DECEMBER 2010

TIS

The International Soroptimist



Focus on Education & Leadership

a global voice for women

Soroptimist International

www.soroptimistinternational.org



President's update

Dear Readers, Dear Soroptimists

I should like to give you some interesting figures from our SI Programme Focus database to show how much Soroptimists worldwide have achieved within our programme work **Funds collected between 1 January - 14 December:**
US$5,583,178, GB£4,156,193, €3,516,036.
Women helped in the period: 465,326
Girls helped in the period: 402,016
PFRs sent to SI database in the period: 3,999

These are fantastic and overwhelming figures! They document the immense work that Soroptimists worldwide are undertaking to help women and girls. The database is also the backbone of the work that our UN representatives do on our behalf, as it really shows that Soroptimist International is empowering the lives of women and girls. A big THANK YOU to ALL Soroptimists all over the world for your unique effort!

I feel sure that the total figures are, in reality, much higher, as not all clubs have sent PFRs to document their work. It is also very interesting to study the PFRs in the database and to realise the variety and creativity of projects.

Through the Programme Focus Report database on the SI website you can search on all service areas, on Hands on Service, on Funding etc, so please enjoy your search in the SI website!

At the SI Convention in Montréal from 10-14 July 2011 you will all have the opportunity to hear interesting speakers and learn more about SI projects. In the workshops you will be able to participate in discussions about our work and future, so please register by visiting www.si-convention.org.

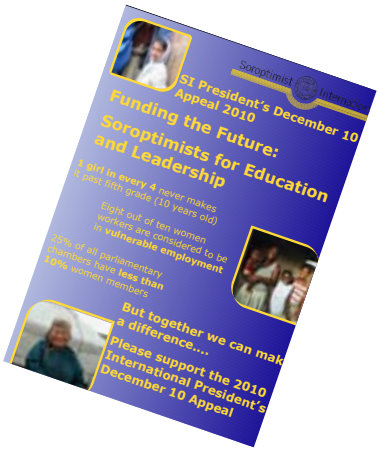
It is a must for each Soroptimist to participate in a convention – at least once in your lifetime. You will never forget the spirit of friendship and enthusiasm, so SEE YOU in MONTREAL!

I use this occasion to thank you all – our dear members – for your devotion to Soroptimism. Our organisation is based on the members, who are our "grass roots". Without your inspiration and efficient work Soroptimist International could not survive. Please consider this when you wear your pin with pride and don't forget to tell your friends, colleagues and neighbours about the overwhelming figures I gave you in the introduction.

Seasons greetings to you all and to your families!

Hanne Jensbo

SI President's December 10 Appeal 2010



Funding the Future: Soroptimists for Education and Leadership

The President's December 10 Appeal 2010 is dedicated to securing vital funds to progress the long term project that will be launched on the topic selected by our members: Soroptimists for Education and Leadership. Your contributions to this appeal will allow us to support outstanding Soroptimists projects around the world.
You will help to:

- Empower women and girls with skills and confidence
- Change attitudes and structures to allow women and girls to participate in society
- Impart leadership skills to women and girls

"I am so happy that our trainer starts our programme with the words, 'Gather together with your friends.' The most important thing for me in this programme is being together and sharing with the other women in my group." Jeanine, Rwanda

By raising money now through this appeal, we can ensure that the long term project has the means to improve the lives of women and girls through education and leadership from its launch. For the first time ever in an international project at SI level, Soroptimists can directly support other Soroptimists in partnership and friendship, so don't forget: "Action Speaks Louder than Words!" Please download the leaflet and material about the appeal from: www.soroptimistinternational.org. Thank you in advance for your contribution!

Hanne Jensbo, International President

Is your project a winner?

The difference that Soroptimists make to women and girls around the world is celebrated by recognising best practice in each Federation. The standard is high and it is difficult making the final decisions! You need to report your project on the SI PFR database to be considered for an award - so please make sure that it is in there by the middle of March 2011! This year the projects must reflect these Programme Focus Objectives:

- Promote peaceful conflict resolution, inter-cultural and inter-racial tolerance and condemn genocide and terrorism
- Ensure equal access to education and training for women and girls throughout their lifespan
- Assure women's advancement in management, politics and decision-making

There is an award for each Objective for each Federation. There is also an award for one outstanding project. Celebrating success is very important so please make sure that you submit your report of the project and send at least one photograph. We will use the photographs in the annually published booklet which celebrates the good projects and promotes the work Soroptimists do!

This time we also ask for photographs from the previous winners during this Quadrennium - they will be used during the International Convention in Montreal 2011. Please send photos to your Federation Programme Director and to SIHQ to hq@soroptimistinternational.org

Margaret Cook, International Assistant Programme Director

a global voice for women

Soroptimist International



From the editor

Great news from SI Headquarters! After much intense work, the Board of Soroptimist International has approved the SI Strategic Plan. The debating is over, the goals for the future are agreed, the objectives are set, the way ahead is clear!

This Strategic Plan is the cornerstone of your work, it gives form, guidance and encouragement to every project or initiative; it is a great achievement and will be immensely useful to members across the globe.

And what work is being done! I am constantly amazed by the vision, the effort and the achievement of Soroptimists – you never stop do you?

This issue looks at the work you have been doing in matters of Education and Leadership, helping today's girls become tomorrow's leaders. How inspiring and invigorating it is to hear about women working so hard, with such generosity, mentoring, guiding, teaching and crucially, funding those who haven't had some of the privileges that others take for granted.

The work of SI should be promoted by all of you, sung from the rooftops, recorded on the internet, anywhere you can think of. Not for self congratulation, but to encourage others to join you - and do even more!

As we go to press many of us are preparing for the Christmas season and a New Year, I wish you all a very happy time and a successful and peaceful New Year.

Sheila

Upcoming events at the United Nations

Soroptimist International has a team of representatives based at each of the main UN centres in Geneva, New York, Paris, Rome and Vienna, as well as at the regional centres for Africa, West Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean. Here are some key dates where SI Reps will be participating or where issues affecting women and girls will play an important role in the policy discussions. Recent events which have taken place but did not make it into the last TIS are also included:

29 Nov – 3 Dec: 140th Session of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) Council. FAO Rep, Cinzia Palmi, and SI Italian Union President Wilma Malucelli attended to see the 1 Billion Hungry campaign signatures being delivered. Soroptimists have been huge supporters of this campaign so please visit the members section of the SI website to read a full report!

17 Jan – 4 Feb: 48th Session of the Convention on the Elimination and Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) Committee, Geneva.
Bangladesh, Israel, Kenya, Liechtenstein, Sri Lanka and South Africa will be reviewed at this meeting. Each state will submit a report on the status of women. NGOs can submit alternative reports to the Committee and NGO attendance is encouraged; if you are in a Soroptimist Club in one of the countries being reviewed you could take part! Soroptimists of Papua New Guinea attended a review in July and did a fantastic job holding their Government to account. For more information, please contact SIHQ or read the recent CEDAW report in the members section of the SI website.

17 – 25 Jan: World Health Organisation (WHO) 128th Executive Board Meeting, Geneva.
Topics on the agenda include the MDGs. Progress reports will be given on climate change and health, working towards universal coverage of maternal and child health interventions and Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting.

9 - 18 Feb: 49th Session of the Commission for Social Development.
SI UN Representatives Lois Beilin and Caroline Themm will attend this session in New York. The priority theme is Poverty Eradication.

20 Feb: World Day of Social Justice

22 Feb – 4 March: CSW55.
The theme this year is Access and participation of women and girls to education, training, science and technology, including for the promotion of women's equal access to full employment and decent work. SI will be sending a full delegation as well as taking part in or leading at least four workshops. Visit the website during CSW fortnight to keep up to date with all the latest news.

8 March: International Women's Day.

14 March: Commonwealth Day. The theme this year is 'Women as Agents of Change'. More information coming soon!

Remember to keep checking the SI Programme Blog for updates on our UN work at http://siprogrammeblog.blogspot.com/. All the reports from UN sessions can be found in full in the members section of the SI website.

Soroptimist International

A global voice for women

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and you will receive your very own digital magazine each quarter, free of charge!



CSW 55 New York

22 February - 4 March 2011

Lois Beilin, SI Representative to the United Nations, New York, reports

What is CSW? The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is a functional commission of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), dedicated exclusively to gender equality and advancement of women. It is the principal global policy-making body.

Every year, representatives of Member States gather at United Nations Headquarters in New York to evaluate progress on gender equality, identify challenges, set global standards and formulate concrete policies to promote gender equality and advancement of women worldwide.

The Commission consists of one representative from each of 45 Member States elected by the Council on the basis of equitable geographical distribution.

The Commission's primary activity is to produce 'Agreed conclusions', which contain an analysis of the priority theme of concern and a set of concrete recommendations for Governments, intergovernmental bodies and other institutions, civil society actors and other relevant stakeholders, to be implemented at the international, national, regional and local level.

The 55th Commission on the Status of Women will be held in New York, 22 February – 4 March, 2011.

Plenary sessions will be held in the UN Building (a new temporary known as the North Lawn Building) and severe limitations of space will curtail attendance. However, Consultation Day, all parallel events, the CSW reception and UNIFEM luncheon are open to NGOs and participants that are not officially registered.

Michele Bachelet, Under Secretary of UN Women, has been invited to address the Consultation Day. Other speakers will be leaders who have promoted getting women and girls in to science, technology and mathematics and leaders of grassroots projects that are working at the frontier of science and technology. For expert papers and preparation see: www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/55es.htm

The NGO Working Group on Girls plans to bring 15 girls from countries around the world to participate in CSW55. These young women are guaranteed registration by the CSW committee and will attend sessions and participate in as many discussions as can be arranged.

The young women will be the ambassadors of CSW55 to their respective communities and contribute to a periodic newsletter called Action for Girls – Girls' Rights are Human Rights.

For further information, contact wggs@girlsrights.org.

Soroptimist International invites YOU to help our advocacy campaign!



We are asking every Soroptimist to ensure that our concerns and solutions are heard by government officials before CSW 55 in February. Here are three things you can do to make a difference for women and girls using the Soroptimist statement:

1. Use our postcard or letter template to **write** to your national government officials responsible for gender equality and women's issues.
Download: http://www.soroptimistinternational.org/CSW_Pre-Session_Advocacy_Toolkit.pdf
2. **Lobby** government officials, women's commissions, or other relevant targets in person to ensure that the voices of women and girls, as expressed in the SI statement, are included in decision-making at this year's CSW. Make sure they have a copy of the Soroptimist statement!
Download: http://www.soroptimistinternational.org/CSW_Pre-Session_Advocacy_Toolkit.pdf
3. **Learn** more about the issues raised in SI's statement and spread the word in your club and community. **Discuss** the issues with local community leaders. When you're done, we'd like to hear about it! Use the SI online reporting system (the PFRs).
(http://reports.soroptimistinternational.org/) to tell us what you did and feel free to send photos to hq@soroptimistinternational.org.

INTERNATIONAL DAY
For the Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls

The official observance on 23 November, at the United Nations Headquarters in New York was opened by Secretary General, Mr. Ban Ki-Moon.

Ms Michele Bachelet, the Under Secretary General for UN Women spoke, as did

Ms Shupe Makashinyi, of Equality Now in Zimbabwe.

The messages were all devoted to the enormous work yet to be accomplished in so many parts of the world. Women and Girls in conflict and post-conflict areas are especially vulnerable and need immediate implementation of SCR 1325 by those states. The campaign of UNITE will be given increased visibility and support by UN Women, however, all NGOs and civil society are called on to increase their efforts to advocate with governments to implement the resolutions they have signed.

WOMEN AMBASSADORS MEET SOROPTIMISTS IN NEW YORK



Women Ambassadors are invited to meet CSW/NGO members each year to acquaint them with the objectives and activities of the committee.

The annual CSW/NGO luncheon is also a chance for members to become acquainted with the issues of women in the ambassador's country.

Although there are few women ambassadors, these dynamic women leaders are important and many are helpful in moving the agenda forward. All are supportive of UN Women and several will be speaking at CSW55.

SI of New York sponsored and hosted the Ambassador of Liberia, H.E. Ms. Marjon V. Kamara. Ambassador Kamara has a long history of work with refugees under the auspices of United Nations agencies all over the world.

Her work for Liberia is devoted to increasing education for all children, development of the economy and most importantly, security for all. Ms. Kamara, with her wealth of UN experience, plays an important mentoring role too with the newer and younger ambassadors.

The photograph shows New York Soroptimists (one is not a rep. but a member of SINYC club, Manuela Roosevelt) and the Ambassador from Liberia:

L to R: Carolyn Themm, H.E. Ambassador Kamara, Lois Beilin, Manuela Roosevelt, Yoko Komori Olson and Katherine Mayer.

UN Women

What is it?



The establishment of UN Women (UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women) marks a watershed, unanimous decision taken by the UN General Assembly. UN Women will combine and streamline gender equality work in the UN from four previously distinct parts of the UN system:

- Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW, established 1946)
- International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW, established in 1976)
- Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI, established in 1997)
- United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM, established in 1976)

UN Women will be a champion for women and girls, providing a unified powerful voice. The agency will have two primary roles: supporting inter-governmental bodies such as the Commission on the Status of Women in their formulation of policies, global standards and norms, and helping Member States to implement these standards. It will also help the UN system to be accountable for its own commitments on gender equality.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon has also empowered UN Women with an Under-Secretary-General, Michelle Bachelet, the former president of Chile. Ms. Bachelet was the first female president of Chile and most recently has been working closely with UNIFEM advocating for Haitian women affected by the earthquake.

In November, ECOSOC elected the Executive Board of UN Women. The 41 board members were selected as follows: 10 from Africa, 10 from Asia, 4 from Eastern Europe, 6 from Latin America and the Caribbean, 5 from Western Europe and 6 from contributing (funding) countries. The length of term was determined by drawing lots (with the exception of the contributing countries).

Of note, Iran was not elected to the Board, as the late addition of Timor-Leste as a candidate meant that there were 11 possible choices for the 10 places reserved for Asian states.

There is some criticism that there is no representation from the Pacific region.

UN Women will be operational by January 2011. Please visit http://www.unwomen.org/ for more information.

	2 year term	3 year term
Africa	Côte d'Ivoire Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) Lesotho Libya Tanzania	Angola Cape Verde Congo Ethiopia Nigeria
Asia	Bangladesh India Malaysia Pakistan Timor-Leste	China Indonesia Kazakhstan Japan Republic of Korea
Eastern European	Estonia Russia	Hungary Ukraine
Western European and Other	France Italy	Denmark Luxembourg Sweden
Latin American & Caribbean	Argentina Brazil El Salvador	Dominican Republic Grenada Peru
Contributing states		Mexico Norway Saudi Arabia Spain United Kingdom United States

World Food Day

SI UN Representative Cinzia Palmi reports from Rome

World Food Day (WFD) was a great opportunity for SI to gain visibility. As this was my first time, it was interesting to participate in the WFD Ceremony.

The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) Director, General Dr. Diouf presented his address calling for global efforts to reach the Millennium Development Goal 1: "Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger" and he launched a global campaign for people to sign a petition against "1 Billion Hungry" as a way for individuals to show their moral outrage toward the situation.

Other well-known personalities spoke to the audience including an address on behalf of Pope Benedict XVI. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda, was the guest of honour, and several Goodwill Ambassadors were present.

Children from schools in Rome were rewarded for winning the WFD poster competition organised by the UN Women's Guild. In addition to the official programme, there were two side events. One was the Private Sector Forum "Creating shared value" attended by Cristina Gorajski, the co-ordinator of our AHG/INGO group, who spoke about enhancing procurement from smallholders, innovation and transfer of technology to different regions.

The other was the Civil Society Forum "Actions against hunger". SI was invited to present our activities in support of the "1 Billion Hungry" Project, taking stock of action taken and making suggestions regarding the way forward for the campaign.

It was an opportunity for stakeholders to agree on some concrete strategies for highlighting the "1 Billion Hungry" Project and take responsibility for the key solutions to ending world hunger.

The panel counted only seven "1 Billion Hungry" Project partners: Sergio Marelli – CISA, George Dixon –YUNGA, Anna Stensland – IAAH, Aksel Naerstad – More and Better, Hanna Mattinen – ACF and me as a SI Representative to FAO. It was strongly suggested that the campaign should be linked with concrete examples of successful actions and programs at all levels. Emphasis should be put on policy making and accountability of countries, incorporation of nutrition in the materials, stress on the role of sustainable agriculture and access to natural resources and the necessity for a multi-stakeholder approach to the fight against hunger.

The paper on the role of SI in support of the Campaign and future action was greatly appreciated and is available on the members section of the SI website.



World Food Day Civil Society Forum "Actions against Hunger".
©FAO/Alessandra Benedetti



SI UN Reps in Geneva and Vienna
Trafficking is modern slavery

Sina Stiffler SI Rep to UN Geneva reports from the TOC (Transnational Organised Crime) Conference in Vienna

As a newcomer representative to UN Geneva I happily accepted UN Vienna SI representative Roswitha Benesch's invitation to accompany her to the TOC Conference in October 2010. Trafficking in Persons was one of the core issues, exactly ten years since the UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (TOC) was decided, the resolution 55/25.

Big hopes had been set on this Anti Trafficking Convention (also called Palermo Convention), the signing of which was seen "as a watershed event" by Kofi A. Annan in 2000, when he stated that "the trafficking of persons, particularly women and children, for forced and exploitative labour, including for sexual exploitation, is one of the most egregious violations of human rights that the UN now confronts". He believed that the ratification could make a real difference in the struggle to eliminate this reprehensible trade in human beings.

However ten years later, we are not there yet. Awareness has risen – but it seems extremely difficult to help trafficked persons or to get hold of the perpetrators.

"Human trafficking is a too technical term for this very bad crime" says Yuri Fedorov, Executive Director an UNDOC (UN Office against Drugs and Crime). The term itself doesn't bear meaning and doesn't raise attention to what it is: it is simply slavery – and we should not refrain to name it.

What was said in Vienna is hair-raising: human trafficking has become the third biggest crime, with 2.4 million new victims every year. Trafficking comes in various forms:

- Cross border trafficking (stealing women) from neighbouring countries into China; a shortage of women is the consequence of the one child policy (and abortion of female foetus).
- Forced juvenile begging, very often it is only DNA that makes it possible to give children back to their parents when they cannot recognise them after some years.
- In many countries women are employed as domestic workers but end up in forced prostitution - slavery. Sadly, when victims are freed, they often cannot go back home, they often feel ashamed or guilty. Often victims do not co-operate for fear of being sent back as illegal immigrants.

Most organisations agree that there must be compensation for the victims for unpaid wages, psychological traumas. But who should pay? Although it is stated that about US$30 billion is earned with trafficking in any forms, it seems extremely difficult to get hold of traffickers or the money they have made with their crime.

A feeling of helplessness arises during this conference, how can we as Soroptimists, as the Civil Society, do anything to combat such awful crimes? Awareness yes, advocacy yes, but action is needed! In the March 2010 edition of TIS SI members were advised to support organisations that have the power to do something against trafficking, 'Stop the traffik' is one of them www.stopthetrafik.org, it has more than 1,000 member organisations in 50 countries and a grass roots following of ordinary activists around the world.

The campaign is directly related to Objective 2 in the SI Programme Focus 2007-2011.

United Nations Human Rights Day
10 December

Rosie Coutts, SI Executive Director on the history behind this year's appeal

The promotion and protection of human rights has been a major concern for the United Nations since 1945, when the founding nations resolved that the horrors of The Second World War should never be allowed to recur. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948.

All States and interested organisations have been invited by the General Assembly to observe 10 December as Human Rights Day since 1950. To quote UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon: "Discrimination targets individuals and groups that are vulnerable to attack: the disabled, women and girls, the poor, migrants, minorities, and all those who are perceived as different... But these victims of discrimination are not alone. The United Nations is standing with them, committed to defending the rights of all, and particularly the most vulnerable. That is our identity and our mission."

The UN encourages us all to make a difference: to celebrate Human Rights Day by advocating non-discrimination, organising activities, raising awareness and reaching out to our local communities on 10 December and beyond.

The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights set 2010's theme for Human Rights Day as 'human rights defenders who act to end discrimination', stating that human rights defenders acting against discrimination, often at great personal risk, are recognised and acclaimed on this day. This focus will continue through 2011. They note that human rights defenders are active in every part of the world, working alone and in groups, in local communities, in national politics and internationally. Human Rights Day 2010 is also intended to inspire a new generation of defenders to speak up and take action to end discrimination in all of its forms whenever and wherever it is manifested.

SI recognised December 10 as International Day from 1956 onwards. In 1981 International President Catherine Salt asked members to go a step further by introducing the International President's Appeal Day. She asked that all Soroptimists make a personal sacrifice that day, so that the money could be given at the International President's discretion, to women in great need anywhere in the world.

The first, highly successful Appeal was in 1982, aiding refugee women and children on the island of Pulau Bidong in Malaysia. This excerpt from the September issue of *The International Soroptimist magazine* of that year makes fascinating reading – our idea of personal sacrifice might be different today! *"The President hopes that all Soroptimists will observe this day by making some personal sacrifice, small or great – perhaps do without a packet of cigarettes, or a meal, or a hair-do, the choice is yours."*



Former SI President Catherine Salt, is second from right in this photograph

In the 28 President's Appeals since that date, Soroptimists have collaborated with an impressive array of partners in every corner of the world, including 12 partnerships with the UN and inter-governmental agencies. The diversity of the Appeals is remarkable, although they all share one unifying feature: the difference that Soroptimist contributions make to the lives of women and girls. Each appeal is special and we, at SI Headquarters, feel privileged to share in their planning and keep up with their outcomes, often long after the Appeal has closed.

Although usually designed to last just one year, the impressive amounts donated by members have often ensured that the particular project can be sustained over a much longer period.

The 2010 December 10 President's Appeal is taking a different form from previous appeals – do read President Hanne's comment in this magazine to find out more, and visit the international project pages on the SI website for details of current and past recent appeals.

The SI Strategic Plan: Unanimous Board Agreement for Completion



Rosie Coutts, SI Executive Director, reports

VISION
Soroptimist International is a vibrant, dynamic organisation for today's professional and business women. We are committed to a world where women and girls together achieve their individual and collective potential, realise aspirations and have an equal voice in creating strong, peaceful communities worldwide.

MISSION
Soroptimists inspire action and create opportunities to transform the lives of women and girls through a global network of members and international partnerships.

VALUES
• Human rights for all
• Global peace and international goodwill
• Advancing women's potential
• Integrity and democratic decision making
• Volunteering, diversity and friendship.

GOAL 1 – PROGRAMME
Soroptimists will ensure that women and girls enjoy equality, live in safe, healthy and equitable environments, have access to education and have leadership and practical skills.
OBJECTIVE 1: Improve the status of women and girls, particularly the most vulnerable, through the 2007–2011 Programme Focus Objectives:
1. Eliminate poverty and gender discrimination through ensuring women's full social and economic rights.
2. End human trafficking and all forms of violence against women and girls.
3. Ensure access to health care for women and girls.
4. Support programmes and policies that eliminate HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis and other major diseases.
5. Improve access to clean water, sanitation and essential food resources.
6. Mitigate the effects of climate change and integrate sustainability into personal choices and government policies and programmes.
7. Meet the needs of women and girls during and after armed conflicts and disasters.
8. Promote peaceful conflict resolution, intercultural and inter-racial tolerance and condemn all forms of genocide and terrorism.
9. Ensure equal access to education and training for women and girls throughout their lifespan.
10. Assure women's advancement in management, politics and decision making.
OBJECTIVE 2: Strengthen and increase SI's presence as an international advocate for women and girls in SI's programme focus areas, particularly education and leadership.
OBJECTIVE 3: Intensify activities that raise the international profile and visibility of Soroptimist and its programme focus on the global level within the organisation and externally.

GOAL 2 – ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
Soroptimist International will have a dynamic, flexible and responsive membership, with an international point of connection, committed to the delivery of its vision and mission.
OBJECTIVE 1: Increase members' engagement and affinity for being part of a global organisation.
OBJECTIVE 2: Increase membership.

GOAL 3 - STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP
SI will be a strategic organisation with dynamic and proactive leadership at all levels, able to deliver results and ensure its vision is achieved.
OBJECTIVE 1: Improve performance management and decision making.
OBJECTIVE 2: Develop leadership capacity.
OBJECTIVE 3: Establish strategic financial planning and control.
(SI is the board and SI post holders)

Extend and Prosper
Organisational Development Committee



Ann Dawson, Chair SI Organisational Development Committee, reports

Yes, the Extension Committee has a new name, one that more accurately describes the work undertaken by the committee, particularly in these days of strategic planning and development.

As a vibrant organisation for women we need to grow in order to ensure that our organisation can fulfil its vision and its mission throughout the 21st Century and to do that we need a clear strategy and the willingness to develop.

During the past few months it has been good to send greetings and congratulations to new clubs in all four Federations, particularly as in some cases, this marks the organisation breaking new ground and entering countries/territories where, prior to considerable hard work and negotiation, there had been reluctance to accept women's service clubs in their domain.

On this note, particular congratulations must go to SISWP for their work in Mongolia and their continued liaison with the All China Women's Federation.

Without members we cannot tackle the vital issues that affect women and girls. It is, without doubt, our programme work that attracts new members and retains their interest; this can be seen in Sierra Leone where there are two embryonic clubs. Major projects attract groups of women and open the door for the extension and development of our organisation. It is the responsibility of us all to ensure the door is open wide and the welcome warm.

We need the power, knowledge, skills and experience of members in established clubs to encourage and nurture our new clubs and new members. It is that wonderful mix of experience and raw enthusiasm that enables Soroptimist International to be the channel through which we can all continue to make a real difference to the lives of women and girls.

Make sure your club is visible when tackling social issues, let the media know that Soroptimists are not shrinking violets but women of action! Have you thought of offering yourselves as speakers at other clubs? I know of a member who, when invited to address a Rotary club about a Soroptimist project, was surprised to find that it was the Rotary women who had not heard of Soroptimists not the men!

The committee may have a new name but never forget 'Extension' - ask the question of women showing interest at your public event – "do you have a group of like-minded friends - would they be interested in hearing about the work of Soroptimist International"? Ask to meet them in a social situation to introduce them to Soroptimism and our work, if they form a natural group they may well form the nucleus of a new club. Never miss a chance!

The future of our organisation is in our own hands, every single member is an ambassador for Soroptimist International; let us work together to see our organisation grow and thrive in the 21st century. There are women and girls throughout the world who need us.

SISWP



Trapped in a Dark Hole

SI Joondalup SISWP

Ailsa Rothenbury, SI Joondalup, reports

It's hot and humid, the torrential downpour has finally ceased. It's 1am in Dili and I am watching the BBC coverage of the mine rescue in Chile, again. The president is there and they have spent millions of dollars on a momentous feat.

Eventually, I start to see a connection between the situation of our girls in Dili and the situation of the trapped miners. National independence does not always bring personal success and freedom immediately. I got to thinking about the two youngest girls we are supporting in their bid for education and a way out of being trapped in a situation of domestic violence and rural poverty in the Dili hinterland where food security is a major administrative problem.

The problem in Timor-Leste is complex and chronic but is crucial to the maintenance of social stability and must be addressed if the nation is to succeed as a democracy. As food security is one of the most fundamental human needs, its absence is both a symptom and a cause of a malfunctioning society. To avoid state failure, the government of Timor-Leste must meet the expectations of its citizens by delivering certain public goods, of which human security is arguably the most important. Food security is not just a rural issue – in Dili, almost 40 per cent of households experience food shortages *(World Bank 2003)*.

Food security is dependent on financial security. Access to education and achievement of educational goals are the escape capsule for our scholarship girls. The cave-in was political not industrial. The trip from the depths to the light will take longer than the time it took to drill through the bedrock of Chile to the 33 trapped men. And the problems the girls face are more insidious because they are not starving, are not bleeding nor obviously drowning.

The girls appreciate the opportunity given to them by their neighbour, Kirsty Sword Gusmao, who connected them to the sponsorship programme that SI Joondalup took up in 2008. They are working hard at their studies, coping with family life and the need to travel everyday by truck or bus into Dili. The roads are dreadful so studying en route is impossible.

When the girls complete their studies, they will be able to give something back to their community, locally and nationally. Their neighbours will require a 'hand up not a hand out' - the study mode encourages this process.

Soroptomist International is recognising the value of education for women and girls. I hope that we will continue to facilitate the education of these young women as they continue their personal fight out of poverty and deprivation.

Changing channels, I get Home and Away. Lovely house, in a lovely suburb with a family with a range of relationship problems.

They can drink the water from the tap, the toilet is a dual water saver flush model, the kids ask 'what's for dinner'? In rural Timor Leste this does not happen. On TV the children have a room to themselves, Dad has a job, gets annual leave, if a family member dies there is grief counselling.

In rural Timor Leste this does not happen. My trip to Dili has made me more aware of the things I already knew, but has motivated me to act rather than just let others do it. Our education sponsorship capsule will help to pull them up into the light of self confidence and community respect.

SIGBI

Stars of Tomorrow

Sujatha Balakrishnan, SI Bangalore, SIGBI, reports

"Stars of Tomorrow" an educational initiative of SI Bangalore, started with the vision that children from families of all income groups should have access to high-quality education. Many government schools in India have vernacular instruction, with the result that students of these schools are weak in English. The Stars of Tomorrow Project steps in to address this issue.

The Project was inaugurated on World Literacy Day, 8 September 2009. It started with the Gopal Ramnarayan Government School, in Bangalore North and it is hoped to expand the project in the coming years. The English teachers include SI Bangalore members with a few volunteers; students from engineering and management colleges and young professionals.

An integrated curriculum focuses on communicative English combined with personal hygiene, human values and leadership development. The classes are bi-weekly, held after school.

Besides these classes, the club has held other programmes over the past year for the students. On 14 November 2009 – Children's Day – an important event in the Indian calendar, they held a talk to expose the students to inspiring role models.

Two young girls from similar socio-economic backgrounds who are well educated and successfully employed in the fields of nursing and business management joined the event and spoke to the children on how education, particularly for the girl child, can lead to an empowered life. One of the club members who is good at art and craft work, entertained the little children with puppets she had made, enacting various fables like The Hare and the Tortoise, the Two Swans and the Tortoise, The Crocodile and the Monkey.

On World Peace Day 2010, the Soroptimists held a painting competition for the children of Gopal Ramnarayan School and two other neighbouring government schools on the theme of World Peace. The most creative entries were awarded books as prizes.



Children's Day: One of the girls who spoke to the children about education and how it could empower them

The club's vision for the programme is to instill confidence in these young students through improved communicative English skills, and also through counselling, to encourage them towards acquiring college degrees which will help them cross horizons hitherto unknown.

Advancing Women Beyond Borders

European Mentoring Programme

Christine Cromwell-Ahrens, Editor, The Link, reports



Mentees, mentors and organisers at the Kick-Off meeting in Bensheim

It all began in a fairytale-like Castle Schöneberg in Bensheim, Germany in mid-September, when 24 young women from Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg and Sweden met for the three day Kick-Off Seminar of the European Mentoring Programme 2010.

The event marked the beginning of the nine month mentoring programme, laying the groundwork for successful training, co-operation and networking.

"We felt somewhat awkward at first with so many strong personalities gathered together, but we quickly focused because there was a lot to be done," wrote the delegation of Belgian mentees (Christina Elvers, Liesbeth De Waele, Natalie Van Praet and Sarah Vermeulen). "We want to make the most out of this amazing opportunity!" SIE's partner in this programme – EAF *(translated European Academy for Women in Politics and Business)* – provided professional trainers throughout the weekend.

In addition to the official programme, this first meeting gave participants a chance to meet each other on a personal level. "Different nationalities give an extra dimension to this programme," said mentee Hedda Malm from Sweden. Besides building the mentee-mentor relationship, the idea is to build a network among mentees across borders and to inform them about the Soroptimist ideals. "We really appreciated the way trainer Birte Raske helped us gain a clear vision about ourselves," said the Luxembourg mentees Vanessa de Bartolomeo, Jennifer Saffran and Isabell Scherer. EAF trainer Manuela Möller described the methodology of the mentoring programme to assist the mentees decide what they expect to gain from the relationship.

Each participant seemed to take home something special from the seminar. "Although all of us were quite different in age, nationality, profession and interests, we were united in our enthusiasm for this diversity and curiosity to learn from each other," commented German mentee Ulla Hüppe.

Parallel to the programme for mentees in Bensheim, many of the mentors participating in the now expanded SIE programme received instruction on the role and responsibilities of mentoring. The national groups have since met in their respective countries for further professional training.

German mentee Verena Münsberg remarked after returning from the second meeting in Melsungen: "My head and heart are full of new impressions and insights. The hours we spent together were demanding, exhausting and infinitely precious. I am very happy to be part of this wonderful group."

That says it all.

Helping Women Achieve Their Dreams

Annabeth Studer Meyer, Chair, SIE Scholarship Fund, reports



Thanks to the SIE scholarship El Hajjaji Souad from the Rabat Single Club in Morocco was able to attend a six-month course at the German Research Centre for Environmental Health.

Alongside numerous projects and programmes aimed at furthering the education and training of women and girls, especially in Africa and Eastern Europe, SIE and its individual Unions and Clubs have long invested in Education and Leadership by awarding various scholarships and grants. In the year 2008-2009 alone, scholarships totalled more than €350,000.

At the SIE annual meeting in Ghent this summer, the Governors of the Federation approved the suggestions of the SIE Board to grant 14 scholarships from 30 applicants for a total sum of €72,000 for 2010. The applications came from 17 Unions and six single clubs.

These scholarships are of enormous value – both for the empowerment of women and for a greater visibility of Soroptimist International.

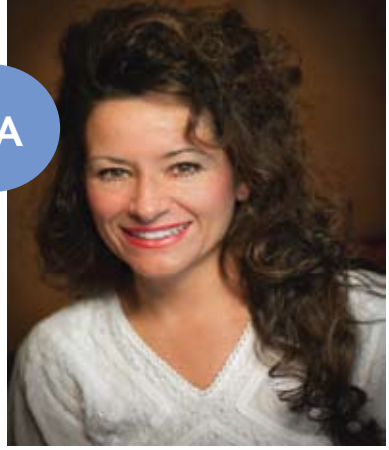
The Federation's Scholarship Fund was established in 1968. Since then women and girls of all ages and from countless fields have received financial aid for their studies or for further training.

Each year applications are submitted for a sum of around €200,000. About €70,000 are available from the Fund to distribute each year. The Federation hopes to increase this amount in the future. It also intends to create a database of the scholarships to evaluate how it is helping women and girls to better follow the careers of the grantees and generally to improve information. In addition, this database will include the scholarships and grants offered by individual Unions and single clubs. In 2008-2009 alone this figure surpassed €265,000.

In connection with its Dr Noël Fund in honour of Dr Susanne Noël, the French plastic surgeon who was instrumental in bringing SI to Europe, the Federation also regularly awards grants to women studying or working in the field of plastic surgery.

Education offers women and girls the possibility to grow as individuals and to earn their own livelihood. It is tangible help to improve their lives.

SIA



Lisa Boyd

Soroptimist Women's Opportunity Awards: It's not just about the money

Lori Blair, Senior Director of Programme Services, SIA

Since 1972, SI of the Americas has helped women who have primary financial responsibility for their dependents to fund their education or job training.

The goal is that with increased education, women will secure employment that provides an improved standard of living for their families. But we know from past recipients that although the cash award is needed and valued, the boost to self-confidence that recipients feel when they win the award is equally valuable. The programme objectives are to:

- Increase the number of women who receive the resources to access education/skills training.
- Increase women's sense of self-esteem and self-confidence.
- Increase the number of women who earn an educational degree/certification.
- Increase the number of women with secure employment.
- Improve the standard of living for women and their dependents.
- Increase the number of women who serve as role models for their dependants.

Each year,1000 women receive nearly US$1.4 million to support their education and job training. They consistently complete their education and secure stable jobs. But a recent survey of past recipients confirmed the other objectives as well. Of the respondents, 100 per cent stated that they had an increased self-esteem and self-confidence and now serve as role models for their dependents. Even the women that did not complete their education still experience the other benefits.

One woman who didn't finish her education due to illness and used her award to start a small family business stated "I believe I already am a winner because I can provide comfort for my beloved family. The US$3,000 that I won was the foundation for everything—the beginning of a dream of being self sufficient and able to provide food, medication, school and leisure for my family."

One woman who was successful in school and secured a good job said: "I love my work. I love making a difference. I love who I have become. My kids say things like "when I go to college;" not "if I go to college…

"Your gift has not only changed my life, but the lives of those around me and countless lives in my community. I am grateful to you all for your help. Thank you doesn't begin to express my gratitude."

Lisa Boyd, a federation finalist from 2010, appreciated the importance of being recognised by a group of professional women; Receiving the award at the Soroptimist 41st Biennial Convention, Lisa said, "My children are an integral part of my journey and growth and they were fortunate to be in the room when I received the first two awards (club and region) and when they turned and saw all the power in that room – and women in power in a room are different than men in a power – they had a new view of the world and women."

It is stories like these that encourage more than 1000 clubs in SIA to participate in this programme each year.

For more information visit: http://www.soroptimist.org/awards/awards.html.

SIE

Support for Professional Women Refugees building a new career

Joy Groosman, Programme Director, Dutch Union and Ally de Vries

Being a refugee not only means the loss of family, home and roots, it can also make a professional life and income insecure. A new homeland doesn't automatically mean that qualifications are recognised. Very often one has to qualify again, partly or entirely. The Dutch Union helps professional women with scholarships and coaching programmes, in partnership with a foundation.

Scholarships for refugees are not new in the Netherlands, the University Asylum Foundation (UAF), for instance, has helped refugees since 1948. For young people, grants can be linked with existing national systems, but these formal procedures are not designed for immigrants who already had a professional career. This means that they can expect official and financial difficulties when they have to fill educational gaps, for example because their diplomas and experience are not fully recognised; this often happens, even if they are very well qualified and have outstanding working experience.



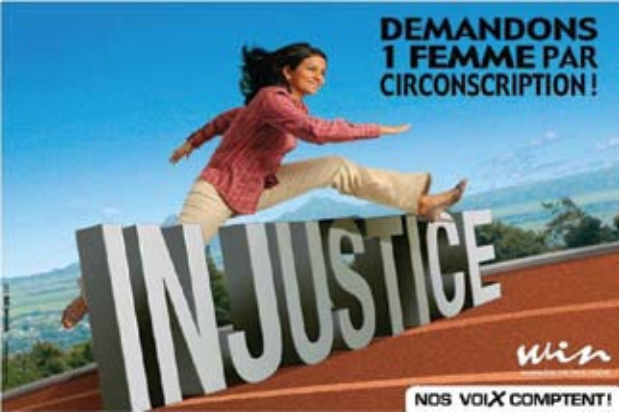
Some of the women involved in the SIE refugee project

In 2007 the Dutch Union came to an agreement with the UAF, promising to raise funds which would enable highly qualified women refugees to bring their professional status in accordance with Dutch academic and professional conditions, even if this meant that they had to complete their entire study again... but the Soroptimists did more: they opened their offices, laboratories, schools and hospitals for training purposes and they offer help with language problems and job applications. Many Soroptimists act as mentors for the refugee women to find their way both personally and professionally in this complicated society.

When the partnership started, the Dutch Union had two important intentions. It would try to raise as much as €400,000 (US$550,000) and support efforts directed towards a better understanding between club members and refugees.

Both intentions were, in combination, labelled as a project, with the title Hidden Treasures. Strictly speaking there was no real project, nor clear goals or strict activities and planning. It was a serious but adventurous undertaking, offering ideas and lots of hands-on initiatives. It worked so well, that with 10 months to go, the target amount of €400,000 is almost secured.

A hidden treasure which certainly came to light was the bonding between Soroptimists and women refugees. Of 900 women refugees in the UAF-programme during this period, 300 made contact with Soroptimists, some have even became members; an excellent result for the women refugees and the Dutch Soroptimists.



SIGBI

Women's Empowerment & Girls' Education

Sue Challoner, Assistant Programme Director, Economic & Social Development, SIGBI, reports

Members of SI Ipsae and SI Port Louis have joined forces with other organisations and associations in Mauritius to work for women's empowerment on this island.

WIN or Women in Networking was created on 30 June 2006 in order to develop at least 30 women leaders each year and to double the number of women in the National Assembly. The Women's Leadership Programme was established to promote gender equality in all spheres of life and provide women with the skills and techniques required to empower them to become more active members of society at all levels- economic, social and political, also to gain the confidence required to become future leaders in society.

The Leadership Programme consists of 18 modules, which include nine days of training. It is free to participants and to date 95 women have been trained in leadership skills. The network has lobbied all political parties for more women in politics, and the results have been excellent, from the last intake of 12 women, two have been elected as Members of Parliament.

A huge advertising campaign was launched this year by WIN and the photograph shows the eye-catching billboard poster which could be seen all over the island and was funded by the US Embassy in Mauritius.

Helen Owen: Assistant Programme Director, Education, SIGBI, reports

Lesley Abdela MBE, Political Journalist and keynote speaker at the SIGBI Conference re-enforced the message that one key action to help keep girls at school was to provide proper sanitation so that girls feel able to attend school following the onset of puberty.

SIGBI clubs have been contributing to Loos For Lynn, a fund set up in memory of Past International President Lynn Dunning. Partial grants have been awarded for building toilets for a school in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, a toilet block for a school in Lagos, a Midland Arden project helping to build toilets for a women's centre near Kampala and a toilet block for women in a hospital in Bamenda, Cameroon.

SI Bulawayo, with help from friendship links in Yorkshire Region and SI Barnstaple, are committed to educate girls to a higher level. In the difficult times in Zimbabwe, many girls dropped out of school because of being HIV orphaned or having parents unable to afford the fees.

Fundraising efforts help to pay for tuition and examination fees, textbooks and uniforms. Some of the girls have graduated from university and are already employed - one paying back money allows another to be helped. SI Bonaberi Douala Cameroon recently reported that a project they have started has produced its first graduates. Ten previously illiterate women passed the first level exams.

With support from Midland East Region, the club is now determined to help the women succeed at the secondary level.

Education and Leadership Initiatives in SI South West Pacific

Robyn Cain, Federation Programme Director SISWP reports



SISWP

High school girls at SI Logan's Leadership Day

Soroptimists are often at the forefront in promoting education and leadership and South West Pacific clubs are no exception.

SI Townsville and its Friendship Link SI Noumea and SI Solomon Islands worked together to support a local chief's daughter in her desire to rebuild an education facility in a poor, isolated village. The village was able to establish a literacy programme for children up to eight years. SI Townsville also works with a multicultural group to improve migrant women's English and familiarise them with the local culture.

Clubs support disadvantaged students in their quest for education by giving scholarships. SI Penang established an education fund for needy students, SI Business on Collins works with the Victoria University to provide a tertiary education scholarship to an indigenous woman studying a Bachelor's Degree and SI Damansara, Malaysia conducts a Literacy project amongst children in homes for the underprivileged. The competition has seen a vast improvement in the English proficiency of these children.

SI Kapiti Coast lobbied local MPs to increase funding for Early Childhood Education for minority groups within the community.

South West Pacific supports women and girls in their efforts to advance in management and decision making. SI Rockingham, SI Gold Coast, SI Riverside and other Western Australian clubs have all sponsored young women to attend Leadership Development camps.

In Fiji, Soroptimists established garden plots at a special school where women train as co-ordinators for agricultural development programmes. Women who acquire skills through these programmes then deliver the knowledge to assist other rural women to utilise their land.

SI Logan facilitated a Leadership Day for high school girls for them to meet role models and identify leadership skills.

The President of SI Ramu in Papua New Guinea, Judy Muliap attended high level meetings for discussions about CEDAW at the UN in New York, with Dame Carol Kidu and at the Pacific Government-NGO Dialogue towards effective implementation of CEDAW and Ratification of the Optional Protocol. Another PNG member, Florence Bunari, was accepted to attend the Jakarta workshop on Global Women in Management.

In Australia, 2010 was the Year of Women in Local Government aiming to increase the participation of women in decision-making, management and leadership training and mentoring programmes in local government.

Project SIerra: transforming a girl's life

Alison Sutherland, SI Quadrennial Project Liaison 2007-11, reports

Julie had a happy early childhood with her parents in Freetown. However, her parents' marriage ended, her father moved away and cut off all support or contact with his children. Julie's mother couldn't support the family, and Julie drifted into selling her body to earn money for basic household needs.

When her mother re-married, Julie's step father provided for the family and was unhappy at Julie's street life-style. There were arguments, and Julie became angry and left home to stay with a friend.

She would hang around night clubs looking for men for commercial sex. Sometimes she stole from men when spending the night with them.

Social workers first met Julie in mid-2009 at a night club around midnight, smoking a cigarette and scantily dressed. She was just fourteen years old. When she told her story, the social workers encouraged her to meet them again.

After several meetings at the Project SIerra supported centre, where Julie was counseled on dangers of street life and encouraged to think of something she would like to do, she showed interest in joining the "children living alone" programme.



Project SIerra helping other young girls!

Julie is now 15 years old and her life has changed dramatically. She is back in school and doing well. After counselling, she was successfully reunited with her mother and stepfather, has returned to the family home and has good relationships with her family and neighbours. Her health is improving, though is sometimes affected by her harsh experiences.

The counselling and encouragement she receives from the programme help her to cope with the impact of her past life. She is an extrovert, enjoys playing with her friends and is a role model and young leader among other Project SIerra beneficiaries.

Through Project SIerra, YOU are giving young women like Julie the opportunity of a transformed life! At the Kissy Centre where 70 young people are enrolled (several with histories like Julie's) Soroptimist funding is training more social workers; 80 per cent of the children in formal schooling passed their exams last academic year, and have now received uniforms, kit and tuition fees paid for this year.

During the SI Study Tour this year Julie thanked Soroptimists in person. There are many other young women and girls in similar plight, so please continue your support for the rest of the quadrennium, and enable many more young women and girls like Julie to transform their lives!

Get updates on SI's Quadrennial Project at www.projectsierra.org and join Friends of Project SIerra on Facebook.

project.liaison@soroptimistinternational.org

Soroptimist International Convention 10-14 July 2011

Montréal 2011

Will you be with us?

asks Yvonne Machuk, Convention Chair

Thank you for your patience as we worked to get registration open. I know many are anxious to register and finalise travel plans and that our members are enthusiastic about Convention. I am delighted to announce that registration, hotel, official airline and social event information will shortly be available on the website.

As a committee, we made the decision to have this convention as green as possible. As a result, registration is available online only. We know that clubs will assist those members who don't have access to the internet and thank you in advance.

We have planned some wonderful social events to enhance your Convention experience. While all the events will be enjoyable, the concert on Monday evening is one that the Convention Committee is especially excited to offer. A concert in Notre Dame Basilica (pictured) has been designed just for us! This breathtakingly beautiful building is an exceptional venue for the performance by Tocadeo. This is a must-see and one of those "only at Convention" events that delegates will be talking about for years e.

There are two choices. You can attend only the concert or attend the concert and then participate in a dine-around with other Soroptimists in Old Montréal in specially selected restaurants reserved for Soroptimist Convention delegates and accompanying persons.



We expect a sell-out crowd for this extraordinary event.

"Women as Role Models" is one of our daily themes for Convention. As Soroptimists, we are role models – in our families, in our communities and in our professional lives. The speakers are all Canadian women who are role models in their various endeavours.

Former Governor General of Canada, Adrienne Clarkson, will open the Convention. Ms. Clarkson was born in Hong Kong and came to Canada as a refugee during the war in 1942. She settled with her family in Ottawa, later earning an Honours BA and an MA in English Literature from the University of Toronto's Trinity College, followed by post-graduate studies at the Sorbonne in France.

Ms. Clarkson began her award-winning career at the Canadian Broadcasting Centre (CBC) in 1965. After taking time to serve as Ontario's first Agent General in Paris, and president and publisher of McClelland & Stewart, she returned to the CBC in 1988 becoming executive producer, host and writer.

Ms. Clarkson has been recognised for her outstanding contributions and honoured as an Officer of the Order of Canada in 1992, and becoming Chancellor and Principal Companion of the Order upon her appointment as Governor General in 1999.

We are delighted that she has accepted our invitation to join our Convention.

Soroptimist 2011
19th International Convention