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

PROGRAMME NEWS

No. 5, March 2010

Dear Soroptimists,

It is our pleasure to once again bring you the news and updates about the Programme work and Soroptimist activities. Spread the word!

SI/E Best Practice Awards

This year, again, SI/E Best Practice Awards will be given to exemplary projects in all **10 Programme Focus Objectives**. A separate leaflet was sent out specifying the selection criteria and process. It can also be found on our website: http://www.soroptimisteurope.org/. All nominations have to be submitted by **March 15th** and the winners will be announced during the Governors' Meeting in Ghent in July. We would like to ask all Union Presidents to communicate with your clubs the details of the SI/E Best Practice Awards.

International Women's Day

"Equal rights, equal opportunities: Progress for all"

International Women's Day is a day celebrating the global achievements of women. It aims to recall our achievements from the past and the present and to look forward to our future successes. Following an initiative in 1910 in Copenhagen with women from over 17 countries, the first International Women's Day was held on 19 March 1911 in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland with more than one million women and men attending rallies. Their demands were the right to vote, to hold public office, the right to work and to vocational training and for an end to discrimination in their jobs. Overtime, International Women's Day has grown to be a day to commemorate progress, reflect on the status of women, and to acknowledge areas still in need of improvement.

This year's theme for International Women's Day is "Equal rights, equal opportunities: Progress for all." Commenting on International Women's Day, United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon recalls that 15 years ago at the Fourth World Conference on Women, there was a clear message that equality and opportunity are inalienable rights. Since then, women have made progress in many areas – in politics, business and education. However, there is still progress to be made. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon states, "Until women and girls are liberated from poverty and injustice, all our goals – peace, security, sustainable development -- stand in jeopardy."

Soroptimists live out this theme everyday. Through the nature of our organisation, Soroptimists are professional women who are committed to striving for equality and equal opportunities in their everyday lives. Soroptimists also are devoted to the cause of every woman. Through service programmes dedicated to education, to the reduction of poverty, to increasing access to water and to health care, Soroptimists concern themselves with the success of every woman. For Soroptimists, everyday is a day striving for progress, but let International Women's Day be a day to celebrate the achievements already made and a day to encourage us towards a bright future.

An African Experience



Wilma Malucelli, the current President of the Italian Union, and Evelyn Caron, member of the Belgian Union-SI club Gent-Scaldilys were SI/E's representatives at the Project SIerra Study Tour end of January. Both were overwhelmed by emotions, love and care the girls have given them. The tiring long drives on dusty roads had been eased by the warm welcome of the singing and dancing youngsters as well as the local leaders. Wilma and Evelyn were impressed by the results of the Project SIerra and emphasised that HANCI (Help A Needy Child International) was doing an incredible work locally. Soroptimists' help has changed many lives in Sierra Leone. Overall, it was a life-altering experience for both of them.

Exchange Visit to Suriname

Women for Water Partnership facilitated an exchange visit for Roswitha Ott, SI/E Project Manager Africa, and Suba Parthiban, SI/E Programme Officer to study

projects of the National Women's Movement (NVB) of Suriname. NVB does capacity building of grass roots organisations, promotes local women's participation in projects and offers various help to them. This visit culminated in the sharing of knowledge and experience. There will be a more detailed article on this exchange visit in the March issue of the Link.

Beijing +15 NGO Forum

The knowledge gained at the Global Forum for Women: Beijing +15 proved to be invaluable for the participation at the Commission on the Status of Women. On February 27 and 28, 1500 women in packed hall at the Salvation Army listened to the welcome remarks and music. The keynote speaker Dr. Sima Samar from Afghanistan who is also Chairperson of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission and dedicates her life to education and health needs of the women and girls. She declared that "all the nice resolutions have no meaning in our country. We need to stand united and share our failures and successes!"

Patricia Licuanan from the Philiphines stated the importance of networks and partnerships; Charlotte Bunch from the Center for Women's Global Leadership, pointed out that the women's conferences have completely transformed the whole women's movement. Mama Gertrud Mongella from Tanzania is really a staunch advocate of equal rights for women around the world, and she acknowledges the capacity of women's movements.

The caucus on Sunday happened in an open balcony with loudspeakers booming from the auditorium below it was somewhat difficult to hear the voices from the European group, but Sylvia Borren (who was one of our keynote speakers at the Congress in Amsterdam last year) as our spokesperson did an excellent job of tying it all together. It was really exiting to hear later, when the various regions were assembled again, that the areas of concern were very much alike, albeit with some regional differences. For Europe, for instance the 50/50-parity and the role of Europe towards the rest of the world, came high on the agenda, but naturally also the ratification of CEDAW; violence and trafficking.

There also has been a wonderful show performed by school-children depicting the history of woman in words and music. A 13-year old African American girl sang Aretha Franklin's "Respect", which turned out to be an engaging appeal rendering her thunderous applauses from the audience!

The World is Queuing for a Toilet. Are You?

World Water Day, 22 March 2010, is a crucial moment to raise your voice and awareness of the global sanitation and water crisis. World's Longest Toilet Queue is a campaign to show support for the 2.5 billion people who don't have access to basic human rights: a safe toilet and clean water.

Queues will be happening all over the world: this is a global mass mobilization bringing together campaigners to demand real change. Become a part of the WLTQ by organizing or joining a queue. Register your queue online at www.worldtoiletqueue.org Please contact suba@soroptimisteurope.org for more information.

Launch of the SI Convention website

Soroptimist 2011
19th International Convention
July 10 to 14, 2011 – Montréal, Québec, Canada

http://www.si-montreal2011.org/

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