Soroptimists go for WATER AND FOOD

Programme NEWS

Soroptimist International of Europe

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Project of the Month

This month's winners are 42 Austrian clubs for their participation in the UN-World Food Programme/FAO and TNT fundraiser "Walk the World". Their aim was to raise funds for school meals, particularly for girls, in countries with low enrolment rates and hunger related problems. The project fulfilled Programme Focus Objective no. 4: "Ensure women and girls have food security and access to the highest attainable standard of health care."

The Austrian Union raised funds for school children in Gambia where literacy is very low and malnutrition is high. Each club organized a 5K walk where participants paid at least €15 to enter. Soroptimists wore T-shirts with SI emblem and the event's "End Hunger" Logo. Additionally, the Union produced a folder to inform and motivate people to participate in the event and promoted the walks in Union and Club home pages as well as in regional newsletters and local radio.

PFR no. 21626 reports that a total of €42,700 were raised and transferred to the World Food Programme in Berlin to buy meals for school-going girls. When girls attend school many of them get a take-home ration which can serve as an incentive for their families to continue sending them to school, and giving them a proper education. With the cost being 20 cents per meal, about 200,000 school meals were financed by the Austrian Union's contribution. This will help an equal number of girls improve their nutrition as well as their education.

Congratulations to the Austrian Clubs!

"Soroptimists go for Water and Food" 2011 – 2013

With growing world population, increased competition for natural resources and advanced attention to environmental issues, water for food has become a major issue to be tackled. There is a need to explore new forms of water and food production management. Evidently, water plays a critical role in achieving food security. It is indeed a challenge to produce better quality food while using less water. Considering the importance of this topic, SI/E President Kathy Kaaf chose the theme "Soroptimists go for Water and Food" for her biennium 2011-2013. She stated that "we want not only to draw attention to social wrongs and grievances, but also to actively commit ourselves to correct them." SI/E members are encouraged to initiate projects in this area.

The results from these two years will then be presented at the 20th European Congress of SI/E in Berlin, 12th – 14th July, 2013. In addition, SI/E aims to raise awareness of the inequity in distribution of water and food products, focus on agriculture with emphasis on science and technology based solutions as well as local and traditional knowledge to develop new innovations in the area of agriculture, champion food security, encourage more sustainable forms of energy, and provide rural population with resources and opportunities to live a healthy and productive life.

We encourage SI/E members to further initiate and continue successful joint projects in partnership with SI clubs around the world as well as with external organizations.

SOROPTIMIST PROJECT MATCHING

To celebrate the new biennium theme "Soroptimists go for Water and Food," this month's Programme News features projects which are part of SIA and SIE's Project Matching initiative. The following projects strive to bring impoverished communities cleaner drinking water as well as ease their access to food. Some of these projects have been funded through Soroptimist Project Matching and some still need your help! Please visit www.soroptimistprojects.org to learn more about how you can support!

ML0005 – Truck farming and fruit-trees plantation for women in Tia

Women in Tia, Mali are generally unemployed or employed in activities that generate little income. Working in poor conditions and earning little has important consequences for them and their children; they are unable to have access to health care and often do not have enough money for food or other supplies.

The purpose of this project is to develop truck farming and a plantation of fruit-trees on a field owned by the Women's Group of Tia. Wells have to be built in order to ease access to water and an agronomic engineer will help train women and supervise this task. Fruits from the plantation will be sold on the market and the profits will give villagers the possibility to buy food during winter to send their children to school and to have access to health services.

SG0001 – Training of women farmers

To improve the economic situation of 20 women in Ziguinchor, Senegal, this project trains them on how to preserve fruits and vegetables for later commercialization. This project seeks to help women who have been displaced by war. Small and medium enterprises make up most of the economy in Senegal, hence this project also educates them on small businesses.

ML0006 & ML0007 – Purchase of a multifunctional mill and a well for the Farada Village

Up until now, women from Farada, Mali had to wake up at 5 am to carry large quantities of food supplies to the neighbouring village which is located 3 km away in order to grind them into powder. Often girls are forced to quit school to help their mothers to crush millet or corn by hand for lunch. Additionally, the village has only small wells that dry up outside of the rainy season and whose water is neither safe nor clean; women and girls have to walk as far as 8 km to reach the closest village with access to safe water. Together, these projects aim to fund the purchase and installation of a mill and a storage room for the machines, and a large well that will help fight water-related diseases.

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November 25 – International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

On November 25th, we commemorate the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women established in 1999 by the UN General Assembly to raise public awareness on a problem that is pervasive around the world. Violence against women takes many forms – physical, sexual, and psychological. It is not confined to a specific culture, region or country, or to a particular group of women within a society. As such, it is a serious international problem, particularly when it takes place within conflict situations.

In line with the aspirations of Resolution 54/134 of 1999 which invited governments, international organizations and NGOs to organize activities designed to raise public awareness on the problem of violence, the UN convened a mini-summit on Preventing and Responding to Sexual Violence in Conflict Thursday 22nd of September to declare sexual violence in conflict situations a threat to peace and security. Leaders hope that treating this issue as a security rather than a health concern and engaging the Security Council as a leading actor will help to bring the issue to the foreground and prompt swift and consistent consequences for perpetrators of sexual abuse.

This is a significant step taken to advance women's rights and protect the millions who are vulnerable to abuse – as at least one out of every three women around the world has been beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime. It is extremely important that we continue to raise awareness and to discuss violence against women as it is an issue which not only harms the victim but which can have serious effects on families and communities, reinforcing other forms of violence that are prevalent in society.

We invite all Soroptimists to organize activities on this day as well as in the following 16 days to raise public awareness against Gender Related Violence leading up to International Human Rights Day on the 10th of December.

FEATURED WEBSITES:

www.wfp.org/

The World Food Programme is the world's largest humanitarian agency fighting hunger worldwide. Currently, it is the largest organization working to fight the hunger crisis in the Horn of Africa. As part of the UN system, it has been working since 1961 with sister UN agencies – the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) to provide food in emergencies saving the lives of victims of war, civil conflict and natural disasters. WFP works in 73 different countries and has programmes which research nutrition and food security. It also uses its purchasing power and expertise to offer smallholder farmers access to agricultural markets.

www.welthungerhilfe.de/home_eng.html

Welthungerhilfe is one of the largest NGO in Germany that provides immediate emergency aid in the wake of a disaster as well as initiates long-term projects which are carried out in cooperation with local partners. Welthungerhilfe has 5,500 projects in 70 countries. Many of their projects in addition to providing support for agriculture include reconstruction and infrastructure work, improving schooling, and protecting women from violence.

www.fao.org/countryprofiles/water/

FAO's Water and Food Security Country Profiles provides specific information on the state of water resources and food security in a country-specific format. The site makes available valuable information from FAO and its partner's databases and information systems, to give users results which can be used to enhance decision-making and promote advocacy in these areas. The information to be found includes: country briefs, projects in the country, international human development indicators, key statistics, maps, rural poverty country profiles, and news archives.