be the starting point. Within five years, the consultant believes, that BPW Aqaba will not be able to attract new members from the business sector, not until after the impact of the ASEZA is truly felt by the community and entrepreneurship and the private sector develops.

BPW Aqaba as a catalyst for change: Compared to the Aqaba population, BPW Aqaba members are the most progressive female group in the community, while consciously keeping their sense of tradition. This is an asset that should not be ignored. Within the ten years since the group's formation, the organization has established a respectable status within this community and has the potential to be a catalyst for change.

ASEZA and the development of Aqaba: As ASEZA takes its economic root in the community, the very rigid religious conservatism in the community will most likely change. As ASEZA continues to promote its economic and industrial zones and foreign investments continue to come in, the community will have to deal with more influx of non-Aqaba natives who come from Amman to Aqaba for work only. These workers from Amman are seen by the Aqaba natives as agents for change as they introduce new ways of thinking to the community. The community realizes that they do not have the same kind of education or qualifications that would allow them to compete for the same high paying jobs. They realize that if they want to make the same kind of income, they need to have the same kind of education and understand that the community has to deal with the challenges of modernity while keeping their tradition alive. .

Recommendations

- 1- AMIR Program to continue assisting BPW Aqaba to help the association develop a detailed program of work based on the strategy and outline developed.
- 2- AMIR Program to provide more business association training to BPW Aqaba in the area of forming and managing committees, membership development, and planning and implementing programs of work.
- 3- BPW Aqaba to focus on attracting professional women rather than business women to join the association due to the current very limited number of businesses in Aqaba.

- 4- BPW Aqaba to change its registered name from “Club” to “Association” and start focusing on business association related type of activities such as providing more tangible benefits to their members such as training, skills upgrade, newsletter, and advocacy for business and professional women’s issues. Meanwhile, BPW Aqaba should build on its recognized previous social and community work to enhance the role of the association as a professional and business association
- 5- BPW Aqaba to keep its registration under the Ministry of Social Development rather than change its registration under the Ministry of Interior. Though this process was encouraged by ATASP and AMIR, I see this suggested change to have a negative impact on the future of the association. To have civil society associations work under the Ministry of Interior’s control is a very critical decision that needs to be thoroughly considered. One of the concerns raised in meetings with ATASP is that if BPW Aqaba is registered under the Ministry of Interior, the association will most likely do less social activities. It is this consultant’s contention that being under the Ministry of Interior would not necessarily lead to the association doing less social activities, but rather would limit the association’s ability to do public policy advocacy as the Ministry of Interior might use the registration to meddle on the association’s activities.
- 6- In order to address the issue of the association focusing a lot of efforts on social activities, the consultant suggests that BPW Aqaba establishes a social committee. This committee will ensure that not all members of the association are involved in planning and coordination of the association’s community, charity or social work. The social committee should be limited to three members and should not use any financial or human resources of the association.
- 7- BPW Aqaba should build upon its program of work based on the results of the retreat and submit the following information for each of the planned activities: Service to be provided to the members, its purpose, measurement criteria, goals, strategies or activities, person responsible, timeline, and financial and human resources needed to carry out the service. As agreed with BPW Aqaba members who participated in the board retreat, BPW Aqaba should submit its strategic plan and work plan to AMIR by mid September.
- 8- AMIR Program and ATASP to start helping BPW Aqaba in developing a proposal for USAID funding. AMIR can provide one-on-one assistance to BPW Aqaba on how to develop and write proposals within the ATASP format. It was agreed during the board retreat that the association should have 4 corporate sponsors by the time it submits a grant application to AMIR (2 multinationals and 2 Jordanians).
- 9- AMIR to conduct an assessment after six months (end of March 2003) for BPW Aqaba as a professional women association and not a business association where policy advocacy is a major expected activity. Unless more big businesses are established in Aqaba, the activities of the population of Aqaba will remain limited and similar to the current type of micro and marginal activities; and the demographics of Aqaba will remain the same including level of education, type of employment activities, etc..