

DECEMBER 2011

THIS



The International Soroptimist

Focus on Advocacy

- Birthing in the Pacific
- Audacia Forum
- International Women's Day



£1million target reached for Project Sierra!

Soroptimist International Quadrennial Project: Project Sierra hits £1million target

a global voice
for women

Soroptimist International



www.soroptimistinternational.org



A wonderful response to our December 10th Appeal

Thank you for your generosity!

By Alice Wells, President, Soroptimist International

Soroptimist International A global voice for women

PRESIDENT: Alice Wells
president@soroptimistinternational.org

PRESIDENT ELECT: TBC
president.elect@
soroptimistinternational.org

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT:
Hanne Jensbo
ipp@soroptimistinternational.org

TREASURER:
Patricia Carruthers
treasurer@soroptimistinternational.org

**INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMME
DIRECTOR:**
Hilary Ratcliffe
programme.director@
soroptimistinternational.org

**INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANT
PROGRAMME DIRECTOR:**
Anusha Santhirasthipam
programme.assistant@
soroptimistinternational.org

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:
Rosie Coutts
executive.director@
soroptimistinternational.org

HEADQUARTERS OFFICE:
87 Glisson Road, Cambridge
CB1 2HG, United Kingdom
T: +44 (0)1223 311833
F: +44 (0)1223 467951
hq@soroptimistinternational.org
www.soroptimistinternational.org

EDITOR:
Sheila Manchester
editor@soroptimistinternational.org
T: +44 (0)1825 733843

Articles, letters and other materials published in this magazine do not necessarily express or reflect the official views of Soroptimist International or those of the Editor.

Congratulations to all of the clubs and members in each Federation who were selected to receive the SI Best Practice Award. I recently had the honour and privilege of attending the SIGBI Conference in Brighton, England and present the 2011 Best Practice Awards to their Federation winners.

Each project had a different focus but each project had Education and Leadership at the core of the project. The SoroptiVoice Blog on the SI website has been featuring the story each of these winners from each Federation. What varied and exciting projects we have throughout our four Federations!

One of the joys of attending meetings and conferences is having the opportunity to meet and interact with Soroptimists (and non-Soroptimists) during these events. It is a time to renew friendships with women whom I have met before, but also the opportunity to meet new friends.

Such was my experience in attending the UN/DPI Conference in Bonn, Germany back in September and then travelling to Paris with International Programme Director Hilary Ratcliffe to visit the UN Centre and meet the outstanding UN Representatives there and many Soroptimists from the French Union.

That same camaraderie continued while attending the excellent SIGBI Conference in Brighton. I love hearing about your club experiences, your club projects, your dreams and visions for a bigger, stronger Soroptimist membership.

I am very excited about the wonderful responses that I have received regarding the 2011 December 10th Appeal Project, Birthing in the Pacific. Your generous donations to this project will indeed make a difference in saving the lives of women and their babies.

Your donation of \$1 can provide an obstetric wheel which is a calendar that uses events such as Christmas and Easter to help birth attendants and pregnant women work out a due date so that they know when to go to a facility to deliver.

Your donation of \$100 can provide a clinical birth attendant with a 'Karim work bilum' which is a pouch of essential work tools for safe deliveries... or it will provide buckets and goggles to a "class" of village birth attendant graduates to ensure clean deliveries for those women unable to go to a birthing centre.

A donation of \$300 can send a registered midwife to a Midwives' Society professional development course or cover costs for village birth attendants to attend a local training course covering basic reproductive health care and hygiene or support community health workers to attend a five month Dept. of Health maternal competency course.



President Alice presents the overall winner SI Best Practice Award to SI Weston Super Mare (SIGBI).

EDUCATION AND LEADERSHIP! Be sure to check out the SI website for all the information and downloadable brochures that you can share.

I am so grateful for the talent and expertise of our SIHQ staff, Reilly Dempsey and Anna Aiken, who keep the website current and fresh. They have accomplished so much with our website in the past 12 months! It is relevant, it is exciting, and it features Soroptimist members throughout our world-wide organisation.

As the year winds down and the holidays approach, I wish each and every one of you a most joyous holiday season. May your new year be overflowing with health, happiness, and success in whatever you do.

Alice Wells



SI UN Representatives with Hilary Ratcliffe, 2nd right

Advocating for Change

Anna Aiken SI Programme Officer, reports



From the editor

Farewell!

As reported in our September magazine, this will be the last issue of The International Soroptimist (TIS).

As most members will remember, TIS used to be a printed magazine but as the costs of print and distribution rose, we 'went digital'.

With such a truly international membership and – therefore – readership, it seems it was only a matter of time before most communication was carried out on the internet, reaching most parts of the world far more quickly, efficiently and cheaply than print could ever do, and so the magazine has only been available online for the last two years.

Now, with further budgeting requirements, the SI website and the Global Voice newsletter will be the main media for members to find news and information about SI events, initiatives and successes.

I have very much enjoyed editing The International Soroptimist, meeting – in person and online – some wonderful women from all corners of the globe, hearing their experiences, sharing their news, trying to help develop their hopes and dreams.

One thing is for sure, Soroptimists are doing an amazing job around the world, frequently in the most incredibly difficult circumstances, taking time out of their busy lives to help others.

To paraphrase the great Rudyard Kipling (he wouldn't mind, I know!):
*"If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance
run -*

*Yours is the Earth and everything that's
in it,
And - which is more - you'll be a
Soroptimist!"*

I wish you all good luck with your impressive work and hope that one day, the rights of women will be a matter of course not a cause to be won.

Sheila

A Global Voice at the Highest Levels: Rio+20

Welcome to the final TIS UN column. Once again it has been a busy few months!

SI is delighted to announce the appointment of two new UN representatives. Rina Dupriet has joined the team in Paris, and Martina Gredler has joined the Vienna centre. We extend a very warm welcome to Rina and Martina!

We are sadly saying goodbye to two long standing representatives in Paris; Yseult Kaplan (representative since 1995) and Christine Dagain (representative since 2005). SI would like to thank Yseult and Christine for all they have done to further our representation at UNESCO and the voice of SI.

We are now well on the road to Rio+20 (also known as the Earth Summit) which will take place in June 2012. The President Elect of SISWP attended the International Women's Forum on Sustainable Development in Beijing in November.

This forum brought representatives from government, civil society and the UN together to discuss the challenges of the Rio+20 agenda in relation to women.

SI, represented by UNEP representative Alice Odingo, joined the Women Major Stakeholder's Group in the development of their official submission to Rio+20.

New York

International Day of the Older Person was marked in October. SI's UN Representatives in New York attended a briefing session on what living longer means for development, the economy and gender equality. SI UN Representative Carol Themm was interviewed by Global Action on Aging. Her interview is on the SI news pages (published 19 Oct).

Vienna

Our Vienna representatives have been working with the Nairobi representatives to connect the UN Industrial Development Organisation with the SI Kenya-Denmark climate change project. UNIDO are interested in learning from this successful example of civil society/government partnership. Updates to follow in the New Year!

Rome

In Rome, Cinzia Palmi attended a roundtable on Gender, Food Security and Nutrition. The discussion promoted the development of international voluntary guidelines on food security and nutrition. SI's response can be found in the members section of the SI website.



Cinzia Palmi attended the UN Food & Agricultural Organisation meeting in Rome

Our UN Representatives in New York will be attending meetings in December where all submissions to Rio+20 are debated and combined to develop a declaration which will be the starting point for the Rio+20 outcome document. We will be working to ensure that the language around women is not compromised.

CSW New York

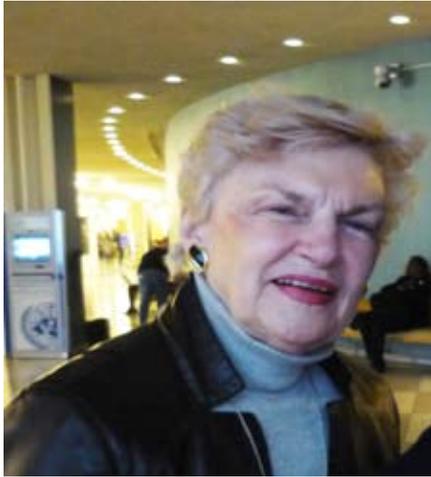
Finally, SIHQ and the New York representatives have been busy preparing for CSW 56. SI has submitted a written statement on the priority theme which centres on rural women. Pre-session advocacy materials will be made available by January 1st to help you lobby your government on critical issues.

Full reports for all of these events are available at www.soroptimistinternational.org. To stay informed of all UN news, do sign up for SI's monthly newsletter, The Global Voice: <http://soroptimistinternational.us2.list-manage1.com/subscribe?u=4c7867996d6229f393f039603&id=68f0d4e8d4>.

If you have any questions about our UN work, please contact hq@soroptimistinternational.org. We would love to hear from you!

Taking advocacy to new world heights

Reilly Anne Dempsey, SI Programme Director, reports



Lois Beilin, SI UN Representative at The Audacia Forum

This edition of TIS is full of exciting new developments in SI's advocacy work. As part of SI's new strategic plan, we are expanding our reach and influence beyond our established UN and Commonwealth activities.

SI has had representatives at two such forums recently – the Audacia Forum for Girls' Education in New York and the World Bank/IMF Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C.

Audacia Forum for Girls' Education, New York

The Audacia Forum was an invitation only, two day networking and learning event. Our UN Representative Lois Beilin attended on behalf of SI.

Successful programmes, best practices and educational policy were presented by leaders in education, technology, media and government.

Lois reports back some of the most important messages from this event:

- Schools for girls must first and foremost be safe places, free of violence, assault and prejudice.
- Schools must be places that provide sanitation facilities for girls.
- Schools must be accessible with safety and/or transportation provided for girls.
- School fees, uniforms and other necessary sanitation items (sanitary pads) should be available or provided for girls.
- Schools for girls should extend beyond primary education with secondary and other occupational skills offered to girls as well as boys.

A unique model of a boarding school, the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls, was described by Ms Anne van Zyl of Pretoria, South Africa, as a transformational environment specifically operated to educate and empower women leaders to South Africa. A different model, the AGE Africa programme, provides a curriculum model for girl's empowerment in schools of Malawi.

This programme strives to support girls already in schools and works with teachers to ensure empowerment of the girls attending.

Perhaps the most controversial issue cited was the current high profile given to the education for women and girls. This presentation challenged many assumptions about the projects, whether directed by NGOs, corporations or governments.

The question raised, about social justice and gender fairness, is: Why has the education of girls become so faddish, so popular, and hyped as the "end of poverty" as we know it? There are no easy answers to this question, but we will leave it with you to think about!

Development has closed some gender gaps in educational enrollment, life expectancy and labour force participation, however, there is still much to be done.



Heather Brotsos, SIA member, at the World Bank event

World Bank/IMF Annual Meeting, Washington DC

Seroptimist Heather Brotsos from SI Washington DC attended the Annual World Bank/IMF Meeting, which was more open to civil society than ever before. SI jumped on the chance to be represented!

While Heather attended many different talks, panels, and discussions, perhaps the most important was the Open Forum on Gender. A number of activists and experts from around the world took turns moderating this discussion. Hala Gorani, of CNN International hosted the event. The first segment kicked off with World Bank President Robert Zoellick, Maria Eitel, President and CEO of the Nike Foundation and Kakenya Ntaiya, Founder of the Academy for Girls in Kenya.

Gorani led the conversation with these panelists, who discussed why gender equality is not only important for women's empowerment, but also economically smart.

A number of reports were generated by the World Bank and others to build this case. Development has closed some gender gaps in educational enrollment, life expectancy and labour force participation, however there is still much to be done.

Heather reports that the priorities of the World Bank include:

- Addressing excess deaths of girls and women and eliminating gender disadvantage in education where these remain entrenched.
- Closing differences in access to economic opportunities and the ensuing earnings and productivity gaps between women and men.
- Shrinking gender differences in voice within households and societies.
- Limiting the reproduction of gender inequality across generations.

As this was SI's first learning experience with the World Bank, we are very excited to see this involvement develop and grow!

You can follow all of SI's advocacy work on our website and by signing up to receive the Global Voice newsletter.

UN DPI/NGO The Road to Rio

Anusha Santhirasthipam, International Assistant Programme Director reports



L-R: Anusha Santhirasthipam, Alice Wells, International President, Hilary Ratcliffe, International Programme Director and Kathy Kaaf, President SI Europe at the UN DPI/NGO Conference in Bonn, September 2011.

The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development 2012 will take place in Rio de Janeiro, from 2--22nd June 2012

What Soroptimist International (SI) clubs can do to transform adversity to opportunity.

20 years after the Rio Earth Summit, our planet is sinking deeper into an unprecedented triple blow - an environmental, energy and financial crisis. The UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) in Rio de Janeiro in June 2012 is crucially significant and is not meant to be another high level United Nations "talk fest".

The world's leaders and most dynamic NGOs will gather to discuss some of the biggest challenges facing the planet today. The objective of the Conference is to secure renewed political commitment for sustainable development, assess the progress to date and address new and emerging challenges. It is a historical opportunity to take stock of valuable lessons over the past 2 decades, examine technologies and best practices, agree on actions that ACTUALLY DO eradicate hunger and poverty, and save our planet.

So what is SI's role in all this and what can an SI club, SI Union or member country do to help achieve lasting progress towards the continued sustainability of the planet and to ensure equitable, healthy and decent jobs and livelihood for women and girls?

Make an impact

SI recently made significant contribution in preparation for Rio+20 at the 64th Annual UN DPI/NGO Conference held in Bonn, Germany from 3-5th Sept 2011.

SI used a multi-pronged approach comprising consultation, networking and active workshop participation to get our salient messages across on the Conference floor and on official statements.

The special UN Environmental Programme International Consultations prior to UN DPI/NGO were an excellent platform for both Dr. Alice Odingo, SI UNEP Representative and me to present gender-specific perspectives, share strategies learnt from our SI clubs' grassroots projects

and best practices, and to work towards meaningful solutions to alleviate the hardship and socio-economic inequities faced by women and girls in rural communities.

At the UN DPI/NGO Conference President Alice and our SI team were ever vigilant of gender perspectives on all pertinent issues under discussion.

We spread out the SI team of 12 (including 6 representatives from SI Unions of Germany and Austria) to attend targeted workshop sessions and pro-actively engaged in workshop outcomes.

We ensured that the official declaration on the DPI/NGO conference theme, 'Sustainable Societies, Responsive Citizens' incorporated SI recommendations.

indicators to be used to measure sustainable development.

- We supported calls for fair trade and sustainable lifestyles, especially responsible consumption and production of food.
- We championed the rights of women farmers to own land and have equitable access to clean water, seeds and fertiliser. This is crucial because in many countries, women produce close to 80 per cent of the food, but own 1 per cent of the land!

Since UN DPI/NGO we have taken follow up action to support a joint statement by the



The Soroptimist International team at the UN DPI/NGO Conference in Bonn, September 2011

Our contribution included recognising and affirming the crucial role and special needs of women as primary producers of food and as vital decision-makers and purchasers of food.

- We emphasised gender-specific education initiatives to ensure women and girls are properly trained and equipped for healthy and secure jobs in a "green economy".
- We called for gender-specific

Women's Major Group for Rio+20.

SI clubs are encouraged to engage in awareness and advocacy activities with local mayors and municipalities, local community associations, farmers' co-operative societies and national Government leaders to ensure sustainable development and women-friendly solutions.

For more information before you swing into action, please visit the SI website or the UN website www.uncsd2012.org/rio20



A new baby is ready to go home after a safe birth

Women's right to safe motherhood

Reilly Anne Dempsey, SI Programme Director, reports

Alyne's story

Alyne da Silva Pimentel Teixeira, a Brazilian national of African descent, was born on September 29th 1974. She was married and had a five year old daughter.

Alyne arrived six months pregnant and complaining of severe nausea at a health center in the state of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on November 11th 2002. She was seen by the attending obstetrician-gynaecologist who prescribed anti-nausea medication, vitamin B12, and local medication for a vaginal infection. Alyne began her prescriptions immediately.

The doctor assured Alyne that all was well. As what was described as merely a precaution, the doctor also scheduled routine blood and urine tests for Alyne on 13th November, two days later. The doctor chose to then send Alyne home rather than admitting her.

Between 11th and 13th November, Alyne's condition worsened considerably.

On 13th November, before her scheduled blood and urine analysis, Alyne went with her mother to the health centre. Another doctor examined Alyne and decided to admit her to the maternity ward. Alyne was registered at 8:25 am that day.

A physical examination was performed in which no foetal heartbeat was heard. This was confirmed by an ultrasound at 10:30 am. Alyne was informed that she would need to be given medication to induce delivery. The induced labour began at about 2:00 pm.

Nearly 14 hours later, Alyne underwent surgery for removal of placenta and afterbirth. Following the surgery, Alyne

began severe haemorrhaging. Her condition worsened and she remained at the health centre. She presented low blood pressure, vomited blood, and refused food. Her mother and husband did not visit the health centre that day as they had been assured that Alyne was well.

Her symptoms continued to worsen and treatment given was minimal. Attempts were finally made to transfer Alyne to an intensive care unit beginning sometime in the early afternoon of the 15th.

Only one hospital would take her, but they would not use their ambulance to transfer her. It took at least eight hours while Alyne was in critical condition to locate an ambulance and an ICU which could take her.

Upon arrival, Alyne was hypothermic, had acute respiratory distress, and her blood pressure dropped to zero. She had to be resuscitated. She was placed in a makeshift area in the emergency room hallway, as there were no available beds for her.

The medical attendants failed to bring Alyne's medical records to the hospital. They provided the treating physician at the hospital a brief verbal recount of her symptoms and sent her mother back to the health centre to retrieve the medical records, a task which, due to administrative deficiencies, took Alyne's mother several hours.

Alyne da Silva Teixeira died at 7:00 pm on 16th November 2002, on a makeshift bed in a hallway. The medical records do not indicate what, if anything, was done for Alyne during the 22 hours that she was in the hallway.

SI December 10th Advocacy Campaign

But Alyne's story does not end there. Her story was heard, and eventually made its way to an international organisation with the resources to seek justice for Alyne and the thousands of women like her at risk. Her story made its way to one of the human rights bodies at the UN empowered to hand down legally binding decisions. And they were outraged.

The committee, after several years of litigation, found in favour of Alyne – that Brazil had, indeed, failed to meet its legal obligations to protect women in childbirth and to ensure appropriate, non-discriminatory health services.

Following this decision, Brazil is now required to provide financial protection to Alyne's mother and daughter, who at the time of submitting the claim were living in a precarious situation. Brazil must ensure women's right to safe motherhood and affordable access to adequate emergency obstetric care and, of particular interest, provide professional training for health workers in reproductive health care and emergency obstetric services.

Just like SI is doing with this year's December 10th Appeal in Papua New Guinea.

Alyne's story has changed the world. But now she needs help. She needs you to tell her story to the whole world, and to tell governments that they must take steps to protect women in childbirth. She needs a global network of women to share her tale and to see it to its end – not the tragic end which happened on 16th November 2002, but the end where we live in a world that cherishes pregnancy and protects women in childbirth, where governments proactively invest in the training and resources needed to avert preventable deaths. Your voice is needed to make this happen – and SI is launching a new initiative to help you accomplish just that. Every year, SI will develop an advocacy platform for the December 10th Appeal highlighting how education, empowerment, and enabling opportunities can transform the lives of women and girls. This platform is now available on the website, where you can download letters and postcards to send to your government.



SISWP President, Yvonne Simpson with Soroptimist nurses working in the Birthing in the Pacific project

International Women's Day 8th March 2012

Kate Nustedt (Executive Director, Women for Women International in the UK) calls for action!



International musician Annie Lennox was a great supporter in 2011

Soroptimist members across the globe came out in force to celebrate the 100th anniversary of International Women's Day on 8 March 2011 with Women for Women's Join me on the Bridge campaign. There were 55 events across the UK, and 464 in 70 countries across the world.

2012 promises to be even bigger! Soroptimists will be leading the charge in making sure that the 21st century is the woman's century, and we'll be doing this by growing a bigger and bigger global movement that joins together in calling for peace.

The idea for this bridge campaign first came about in 2010 when the Women for Women country directors for the Congo and Rwanda called for all women, whether they were Hutu, Tutsi, Rwandan or Congolese, to join them on the bridge that connects their two countries, and was the scene of the mass exodus when people were fleeing the genocide that tore Rwanda apart in 1994.

Many more people wanted to join them in taking this stand for peace and hope in 2010, not only in other war-torn countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Bosnia and Sudan, but also from Australia to Hawaii, where women stood in solidarity with their sisters. Amongst the 75,000 people on bridges worldwide were many Soroptimists.

8 March 2012 will be the third year of the Join me on the Bridge campaign, and we are calling for you all to mark this date in your diaries, and to get ready by joining or organising a bridge event near you. It's very easy - you simply get together with a group of friends, select a bridge, and promote your event to your wider networks.

Last year, many Soroptimists joined forces with other groups, including Women for

Women student societies - and these made a great impact in building wider support and solidarity locally as well as globally. Women for Women gives you full support in organising your events, and can provide you with a campaign toolkit and ongoing advice and support in organising your event.

"We're not asking for any new policies or laws. They already exist. We have UN Resolution 1325, and we have the Millennium Development Goals. It's time to act, and we're calling for everyone who wants to make a stand against the brutalities inflicted on women in Afghanistan, and in areas of conflict around the world, to join us on a bridge on International Women's Day, 8th March 2012."
Says Kate Nustedt, Executive Director of Women for Women UK.

One of the big inspirations for this campaign has been the actions of the women of Liberia. Their campaign, with Christian and Muslim women coming together to stand against the atrocities committed against them and their children by the dictator Charles Taylor and the opposing militia, has been brilliantly documented in the film *Pray the Devil Back to Hell*. They have shown that by coming together, women can build peace and hope.

Leymah Gbowee, one of the key activists of this campaign, and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of Liberia, were recently awarded the Nobel Peace

Prize and this is further encouragement to the belief that women can bring peace to in a world that is going through so much change and revolution. Women for Women is encouraging all bridge organisers to hold their own screening of *Pray the Devil back to Hell* before their bridge campaign, as a way to raise awareness, and build support and understanding for the campaign. Women for Women holds the distribution rights to this film and can also provide you with a toolkit for your screening.

Women for Women is honoured to be in partnership with all Soroptimist members for the Join me on the Bridge event, and on behalf of all the women who will be standing on bridges in war-torn countries we say thank you and We Stand Together.

Thank you for joining us on the bridge!

Further information, toolkits and film screenings available at:
www.womenforwomen.org/bridge



Actress Cherie Lunghi supported the 2011 event

SIE



Some 100 Soroptimists from all over Africa attended the 2011 Conference of the Proposed African Federation in Lomé.

Proposed African Federation

Nairobi, Kenya will be the venue of the joint conference of the Soroptimist International Proposed African Federation from 22nd-24th March 2012.

The Eastern, Central and Western Zones of Africa will also be represented, which includes the countries in the Federations of both Europe (SI/E) and Great Britain & Ireland (SIGBI).

Objective

The main objective of this Conference is to bring together Soroptimists from all over Africa and other Federations with the aim to work towards the effective

creation of the SI African Federation (SIAF). The Conference will give our African Soroptimists the opportunity to share their ideas with the other Federations.

The idea is to develop the criteria for election of an SI African Board as well as to evaluate efforts and achievements attained so far in the African Zones.

'We look forward to seeing as many members as possible in Nairobi, as this is a very important step towards the creation of an African Federation,' says the newly appointed Project Manager for Africa Mariet Verhoef-Cohen, who is a past President of SI Europe.

Register

A registration form is available to download from www.soroptimist-kenya.org/nairobiconference.

Please complete and return the form by 15th January 2012 to one of these organisers: Vivian Namayi Namwalo, Eastern Region President, SI Future African Federation at sikenyaunion@gmail.com or vinnam88@yahoo.com; Josephine Nwokedi, Western & Central Zone President, SI Future African Federation at udezulu.nwokedi@yahoo.com; and hostess Betty Yieke, Union of Kenya President at sikenyaunion@gmail.com or byieke@yahoo.com.

SIGBI



Celebrating reaching the target of £1m, l-r: International President Alice Wells; Hope & Homes' Joe Glackin; SIGBI President, Liz Morgan-Lewis; SIGBI Project Sierra Liaison, Anne MacDonald OBE; SIA President Pat Donohue and SIE President, Kathy Kaaf. Alison Sutherland, International Project Liaison, was, very sadly, unable to be at the presentation.

SIGBI Conference 2011

SIGBI's Annual Conference, held this year in Brighton, England, was an excellent event, welcoming over 1200 Soroptimists and guests from across the world. Special International guests were SI President Alice Wells, SIA President Pat Donohue and SIE President Kathy Kaaf;

all of whom joined SIGBI President Liz Morgan-Lewis and SIGBI Project Sierra Liaison, Anne MacDonald to celebrate the success of SI's Quadrennial Project: Project Sierra.

Together they presented a cheque for £1million to Joe Glackin, from the charity Hope & Homes for Children.

SI Great Britain & Ireland

Jane Slatter, SIGBI Director of Communications, reports

This amazing sum has been raised by Soroptimists from all four Federations to help support the charity's work with women and children in Sierra Leone.

Some of Project Sierra's many achievements:

59 Street Children have been reunited with their families with a further 67 currently on the programme

164 Teenage Mums (with 165 babies) have graduated from the programme with 119 (with 99 babies) are currently enrolled.

200 Vulnerable Families (directly caring for over 1000 children) have graduated from the ACTIVE Family Support Programme

Community Hubs are now being introduced and this will enable future support to reach

even greater numbers.

SI President Alice, SIA President Pat and SIE President Kathy all addressed the Conference, updating delegates on all the activities within SI as a whole and the Americas and European Federations.

New SIGBI website!

Soroptimist International Great Britain and Ireland (SIGBI) has a new website www.sigbi.org with a new easy to remember address.

There are multiple visual and navigational improvements to the new website including a map showing where clubs are geographically located across the Federation and also an extended search facility.

Please visit us soon at www.sigbi.org

SI South West Pacific

Robyn Cain, Programme Director, SI South West Pacific reports

Commonwealth People's Forum

To represent Soroptimist International at the Commonwealth People's Forum, held in association with the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Perth, was indeed an honour. I was sponsored by the local lottery organisation which supports NGOs in Western Australia.

Along with Past International President Margaret Lobo, I attended sessions where we learned how important the Commonwealth can be as a world voice. It is interesting that each Federation has Commonwealth countries in its numbers. The attendance of representatives from many of the countries added a great international mix of ideas and voices to the session discussions.

I represented SI at the Foreign Ministers' Roundtable with Civil Society. Civil Society groups were invited to present questions to the 30+ assembled Foreign Ministers. Questions were drawn from the CPF discussions and included climate change, empowerment of women in financial roles to disability services and migration.

The meeting was chaired by Australia's Foreign Minister, the Hon. Kevin Rudd, who gave everyone the opportunity

to address the group. Several Foreign Ministers responded to the points raised by the group.

Mr Rudd thanked the Civil Society made the following summation:

1. Disability: This has become a world-wide priority with programmes such as Australia's 'Disability and Development' becoming common in the Commonwealth countries.

2. Role of Women: A common aim is ensure women's full engagement in economics and the empowerment of women in financial roles.

3. HIV AIDS: The Commonwealth will support the global fund to provide access to retroviral medicines. Mr Rudd noted that 50 per cent of PLWHA are women.

4. Same Sex Marriage: In the Commonwealth there is a diverse range of views and it is the province of each country to address.

5. Resilience: The Commonwealth countries join together to support programs of sustainability especially in the Pacific Island states.

The meeting was a forthright



Her Majesty the Queen Elizabeth II with Commonwealth Leaders at CHOGM, Perth Western Australia. ©Annaliese McDonough/Commonwealth Secretariat.

presentation of concerns held by members of Commonwealth Civil Society groups which were treated with consideration by the Foreign Ministers. The full Civil Society Statement, available at <http://tinyurl.com/89syp9g> – includes the following:

"We call on Member States to put civil society back at the heart of the Commonwealth during this exciting phase in the association's revitalisation."

An important resolution was to focus on efforts to end the early and forced marriage of millions of girls. We can help by taking a vow to help PLAN (an NGO) disseminate the message to stop the practice: www.plan-uk.org/what-we-do/campaigns/because-i-am-a-girl/vow/

PIP Margaret and I also attended an inspiring dinner panel discussion on the topic of "Empowering Women to Lead" which was initiated by Australia's Governor-General, Her

Excellency Quentin Bryce.

What a great topic to interest Soroptimists as we implement the new SI programme of work – 'Educate to Lead'. The panel, which included the female Prime Ministers of Australia, Bangladesh and Trinidad and Tobago, concluded that educating disadvantaged women in order for them to reach their full potential is crucial to their empowerment.

An exciting event at the People's Forum was the presentation of the Royal Commonwealth Society's "Jubilee Time Capsule" website. This is designed to celebrate Queen Elizabeth's Diamond Jubilee in 2012. People from Commonwealth Countries are invited pick a day in the last 60 years and write a piece about why it is important in their lives. This activity is something Commonwealth country clubs could promote to schools.

Websites to view: www.commonwealthfriends.org • www.commonwealthfoundation.com • www.commonwealthconnects.org • www.commonwealthconnectsprogramme.org • www.womenasagentsofchange.org • www.commonwealthfriends.org

SI of the Americas

Lori Blair, Senior Director of Programme, SIA, reports

Soroptimists around the world responded with concern and support after a massive earthquake and resulting Tsunami created massive damage in Japan in March 2011. Soroptimists are committed to helping women and girls rebuild their lives in Japan following the disaster.

Thus far, the Soroptimist Disaster Grants for Women and Girls, a joint project of SIA and SIE have provided more than \$75,000 in grants to support this goal. An immediate donation of \$10,000 was given to the Iwaki Fureai Support Center to help the domestic violence shelter to rebuild and reopen. Additional grants are supporting:

- Japan Higashi Region's project to raise awareness of violence against women in the aftermath of the disaster.

- SI Fukushima's project to provide scholarships to girls affected by the disaster.
 - SI Sendai's project to provide personal hygiene items to women and girls living in shelters and to organise women to discuss and plan for their special needs following the disaster; and
 - SI Akishima's project to assist a childcare center to enable working women to return to their jobs.
- In addition to the projects funded through the Soroptimist Disaster Fund, the five regions in Japan have joined together to support prefectures damaged by the disasters and Soroptimists who suffered losses from the disaster.

They have also designed a long-term project, Project Kizuna ("Heart to Heart") to provide scholarships to



Homes burning after the Japanese earthquake

girls who lost parents in the disaster. More information is available on the SIA website at www.soroptimist.org. Donations are still being accepted by SIA and SIE to support projects in Japan. The needs of women and girls will continue long after the world has turned its attention to other disasters.

Soroptimists around the world are committed to providing long-term support for all women and girls to rebuild their lives in Japan.



Soroptimist International HQ report

By Rosie Coutts, SI Executive Director

Board acts on Expert Group Recommendations

As reported in the last issue of TIS, at the Montréal Board Meeting in July this year, the SI Board established an 'Expert Group' taskforce to review SI's internal operations, including SI Headquarters, to enable the organisation to continue to be financially sustainable.

Federations each nominated one representative so that together the task force was equipped with financial, legal, human resources and management expertise.

Anusha Santhirasthipam (SISWP), Sharon Fisher (SIA), Hafdis Karlsdottir (SIE) and Bozena Benton (SIGBI) commenced their task in August, chaired by President Alice Wells.

They produced a substantial report for the Board, as a result of which the following items were voted on and approved by postal ballot.

Strategic Plan

An abbreviated version of this report is below. For the full version of the Strategic Plan, including Strategies, please go to the Members' section of the SI website.

Budget

The Board approved the Expert Group recommended amendments to the 2012 SI Budget to achieve financial sustainability without an immediate increase in membership dues. The SI HQ salary budget has seen a major reduction with the restructuring of staff positions; the 2012 February meeting of the Officers and Federation Presidents will take place electronically; the annual Board Meeting budget has been reduced. The Board anticipates that these measures will achieve substantial savings.

Incorporation

Preliminary reports on the future incorporation of SI in the UK had been produced prior to the 2011 Board Meeting. The Expert Group re-examined the issues and the Board agreed to tender for a firm of solicitors to determine the best possible legal and tax structure for the incorporation of SI, having due regard to the most appropriate and cost effective location in the European geographical area, including the UK. The Board plans to complete the incorporation process by 30 June 2012.

SI Business Model

The Board approved the appointment of a Task Force to develop an appropriate business model for SI to include a practical evaluation of the appropriate location for the management and delivery of SI's functions. The Task Force Report is to be addressed at the August 2012 Board Meeting.

Orientation and Training Programme

For effective governance of Soroptimist International it is recognised that there needs to be a formal orientation process for all postholders. The Board therefore agreed to the development and delivery of an Orientation and Training Programme for implementation in 2012.

Sadly, this is the last Headquarters column as we bid farewell to TIS. Future updates from SI Headquarters will be posted on the SI website.

I should like to thank our Editor, Sheila Manchester, for her sterling work on the magazine over the last two years. It has been a great pleasure to work with her.

Soroptimist International Strategic Plan 2011-13

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.

PROGRAMME

GOAL 1: Soroptimist International will improve the lives and status of women and girls through education, empowerment or enabling opportunities.

Objectives:

1. Increase access to formal and non-formal learning opportunities.
2. Improve access to economic empowerment and sustainable opportunities for the employment of women.
3. Eliminate violence against women and girls and ensure women's participation in conflict resolution.
4. Ensure women and girls have food security and access to the highest attainable standard of health care.
5. Address the specific needs of women and girls by improving environmental sustainability, and mitigating effects of climate change and disasters.

MISSION

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

GOAL 2: Soroptimist International will be a global voice for increasing access to education and leadership for women and girls.

Objectives:

- Objective 1: Strengthen and increase Soroptimist International's presence as an advocate at all levels.
- Objective 2: Intensify activities and partnerships that raise the international profile and visibility of Soroptimist International.
- Objective 3: Ensure that the foundation of Soroptimist International's global advocacy is based upon local and global project activity.

ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

GOAL 3: Soroptimist International will provide an international point of connection

Objectives:

- Objective 1: Support development of post holders' knowledge and understanding of

VALUES

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

SI Programme and UN work as a tool for recruitment and retention.

Objective 2: Maintain strategic overview of global trends which may affect membership.

Objective 3: Increase members' engagement and affinity for being part of a global organisation through international activities.

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP

GOAL 4: SI will be a strategic organisation with dynamic and proactive leadership at all levels, able to deliver results and ensure its vision is achieved.

Objectives:

- 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)