**FAWCO Region 4 Meeting, 7-9 November 2014, at AWC The Hague**

**Write-up Club Development Workshop 2: Lifting Up**

**Integration of US and International Members in our Clubs**

**Submitted by Susan Ailleris, workshop facilitator**

**Current situation**

Session began with an overview on where clubs in attendance stand in terms of international members, and what we are looking to discuss in our session:

AWC Brussels, Colleen Gilbert FAWCO Rep

Brussels already has a large international community and their club has also opened membership to men. %age of internationals is 20/25%

Criteria for membership is simply that you must speak English.

Non-Americans cannot be President or 1st VP, but can otherwise fulfill any role and participate fully in club life

AWC The Hague, 3 members attending, names not recorded

Currently the international membership is at 30%, but they are unable to hold a board position nor can they vote. A vote is taking place next week to increase this to 40% and to allow them to vote. Restrictions would still be in place but it wasn’t entirely clear what they would be (eg. Pres/1st VP to be American).

ANCOR (Rotterdam) , Michelle DeBusschere, Treasurer

ANCOR was established as a group to join American and Dutch interests (American Netherlands Club of Rotterdam) – it has also added International to its name and is at its core an international group. Has no restrictions to membership, board positions, but does have a Dutch VP and an American VP (when they can get enough volunteers).

AWC Antwerp - not present (or didn’t comment)

AWC Amsterdam – Susan Ailleris, facilitator session and AWCA member

The strictest of the bunch, with currently permitted max of non-Americans at 25% (not reached) and max 25% of board positions. Non-Americans must have a US tie, which could include family in the US, having lived or studied in the US, working for a US company – very board dependent what is allowed and when.

FAWCO – My-Linh Kunst (President) and Celeste Brown (Region 4 Coordinator)

Regular members of FAWCO have min 60% American members

Associate members of FAWCO have less than 60% American members

Both types of membership have identical privileges. The FAWCO board must all be American except for the Treasurer, and the Foundation board Pres and 1st VP must be American.

**Summary of Discussion**:

Our discussion was not about integrating non-Americans once they have joined our clubs, but about the decision to allow non-Americans into our clubs and in what capacity. Generally it was felt that once they join our clubs, our international members are integrated quickly into club society. Most who join want to join based on the principles of the club as they are, and don’t want to change them. The only pure American components to our clubs (and to FAWCO) are voting and taxation but most others appeal and could be of interest to any nationality. The concern that clubs keep their American spirit and values and feeling of home to so many seems to be generally covered by percentages of Americans on the board - though this was probably the strongest reservation for many. No conclusions were drawn in this session, nor were there specific action plans. Below the main pros and cons discussed:

**Pros and Cons of allowing (more) non-Americans to join our clubs**

**Pros**

1. **Women who enjoy the American attitude**, way of life, culture, though not holding a passport, can enrich our clubs and add their own brand of enthusiasm.

2. In order to **keep our numbers** up in the face of dwindling membership numbers (due to enormous variety of available groups, both digital (Amsterdam Mamas, Facebook, blogs) and non-digital (schools, other clubs, offer similar support and activities). More members mean more activities, more diversity, and more volunteers.

3. Our **world is becoming more international**; the borders are fading in many ways, so it seems logical that our clubs follow suit.

**Cons:**

1. **Losing our “American” culture**; the reason many join the club is to feel at home; if the %age of international members are raised this may fade. This seems to be the strongest concern against allowing non-Americans or increasing the percentages.

2. Similar to above, it is important to have a club identity, and if you are identified as an “American” women’s club but have e.g. , 30% non Americans, are you **losing that identity**? The American Women’s Club of Brussels, for example, has members who are neither American, nor Women.

**Other**

This topic raised questions on how else to increase membership, and two important suggestions were made:

1. A youth/student membership – Amsterdam has been talking about this for some years and it is now coming to the forefront.

2. Corporate membership – raised by My-Linh – for individual members in a corporation or with one member representative.