Soroptimists go for water
safe water = safe life
Soroptimist International of Europe

PROGRAMME NEWS

No. 1. November 2009

Dear Soroptimists,

Welcome to the first issue of Programme News ! There have been many interesting developments in the organisation as well as within the Programme Department that we would like to share with you. As of now, **Programme News** will be published **every month** as an online Newsletter.

Communication

The main goal of the Programme Team in this biennium is to reach all the Club members in our Federation. **An improved communication is the key to our success !** In order to be able to accomplish our mission, the help of the Union & Single Club Presidents, Secretaries, Governors and first and foremost the Union / Single Club Programme Liaisons or Coordinators is needed to widely spread any message coming from the Federation. Please forward any information you receive about Programme to your club members and/or train them on how to access this information on the web.

Project of the Month

As of this month, we will have a project of the month up on the www.soroptimisteurope.org website. This project will be chosen from the selection of **Programme Focus Reports** submitted the previous month. A small selection procedure will then reveal the winner on the website ! In this way, your projects as well as your club/Union will receive more publicity. So keep submitting your PFRs onto http://www.reports.soroptimistinternational.org/ (username: sie / password: geneva)

NOVEMBER 25
The International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women

Soroptimists – a global voice for women against gender violence - Let our voices be heard in international campaigns

Violence affects the lives of millions of women worldwide in all socio-economic and educational classes. It cuts across cultural and religious barriers impeding the right of women to participate fully in society. Violence against women takes a dismaying variety of forms from **domestic abuse and rape**, to **child marriages**, **female circumcision, trafficking, dowry-related violence,** and **honour killings**. Systematic sexual abuse in conflict situations is another form of violence against women. All are violations of the most fundamental human rights. Today **1 out of 5 women** has personally experienced some kind of abuse and almost every woman has been indirectly confronted with acts of violence and discrimination within her family or in her immediate neighborhood.

The **Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women** (ratified in 1993) is the first international human rights instrument to exclusively and explicitly address the issue of violence against women. It affirms that the phenomenon violates, impairs or nullifies women's human rights and their exercise of fundamental freedoms and that it is an obstacle to the achievement of the objectives of equality, development and peace. Article 4 stipulates the **States responsibility** to prevent, investigate and punish acts of violence against women whether they are perpetrated by the State or by private persons.

Despite the various declarations and efforts made by the UN, Governments and Civil Society Organisations are still far away from having achieved a meaningful success in the elimination of violence against women. We have to continue our efforts in creating **awareness** about harmful traditional attitudes and practices, and support the review of the balance of power between women and men at all levels of society. Combating violence against women requires challenging the way that **gender roles and power relations** are articulated in society.

Changing people's attitude and mentality towards women will take a long time. Nevertheless, raising awareness of the issue of violence against women, and **educating boys and men** to view women as valuable partners in life, in the development of a society, and in the attainment of peace are just as important as taking legal steps to protect women's human rights.

Soroptimist clubs have continuously contributed to the elimination of violence against women through **awareness, advocacy and action** in a number of ways. Our database records during the period November 2008 to October 2009 a total of 188

projects which addressed this issue and raised more than 1.4 million USD to help more than 170.000 women and girls within the European Federation.

This is a great achievement giving us a strong foundation for further action in partnership with other international agencies and international campaigns.

We would like to call upon all clubs to join **the 16 Days of activism against gender violence, a campaign linking,** November 25th - the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against women with December 10th – the International Human Rights Day. Since 1991 over 2000 organisations in 156 countries have participated in this campaign – and Soroptimists as global voice for women should not be missing!

The 2009 Theme is: Commit - Act - Demand: We CAN End Violence Against Women!

Please refer to the website:
http://www.cwgl.rutgers.edu/16days/home.html
which provides you with great ideas for a variety of activities with which you can support the campaign.

Another opportunity is to sign up for the UNIFEM initiative Say ***NO–UNiTE to End Violence against Women***. http://www.unifem.org/campaigns/sayno/

This campaign will count and showcase actions taken by individuals, organizations and governments worldwide to end violence against women. Whether you volunteer at a shelter, create awareness, or advocate for better laws and policies — every action counts!

The Mentoring Programme

Mentoring is a personal relationship between an experienced person (**the Mentor**) and a young talented professional (**the Mentee**) whereby the mentor advices the mentee in her personal and professional development. The Mentoring Programme was introduced in 2003 by the German Union of Soroptimist International of Europe.

The main and most important goals of the Mentoring Programme are:

- Support young professional women with **leadership potential**
- Prepare these women for **management positions**
- Assure the fact that combination of **career & family** is possible
- Strengthen **networking** among women
- Make the acquaintance of young committed women with and interest them in Soroptimist International

The programme is performed with cooperation of the EAF (European Academy for Women in Politics and Business in Berlin), and is based on their experience. It starts with an event in which all participants meet, and combines several months of mentoring, with 1 training seminar for the mentors and 2 training seminars and 1 final seminar for the mentees.

An important part of the programme is the "shadowing" where the mentee spends a day (or more) with her mentor at work. It ends with a short presentation of the pairs of mentor & mentee, followed by a dinner.

Each mentee pays 600 Euro for the participation and the rest is paid by donations from the Soroptimist clubs.

The programme is very successful: Over 45 mentees have finished it and by now about half of them became Soroptimists. We hope that more Unions will join and we can successfully expand this programme to the Federation level.

UN Day – 24 October 2009

"... I am painfully aware of the distance to go and gap between commitment and action. On this UN Day, let us resolve and redouble our efforts on behalf of the vulnerable, the powerless, the defenceless. Let us stand more united than ever – united in purpose and united in action to make the world a safer, better place."

\- Ban Ki-moon
UN Secretary-General

Soroptimists are always committed to act and shake the world! **Let's be THE global voice for women**. We look forward to your comments and suggestions about the Programme News.
Please send your comments directly to Suba Parthiban at suba@soroptimisteurope.org

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