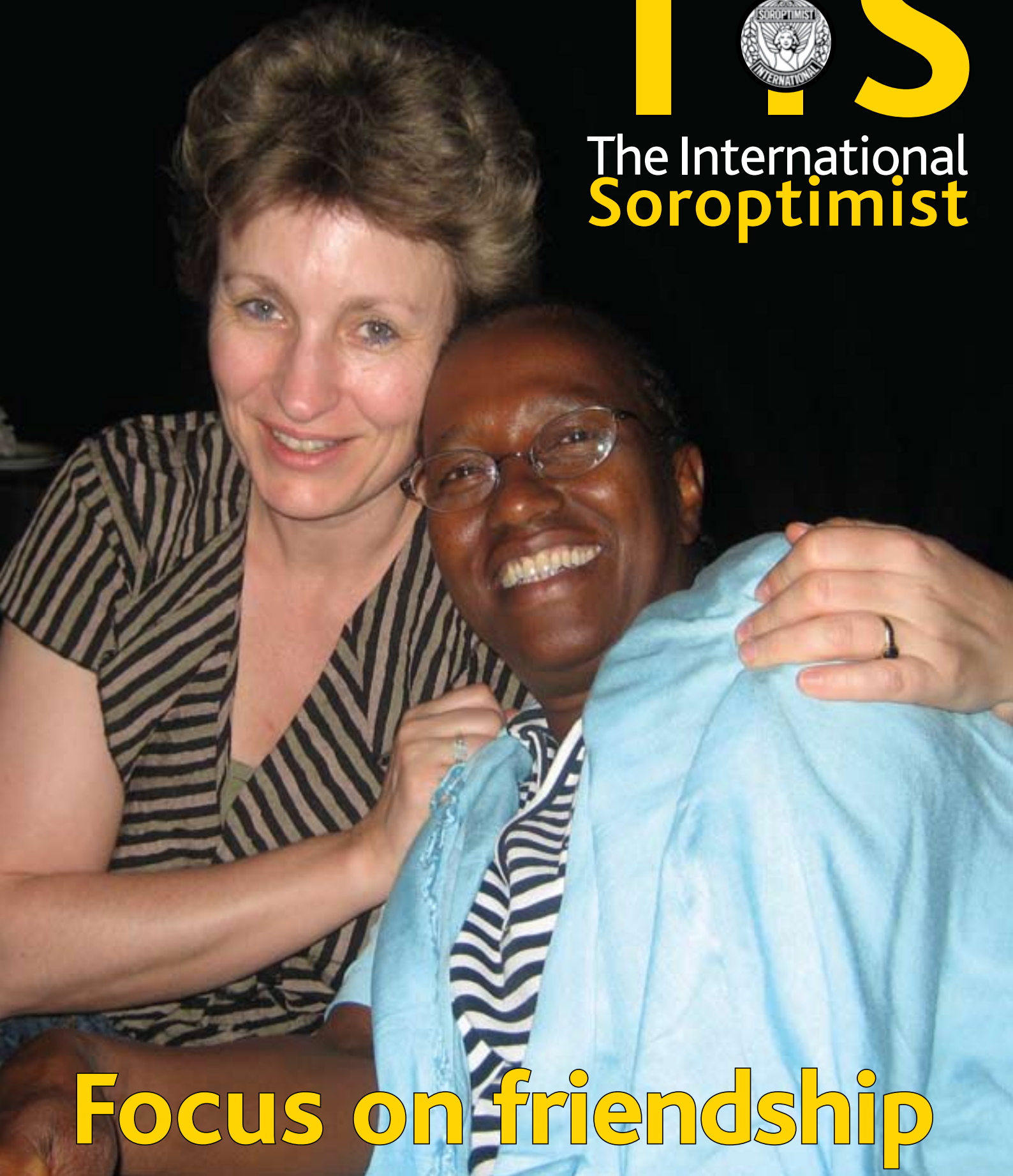


MARCH 2011

# TIS



## The International Soroptimist



# Focus on friendship

a global voice  
for women

Soroptimist



International

[www.soroptimistinternational.org](http://www.soroptimistinternational.org)



## President's update

Dear Readers, Dear Soroptimists

UN Women is launched! UN Women is the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment for Women. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said: "Trust me. I will do all I can to support this new entity."

Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women, Michelle Bachelet, former President of Chile, said, "Women's strength and women's wisdom are humankind's greatest untapped resource. The challenge is to show how this resource can be effectively tapped in ways that benefit us all."

On behalf of all members of Soroptimist International I welcome this new entity and I hope that all our members "will tap our strength and wisdom in a way that will benefit the whole world", as Michelle Bachelet said. Let us come together in a united effort to make this true.

The CSW meeting in New York was full of inspiration, friendship, excellent workshops and meetings. Our SI reception, with 100 participants, was very successful and we celebrated our work around the world with partners, colleagues and friends. Please read more about CSW in this magazine and on the SoroptiVoiceBlog, via the SI website.

Another big event is the recent launch of the new SI website,

[www.soroptimistinternational.org](http://www.soroptimistinternational.org) where you will find news and projects from our 3000 clubs. SI is also active on social networks such as facebook, twitter, You Tube and tumblr.

Our next big event is in July, the SI Convention in Montréal, Canada. It is a must for all Soroptimists to experience a convention once in our lives, so please visit [www.si-convention.org](http://www.si-convention.org) and sign up. I am sure that you will find an interesting programme, exciting workshops, inspiring social events and the opportunity to meet old friends and make new ones. I hope to see you there!

I conclude with the thought that the internet has made it possible for all of us to be kept informed about all relevant news items. It is then up to us to click and find it and to USE it. If only the progress for vulnerable women could go as fast as the communication through the computers, then their lives would be improved and we would reach the MDG goals.

*Hanne Jensbo*



SIGBI members meeting on the Millennium Bridge on London's River Thames on 8th March

## Celebrating 100 years of International Women's Day

Significant progress has been made since the first International Women's Day a century ago when 1 million women marched on Europe's streets to demand an end to discrimination in all areas of their social, economic and political lives.

Soroptimists are part of this vital and ongoing movement for change. IWD is a chance to come together with other like minded organisations to celebrate all that has been achieved and to inspire and encourage us to ongoing action. As we go to press, we can see from the information we have received at SIHQ that Soroptimists from all over the world have been busy celebrating IWD.

Soroptimists from the South East of England joined 1200 others on Millennium Bridge in central London in support of Women for Women International's 'Join me on the Bridge' campaign. This was one of 410 events which took place in 70 countries. Liz Morgan-Lewis, President of SIGBI, was invited to give an address after the march where she was able to share news of Project Sierra and the great work SI is doing with Hope and Homes for Children, transforming the lives of women and children in Sierra Leone.

The plight of women in Afghanistan has been at the forefront of our minds this year. Helen Pankhurst, the great-granddaughter of the Suffragette Emmeline Pankhurst, who joined the London event stated: "Women in Afghanistan are our modern-day suffragettes, standing up for their rights despite threats of violence".

SI Karachi Central also held the women of Afghanistan in their thoughts as they held a 'join me on the bridge' event with students and teachers of Chanesar Goth School and the Connect Women and Child organisation.

Together, they met on the Netty Jetty Bridge and stood in solidarity with the women of Afghanistan and the world. The

club also requested that the students have a lesson on IWD.

Soroptimists in Nigeria marked IWD with a live televised event with participants talking about the impact of Soroptimism, the challenges facing the girl child in terms of accessing quality education and the issue of early/forced marriage. Discussion also considered the plight of women in the troubled Côte d'Ivoire and what can be done to help those in need.

SI Liestal, Switzerland, distributed 600 Roses for IWD. This action was held for the fourth time with Zonta International to make the women of Liestal aware of this special day, as well as

create publicity for SI and Zonta. Every rose had a tag with both organisations' activities and missions.

IWD breakfasts were a popular way in which Soroptimists chose to celebrate the centenary.

Soroptimists in Brisbane held a special morning tea, combining IWD celebrations with the UN Year of Youth. They invited a Girl Guide to speak and shared extracts from the outcome document from the joint WAGGGS/SI workshops on Violence against Women and Girls at CSW55.

In honour of the 100th International Women's Day, SIA highlights the progress women have made and encourages support for the struggles they continue to face through the 'Live Your Dream Campaign'. This campaign celebrates the unique accomplishments of women and the power of their dreams. To find out more, visit [www.liveyourdreamcampaign.org](http://www.liveyourdreamcampaign.org).

Finally, at SIHQ, staff celebrated IWD by tweeting 100 actions Soroptimists have taken to help women and girls around the world. Search #IWD SI on twitter to read the actions!

Don't forget to share what your club did to celebrate IWD 2011 through the online reporting system. Please send any photos you have to: [hq@soroptimistinternational.org](mailto:hq@soroptimistinternational.org).

Standing shoulder to shoulder with women around the world.  
Liz Morgan-Lewis,  
President, SIGBI



## From the editor

Soroptimism is one of the best kept secrets in the world. Every time I edit a Soroptimist magazine, the work of this organisation's 90,000 members, the benefits that their work brings and the friendships that are generated are all absolutely

stunning; but very few people that I speak to have ever heard of Soroptimist International. Why is this? Is it because Soroptimists don't want people to know about them? I don't think so. Is it that Soroptimists are too busy doing what they do, to have time to tell people about their work? That could be the truth of it!

But that is not a good thing: hundreds of thousands of women and girls across the globe have been helped, even 'saved' from one nightmare or another, by Soroptimists directly or indirectly. Millions of pounds have been raised by Soroptimists to help people rebuild their lives after disasters, to educate children, to train women to run a business or progress a career.

That is something to shout about in my book, so can you please start shouting? Spread the word, develop awareness, make Soroptimism grow!

This issue reports on some of your work at the United Nations, on some of the disaster aid efforts that you have made and, perhaps the best part, the friendships that are built through Soroptimism.

I hope you enjoy it!

SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL GREAT BRITAIN & IRELAND  
ANNUAL FEDERATION CONFERENCE

# Brighton 2011

Inspiring action, transforming lives

## SIGBI Conference in Brighton, England, 27-29th October 2011

SIGBI's annual conference will be held in Brighton, East Sussex, England. Brighton is one of the UK's most popular coastal cities, and in addition to an excellent conference, it offers delegates endless opportunities for entertainment and retail therapy! Visit [www.sigbi-conference.co.uk](http://www.sigbi-conference.co.uk) for details.

## Obituary

Sadun Katipoğlu, Soroptimist International President 1985-87

Soroptimist International Past President Sadun Katipoğlu died on 1st January 2011. Sadun's funeral, held at the Tesvikiye Mosque in Istanbul on 3rd January and a memorial ceremony at the Turkish Union on 5th January, were attended by several generations of Turkish Soroptimists for whom she was a role model.

Sadun demonstrated the highest level of commitment to Soroptimism; as a founding member of Club Boğaziçi, Turkish Union President 1974-76, SIE First Vice President 1976-77, Chair of the SI Convention in Istanbul in 1983, SIE President 1981-83 and SI President 1985-87.

On her election as International President, Sadun was honoured with an audience with President Evren of the Turkish Republic. She travelled widely, both for her work and as a Soroptimist and presided over two successful December 10 Appeals: providing vital maternity equipment to Sudanese hospitals in 1985 and supporting UNESCO Co-action in a pilot project for the homeless in the Dominican Republic in 1986.

Zeynep Davran, Turkish Union President 1990-92, says, "The list of Sadun's offices, although a clear indication of her brilliant Soroptimist career, is not sufficient to describe her as a person. President Sadun was one of the most intelligent people I have known; she had wisdom, insight and great deliberative power. She was the Secretary General of the Institute of Economic and Social Studies, a devoted wife and mother and

a busy Soroptimist, combining her duties with grace and efficiency.

"I am lucky to have worked closely with President Sadun at national and international levels. It was an invaluable experience to observe how a dedicated Soroptimist works; you start with local and national issues and go up to international ones and then start from the international and go down to the club level. President Sadun always said that she was first and last a member of her club. Turkish Soroptimists will always be grateful to her for showing the world what Turkish women are like and what they can achieve".

IPP Sadun's message to Soroptimists is as relevant today as it was in 1985, "Looking ahead, I envisage that the organisation will continue its healthy growth and forward-looking strategy, remaining faithful to its objects and purpose, but keeping pace with the rapidly changing world conditions whose keynote is global integration. It will be a predominantly action-orientated organisation where the younger members will take their place in the front rows. There will be more north-south and east-west dialogue, which will bring the organisation closer together." SI records its grateful thanks for Sadun's contribution to Soroptimism. She will be sorely missed.



## Soroptimist International

### A global voice for women

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**TIS:**  
E-magazine is published on the website every quarter, March, June, September and December.

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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.

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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

**Finding A Space for Women and Girls**  
**Commission on the Status of Women 55**  
**Dawn Marie Lemonds, International Programme Director,**  
**reports from New York**

It seems impossible that a year has passed since CSW54 when I proclaimed CSW to be “my big tent”. This year the metaphor that resonates in my mind is that of “space” and the critical need for women and girls across the world to make, find and be afforded SPACE in every arena where violence, poverty, lack of resources and cultural prejudices continuously shut them/us out.

The theme of CSW55 was “Access to Education in Science and Technology”; one which was easily approached from many different aspects including environment and human trafficking in addition to all aspects of formal and informal education.



**Dawn Marie Lemonds at CSW 55**

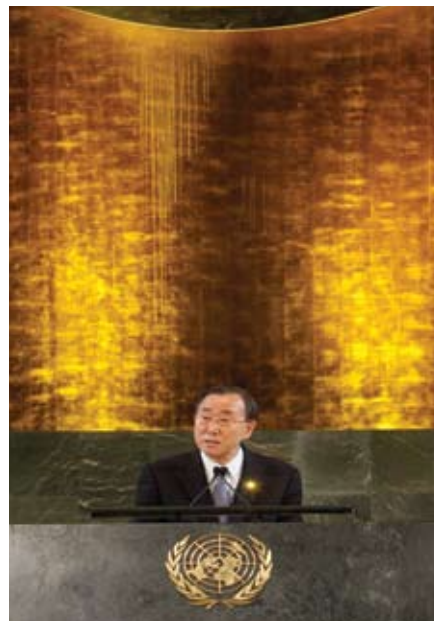


**The SI event with WAGGGS**

27 Soroptimists were among the 1500 official registrants representing 200 NGOs from around the world. Other Soroptimists were “unofficial” attendees who were allowed to attend events presented in sites outside the UN Building. Hundreds of activities were scheduled at the various sites around the city; Soroptimists had direct involvement in six events, partnering in two workshops with the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS). One related to education and the different strategies/case studies of activities that our organisations conduct. The second included the YWCA and addressed strategies to address Violence Against Girls.

These two partnerships affirmed the crucial nature of making partnerships with groups addressing similar issues; for support, for inspiration and for expanding our influence. Each workshop featured dialogues between the panelists that illustrated the benefits of inter generational collaboration and learning.

At the end of the first week we learned that our group (SI, WAGGGS and YWCA) had been asked to present an oral statement on Violence Against Girls to the official government CSW delegations during the second week of CSW; much of the statement written through the invaluable efforts of SIHQ Programme Director, Reilly Dempsey.



**Secretary General Ban Ki-moon opens CSW 55**  
**Photo: UN Women/JC McIlwaine**

We were also pleased that our own Else Larsen was asked to report on the amazing environment project she is working on with Kenyan Soroptimists in partnership with Danish Soroptimists. Margaret Cook, IAPD will participate in a panel on Violence Against Women.

There were so many highlights – the most thrilling was the launch of the new UN entity for women, UN Women. Just four years ago SI signed onto this “seemingly impossible dream” promoted by a group called GEAR with the aim of having a single high level entity for women with an Under Secretary General level appointment for director.

At CSW55, Michelle Bachelet, former President of Chile, was introduced by Secretary General Ban Ki-moon as the very first Director and Under Secretary General. World leaders, NGO activists including all of the SI delegation and the world (via web-cast) were treated to a beautiful, inspirational celebration with the theme of “Honouring the past, envisioning the future for women and girls”.

UN Women will focus on five areas:

- 1) Expanding women’s voice, leadership and participation
- 2) Ending violence against women
- 3) Strengthening women’s full participation



**Michelle Bachelet Director, UN Women**  
**Photo: UN Women/JC McIlwaine**



**Secretary General Ban Ki-moon with Yoko-Komori Olson, SI’s UN Representative to New York**

in conflict resolution and peace processes  
 4) Enhancing women’s economic empowerment and  
 5) Ensuring gender priorities are reflected in national plans and budgets, including capacity to support CEDAW reporting.

The speeches are available on the new website: [www.womenwatch@un.org](http://www.womenwatch@un.org).

We enjoyed the first performance of a song entitled “One Woman”- written especially for this event, the chorus still rings in my ears: “We are one woman, your victories lift us all. We are one woman, you rise and I stand tall. We are one woman, our dreams are mine. We shall shine, shine, shine.”

*Continued overleaf*

CSW is a journey of experiencing one's own "pieces of the elephant"; so many government sessions, high level panels, parallel events, issue related caucuses, workshops, films, briefings, receptions... it is impossible to describe CSW. I take away so many things that will never be shared but I leave you with a snapshot of my personal inspirations:

#### Girls and Violence:

Marta Santos Pais, Special Representative of the Sec. General on UN study on child exploitation: "Children say 'My life is shaped by fear'; they don't feel confident. They don't have the confidence to speak out about it. They feel judged and feel they are blamed for the abuse. Without the trust of children NO mechanisms will work. When asked, 50 per cent of children think that violence against children is their biggest issue; 50 per cent think that sexual abuse of children is a second priority; 80 per cent didn't seek help; they didn't think they had the right; that the authorities would believe them."

#### Girls Voices:

In a panel discussion presented by girls 13-18 about Violence Against Girls, they said that their core issues were the following: a need for positive role models, a need for an opportunity to develop a sense of self esteem, and a need to reject stereotypes and be resilient to negative pressures.

#### Men and Boys:

Gary T. Barker of Instituto Promundo revealed a startling statistic from a study of thousands of men and boys around the world: 5-10 per cent admitted to having procured sex for money and knowingly purchasing sex from a girl under 18. There are not enough prisons to lock them all up! Men and boys have to change attitudes and men and boys have to be the group to do it.

#### Women Using Technology for Good:

We hear so many stories of social media being used for evil... but it is also a vehicle of much good and women need to be empowered, have safe spaces, knowledge,

education and the power to take advantage of the many benefits that social media and technology can bring them. This is another "space" where NGOs such as Soroptimist International can empower women around the globe.

This is my brief "snapshot" of some of the highlights we experienced at CSW.

Several Soroptimists and our wonderful SI Representatives to the UN New York continued to attend the event which culminated on March 4th, aiming for a statement that will be taken to ECOSOC on crucial issues that CSW NGO delegates brought to their government delegations for inclusion.

CSW is a space to learn and grow and revitalise my passion for what we do. It can be yours too if you are interested.

Find more stories and quotes and the final SI Cumulative report for CSW55 on the SI website Programme Blog at: [www.soroptimistinternational.org](http://www.soroptimistinternational.org).

## WOMEN AGENTS OF CHANGE



# Advocating for Change A Global Voice at the Highest Levels

Anna Aiken, SI Programme Officer, has an update on recent activity

Soroptimist International has a team of representatives based at each of the main UN centres in Geneva, New York, Paris, Rome, Vienna and Nairobi, as well as at the regional centres for West Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean. SI is also affiliated to the Commonwealth.

As reported in the December issue of TIS, Cinzia Palmi attended the 140th Session of the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) council to witness the delivery of the 1 Billion Hungry campaign signatures. The SI online reporting system details many of the great campaigning actions SI Clubs have taken to support the campaign. Your actions formed the basis of an SI statement, 'actions against hunger', which you can read at the FAO 'SI at the UN' web page.

The 1 Billion Hungry campaign is far from over. Rising food prices and an increasingly volatile climate are impacting on the food security of millions - particularly women. The General Director concluded "hunger is a complex problem. But it is not hopeless. Behind this petition lies a global movement". If you have not yet signed the petition you can still do so at [www.1billionhungry.org](http://www.1billionhungry.org).

The Commission for Social Development recently convened in New York and Carol Themm and Lois Beilin were there for SI. Most societies continue to be characterised by significant economic and social injustices; the World Bank estimates that the world's poor has increased from 1.4 billion (2005) to 1.7 billion in 2010. The UN Secretary General called for an integrated approach to poverty: one that funds development over war. Every year the world spends 1.4 trillion dollars on weapons and attempts to eradicate poverty will lack credibility if this continues.

Sina and Paulette attended the WHO Executive Board meeting in Geneva at the end of January. They report that progress is being made in the area of maternal health (MDG 5), the number of women dying as a result of complications during pregnancy and childbirth has decreased by 34% and the proportion of women in developing countries receiving antenatal care at least once during pregnancy increased from 64% (1990) to 80% in 2008.

SI welcomes Rose Mwangi and Alice Odingo who began as SI Representative Designates to the UN Environment Programme (Nairobi) in January. Rose and Alice attended the UNEP Governing Council meeting at the end of February and found civil society to be a powerful group at the UNEP. Alice read a statement on behalf of the Women Major Stakeholder Group and they attended a discussion of the Women Ministers in Environment. A full report will be available shortly.

Over the coming weeks the SIHQ and UN teams are involved in many exciting events. By the time you read this, a number of these will already have taken place. A full update will appear in the June TIS but please do keep checking the SI Website for all the latest updates!

In March, President Elect Alice Wells and Programme Director Reilly Dempsey will travel to Vienna to meet with the Vienna Reps. Alice and Reilly have been invited to attend a discussion on Education and Leadership to celebrate International Women's Day (March 8th). Alice will be taking part in the panel. They will also be meeting with policy representatives of UNIDO and the drugs and crime office.

'Women as Agents of Change' is the theme of Commonwealth Day (March 14th). To celebrate, there will be a half day Parliamentary event in London on the transformational impact of education. SI is honoured to be running one of the sessions which will explore access to education with a broader focus of 'working locally to impact globally'. Alice Wells and Alison Sutherland (Project Sierra) will join SIHQ staff for this event.

Finally, if you want to receive monthly updates on the latest advocacy, action and awareness news, please visit the SI website to sign up to our newsletter, Global Voice!

### Forthcoming UN Rep Meetings

**March 21- 25th:** Commission on Narcotic Drugs (Vienna)

**April 1st:** Civil Society Interactive hearings on the 4th UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries (New York).

**April 11th – 15th:** Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (Vienna).

**May 5th – 6th:** UNESCO NGO Executive Board Meeting (Paris) on the theme of International Migrations and the Social and Human Impacts, plus round tables on Human Rights, Environment and Education.

**May 30th – June 17th:** Committee on the Rights of a Child (Geneva). Frida and Paulette, SI's Geneva Reps, hope to attend.



# Soroptimist International Friendship Links

“What is FRIENDSHIP?

Friendship is when you are down and troubled and your friend is beside you,  
 Friendship is when you have an open-minded discussion about all kinds of matters  
 and afterwards you are still friends,  
 Friendship is a hug worth a thousand words,  
 Friendship is when you meet a person and your life is changed forever,  
 Friendship is when we sing the Soroptimist Symphony together.”

*Hanne Jensbo, President, Soroptimist International.*

Friendship Links have always been a meaningful way for Soroptimist clubs to get to know other members of Soroptimist International from around the world and build an appreciation and understanding of cultures very different from their own.

By exchanging communications and sharing information, clubs with Friendship Links have gained valuable information about the challenges facing women around the world. In many cases, these relationships have grown to support local Soroptimist projects that improve the lives of women and girls. In this feature, we report on a very small selection of Friendship Links and hear some leading members' views on what Soroptimist Friendship means to them.

## Longterm development with friends

Lori Blair, Senior Director of Programme Services SI of the Americas reports: “11 years ago, Terry Phillips (1996-1998 Midwestern Region Governor) and Beverly Bucur (2006-2008 Midwestern Region Governor) travelled to Bolivia to meet members of their Friendship Link.

They were intrigued by how a small club, SI Cochabamba, managed so many wonderful projects. SI Cochabamba proudly demonstrated their project that teaches women how to read and cut patterns, sew and design clothes. As they were leaving the centre, one of the project participants begged them not to go. With the help of a translator, the woman explained that the sewing machines rotated between three villages and once they were gone, they could not continue their project. That year, at region conference, Beverly gave a presentation about the project and attendees donated enough to purchase 10 sewing machines for the women of Cochabamba.

Midwestern Region and SI Chicago continued to support SI Cochabamba with donations to purchase baking ovens, sewing supplies, literacy materials and computers. 2000-2002 Midwestern Region Governor Joan Stallard pledged US\$1700 from a region fundraiser to help SI Cochabamba build The Learning House for Women. “The support of SI Chicago and the Midwestern



SI Cochabamba course in painting ceramics

“ It has been said, “Friendship is one of the most valuable assets that we create in our lifetime. That is why people hold friends in such high regard.”

My Soroptimist membership has made me a very rich person indeed, since it has given me a network of friends around the world. Each and every woman we serve and each and every Soroptimist I meet is a friend that I hold dear. Today some of my closest friends are women that I met through my Soroptimist travels and even though we may not see each other often, we know we will always be friends since we are united by a common mission. I cannot imagine my life without having had these gifts of friendship and the journey is far from finished!

*Sharon Fisher, President SIA*

region has been very positive,” said Emma de Iturricha of SI Cochabamba, “the women of the community now have their own space for their classes and meetings. The classes offer the possibility of more income to improve the quality of the women’s lives.”

The support continues to this day. At the 2008 Midwestern region conference, US\$1500 was raised to support a programme to train women to become certified daycare providers.

Bucur says, “The clubs in the Midwestern Region have supported projects in Cochabamba because we know that all of the money we send will be used to benefit women and girls. We also know that in a country like Bolivia, our dollars go a long way to helping women to achieve their dreams. If every club in SIA partnered with another club with less resources, just think of the difference we could make and the women we could empower!”

## Friendship after repression

In 1990, Danish Soroptimists started to send humanitarian aid to the exhausted citizens of Romania who had been isolated and suppressed through the many years of Ceausescu’s repressive regime.

International President Hanne Jensbo reports: “We found many well educated women, professors, doctors, nurses, administrative and business women, who were very eager to connect with Western Europe. In 1993 we chartered the first Soroptimist club in Craiova”.

The Soroptimist humanitarian support continued, but focused on programmes which changed attitudes, teaching and sharing the importance of democracy and human rights.

“We arranged study tours for Soroptimists, teachers, nurses and students. Even when the changes were not immediate, they were very attentive and changes gradually came. We also arranged trips between Denmark and Romania building mutual friendships”.

Now, six new Soroptimist clubs have been chartered and this year Timisoara and Cluj celebrate their 15th anniversary. Timisoara will be the ‘godmother’ club for the 8th Romanian club in Arad, to be chartered on 29 April 2011.



Members and friends: SI Denmark and SI Romania



**Worldwide Soroptimist Friendships: Ellen Nielsen (left) from Denmark with Felicitas Hubert who was originally from SI Pretoria in South Africa and is now a member of SI Taunus in Germany.**

“10 years ago, we started to tell our Romanian friends about human trafficking and asked them to raise awareness about it in their clubs and communities. They were reluctant, as they feared retaliation from those involved in organised human trafficking in Romania, but little by little they took up the issue; now clubs inform students about the risks of trafficking, and they work together with the authorities, the police, social workers and local governments to raise awareness amongst at-risk groups.

The Danish Union provides financial support to help the clubs in this important work and the Romanian Union has been given a further €10,000 for projects against human trafficking. Friendship makes the fight against injustice stronger!

Progress has been achieved little by little, in trust and in friendship. I cannot imagine a bigger friendship between individuals involved in a joint humanitarian mission, than that which the Romanian and Danish clubs have developed over the last 20 years. The Romanian Soroptimists will stay as our best friends. As one student who visited said, we have learned more about each other, our societies and rich culture, than 1000 books can describe.”

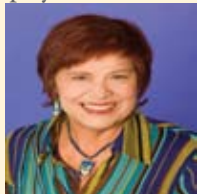


Since the founding of my club, SI Southeast Flanders in Belgium, in 1988, I have visited Soroptimists in many countries and experienced first hand the friendship and hospitality that so characterises our organisation. At club level you would expect to see this warmth, but the true rewards of being a Soroptimist become even more apparent when you extend your involvement beyond the local level. Being a Soroptimist means sharing a common bond beyond national, language or cultural barriers. Friendship is indeed the very essence of Soroptimism.

**Eliane Lagasse,  
President, SIE**



Soroptimist International Friendship means everything to me and continuously fuels my commitment and enjoyment of our organisation. I have been inspired, stretched, challenged, supported, and loved by women from all over the world who would never have entered my life had it not been for Soroptimist International. The reason why this friendship link is so potent is that we are all united through our mission of transforming women and girls. Our work underlines our reason for being together, and for me, makes the work and play the sweeter when sharing with women with the same vision.



I cherish the diversity of our membership... every member and every club has its unique culture and while we are working toward the theme of Education and Leadership for Women and Girls, every club claims its voice in the ‘on the ground work’ that it does”.

**Dawn Marie Lemonds International Programme  
Director, Soroptimist International.**



### Bonds between cultures

Soroptimism is about solidarity, international goodwill and understanding, and opportunities.

Tonny Filedt Kok, a member of SI Amsterdam Centre/West, tells TIS: “Combining your profession with Soroptimist activities is extremely rewarding and a way of experiencing true Soroptimist friendship. Working on a project in Gujarat, India from 1998-2005, I used to pass through Mumbai where SIGBI had three clubs.

In 2001 I called one of the presidents, and we arranged a meeting. I was keen to get to know Soroptimists in Mumbai, to exchange experiences and see if we could collaborate on a project. The idea was born to set up a Friendship Link.

Back home in the Netherlands, I told my club about our idea, and we decided it was feasible because I would be able to have frequent contact with the club. Our Friendship Link with SI Mumbai North was established in 2001. Club members offered me home hospitality and we discussed Soroptimist topics such as how to attract new young members and how to make the club more transparent. One member also visited our club meeting.”



SI Mumbai North is a very active club with many good projects. My club decided to support their nutrition project in a school for underprivileged children, donating a total of €14,000 over six years. In the Netherlands we sold cookery booklets prepared by the Indian Soroptimists. All 1000 copies I brought back from India were sold! SI Leeds, another Friendship Link, organised a fundraising high tea with great success. Collaboration among Friendship Links is a viable method of supporting good projects.

In 2010 25 Soroptimists from Denmark and the Netherlands participated in a Study Tour. The programme was jointly prepared with the Indian Soroptimists and featured visits to clubs and two charters, presided over by the then SIGBI President Jackie Mosedale. The enthusiastic participants all became ambassadors for India! In the meantime, support for Indian projects has no doubt widened – thanks to the friendships formed during these wonderful personal encounters.



There is hardly a place you can go in the world and not have a connection with a Soroptimist or someone who knows a Soroptimist. What a powerful network this can be! We are there for one another in good times and challenging times. That is who we are and that is what we do!  
**Alice Wells, President Elect, Soroptimist International, pictured with Sandra Dannefeldt, a Soroptimist from Alice's region in SIA who now lives in Melbourne, Australia.**

# Friendship Links



## Nurturing growth through friendship

SIGBI club SI Slough, Windsor and Maidenhead (SWM), in England, has a link with SI Banjul for the last 24 years, starting when a member stayed with her sister who lived there, and assisted with founding the club.

Jackie Paling, a club member and now Assistant Programme Director, Human Rights and the Status of Women, reports, "Since then, SWM has supported Gambian projects, the most recent raising money for SI Banjul's Women's Market Garden Project, which supports women farmers in the south of the country.

16 villages are sustained by the produce from three farms. The local Community Development Council provides the land and it is divided according to the size of the families using it. Crops are grown by the women to feed the villagers and to sell on, and members of SI Banjul have used their own expertise in assisting with marketing the produce.

One of the main problems is the destruction of their crops by cattle wandering into the fields and trampling on them. To counteract this they need to build fencing. Normal fencing is expensive and high maintenance, whereas living fence of natural material such as saplings close planted is not only cheap, but relatively easy to maintain and eco-friendly. SI Slough Windsor and Maidenhead raised UK£3000 towards this. Although they do not have a Friendship Link, SI Cardiff have also raised a great deal of money for these fences.

Two SWM members made separate trips to The Gambia and their hostesses ensured not only that they had a good time but also made sure that they were able to see the market garden project in action.

Farmers Mma Ba and Mma Yassi proudly showed off the plump okra that they were picking and the visitors saw that the living fences are doing their job."



I have met some of the most wonderful women and made the best friends I could ever wish for from all over the world, that is what membership of SI means to me. I always say to new members: 'You now have 90,000 new best friends', which is the best member benefit of any organisation.

*Liz Morgan-Lewis,  
President, SIGBI*

## Renewing old friendships

SIGBI club SI Birkenhead was celebrating its 70th Anniversary and, in its archives, discovered that a club member, as Federation President had chartered the first SI club in Africa in Port Elizabeth, and that there had been a Friendship Link established at that time.

Cherry Povall reports: "We contacted the club and asked whether they were interested in renewing the link. They were! For our first visit, eight members went out to Africa taking blankets and children's clothes. We had asked what we could bring that would most useful. Knitting sessions were organised with all the members, even the uninitiated, taking part and we produced the blankets!

These were to be used for the patients in the Aids haven.



When we arrived in Port Elizabeth, the Soroptimists, although few in number, had numerous projects needing help and we offered our support. We also set up a bursary of UK£100 per year to be paid in perpetuity to help them in the recruitment of more Soroptimists.

SI Birkenhead sent 10 sewing machines in the following year and this led to helping the Women's Refuge set up projects to help their clients back into work. The sewing machines are still going strong and have helped hundreds of women.

We returned every year. The number of projects have increased and now cover a wide spectrum of support for women and children.

Our friendship has gone from strength to strength and I'm sure will continue for many more years."

## Sadness and international co-operation

After Maureen Eykelenboom, a member of SI Upper Hutt in New Zealand, started her 'Boomer Cap' project in memory of her medic son who had been killed in Afghanistan, news that warm clothes were needed by women and children in Afghanistan prompted the club to organise a national project.

Knitted garments arrived from all over New Zealand and were to be distributed to Kabul as charitable freight on a New Zealand Army aircraft. Unfortunately, a change in army policy led to that project being aborted, but with tons of clothes that could be useful somewhere, SI Upper Hutt set about finding other recipients.

Very soon arrangements had been made and baby clothes and blankets made their way to SI Ulaanbaatar in Mongolia for the Lotus Orphanage Centre and Shelter house for Women. Another club, SI Darkhan supplies blankets and warm clothing for orphanages and families in their area. The cost of postage of these items is high but in the Soroptimist spirit of co-operation, another New Zealand club, SI New Plymouth helped out with NZ\$150 towards the costs.

SI Hutt told their Friendship Link, SI Cardigan in Wales and they are now knitting items to provide even more items for the ongoing project.

## Goats, chickens and friendships

Six members of SI Kyoto-Toka, Japan visited Malaysia, as part of their 15th Anniversary programme, to launch a joint goat rearing project with their Friendship Link club, SI Bangsar.

After warm hospitality and the exchange of gifts, the Japanese visitors were shown the new goat sheds that the recipients had built, alongside the chicken houses that had previously been provided by SI Bangsar. The goats were handed over to the various families and celebrations continued. The Japanese Soroptimists have vowed to return to see how the goats and their families are getting along and also to see more of their Malaysian sisters.



My Soroptimist friends care unconditionally - they respect and love me despite, or even because of, my foibles. They are there to celebrate my successes and to stand by me during times that present me with challenges and pain. They allow me to support them in the same way. It is my privilege to have such friends. *Yvonne Simpson, President, SISWP*



# SI HQ UPDATE

Rosie Coutts, SI Executive Director, reports

## Launch of new SI website!

After several months of intensive preparation by our website designers and HQ staff, we were delighted to launch our new, revitalised site at the end of February.

We do hope that you will take the opportunity to explore the website and enjoy the myriad new and updated features, including the soroptiVoiceBlog, a new resources section and social networks on facebook, twitter, YouTube and tumblr. Click on 'Act Now' to find the latest campaigns, appeals, and urgent actions you can take to Stand Up For Soroptimism Today!

All new postings on the website will be undertaken at SI Headquarters from now on, so please visit the site regularly to make sure that you keep up with the latest programme news and events.

SI photos on the website can be downloaded by right clicking on the photo and saving them to your computer. An even wider selection of Soroptimist photos is available by visiting flickr.com. Just enter Soroptimist International into the search box and click on 'People' to access the collection and see Soroptimists in action around the world.

## And a new monthly newsletter!



Global Voice is the new monthly newsletter from SIHQ. From March, Global Voice will be sent on the last Friday of the month, providing a summary of all the most important SI news.

The first issue of Global Voice can be found here: <http://us2.campaign-archive2.com/?u=4c7867996d6229f393f039603&id=1ad45d21cd>, or accessed through the home page via Facebook and Twitter. To sign up to receive future issues of Global Voice, please visit the home page of the website to subscribe.

Entering your Programme Focus reports on the new website is as easy as ever! The log in details are unchanged. Just click on the 'Online Reporting' icon at the bottom of each page. If you have any comments or questions, click on 'Get in Touch' at the bottom of each page to e-mail SI or the four Federation Headquarters directly.

We look forward to hearing from you!

## SI Board approves three new appointments

We are pleased to extend a warm welcome to three new post holders who will take up office at the First Board Meeting of the new biennium on 9 July in Montréal.

### SI International Treasurer 2011–13

Pat Carruthers, from the UK, has been selected as SI International Treasurer for the next biennium. In accordance with a recent Board decision, Pat will also serve as Chair of the Finance Committee.

Pat, a member of SI Perth in Scotland, will bring the benefit of her considerable financial expertise to SI: she is a financial accountant by profession and served as SIGBI Federation Treasurer from 2000–2007. Her vision for the future is to harness our strong international membership to enhance human rights, especially for women and girls. She is a passionate advocate of educational opportunities for women. As International Treasurer she wishes to ensure a financially strong organisation with the resources to provide the necessary services to its members.

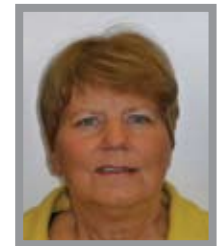


### Chair of Constitution & Resolutions Committee 2011–13

Marlies Hampel, from Düsseldorf, Germany, brings substantial experience to her new role as she approaches the completion of her two year tenure as Procedural Consultant to the International President.

Marlies is also a former Chair of SIE's Constitution and By-Laws Committee and former Procedural Advisor to her federation. Marlies is a lawyer by profession, and has served as the Head of a Public Prosecutor's Office since 1995.

Marlies says, "The major task of the Committee for the next biennium will be to intensively review the SI Policy, Programme and Procedures document."



### Chair of Organisational Development Committee 2011–13

Leigh Ellwood-Brown is currently a voting member of the SI Board as Immediate Past President of the South West Pacific federation. Leigh has been a Soroptimist since 1980 and has a wide knowledge of extension within the organisation, having served as her Federation's Extension Officer for four years.

She is already working with Ann Dawson, current Committee Chair, to develop the future role of the Organisational Development Committee. Having participated in the SI strategic planning process as a board member, Leigh is excited by the challenge of chairing the committee at a time of change and development within SI.

Leigh, who hails from Queensland, Australia, is a gemmologist by profession. She served for 10 years on the Brisbane UNIFEM Co-ordinating Committee and 7 years as Vice President of the Australian Women's Coalition.

Leigh says, "I see this as an opportunity and challenge to enhance much needed change - to take us forward as a very relevant NGO in today's world to collectively advance the status of women and girls around the world! I encourage all comments and input at any time from all members".



# Soroptimist aid for global disasters

Soroptimists across the globe spring into action when disasters occur, helping fellow members with their own problems as well as initiating fundraising and direct action projects to provide useful assistance. Providing funding directly through sister clubs around the world is a marvellous way of helping in a secure and targeted way.



One of thousands of damaged buildings in Christchurch

## Christchurch earthquake

The most recent major natural disaster was the earthquake in Christchurch, New Zealand on February 22nd, when 166 people died. 122 are still missing (to date) and thousands are seriously hurt.

Soroptimists in New Zealand have had many enquiries about helping those affected by the devastation. Women are particularly vulnerable as they cope without water, power and sewerage and with damaged homes, while trying to look after their families and the elderly.

The colours of Christchurch are red and black. New Zealanders have been sporting these colours in their fundraising efforts; they are strong colours and the people of Christchurch are strong too, but they badly need help, both emotionally and financially.

Soroptimists are urged to continue their fundraising efforts as the reconstruction of the city begins. Maureen Lough President, SI Christchurch, says: "Much has been achieved and many residents and business owners have been able to return to retrieve possessions. SI Christchurch has established that most of our older members have moved to other parts of the country to be with their families. Those still here keep in close touch so hopefully will identify any assistance needed relatively quickly.

Many stories of survival and great heroism are beginning to emerge and we all know 'someone who knew someone'. A two minutes silence was observed nationwide on the Tuesday – one week to the minute after the quake; where I was, the cicadas all stopped their cacophony, which gave a very eerie feeling to a very poignant moment.

Sadly the Rescue Operation has now moved to one of Recovery but it is hoped that the death toll may be a little less than feared.

There is still a tremendous spirit here and a determination to get up and running as quickly as possible. Our 6 year old granddaughter, when asked when she

is going to sleep in her own room again answered, 'When I go back to school.' I repeat, we will get through this... keep thinking positive thoughts."

Soroptimists have so far, donated AU\$11,000 to SIWSP HQ in Sydney.

For more information contact [hq@siswp.org](mailto:hq@siswp.org)

## Haiti earthquake

In the year since the devastating earthquake in Haiti, the SIE fund, with donations from all over the world, has financed projects in and around Port-au-Prince totalling more than US\$130,000.



Roswitha Ott, SIE Project Manager, Africa and the Caribbean reports: "The orphanage Notre Dame des Victoires in Port-au-Prince is home to about 30 children and babies. Managed by Sister Véronique and four young women, the three-room building survived the earthquake but was seriously damaged. Thanks to donations collected in Switzerland the floors can be redone and healthier food purchased for the children, who also received Christmas gifts from SI Port-au-Prince.

With the outbreak of cholera in Haiti, members of SI Port-au-Prince immediately went to Carriès, near Saint-Marc, where the disease had started, to inform the population about contamination and prevention. They also took drinking water and medical kits for 65 families.

The earthquake heavily hit General Hospital in Port-au-Prince (HUEH)

with its important paediatric ward. The main building is virtually uninhabitable. Nevertheless, some 1,200 children were born here between October and December 2010. 'Blankets and nappies for newborn babies' is a first-aid project aimed at helping the women give birth to their babies. The 230 medical kits assembled and distributed by SI Port-au-Prince contain everything needed for a new baby.

The initial project was sponsored by a generous donation from SIA, and Christoph von Toggenburg and his Bike for Help Foundation helped with a second donation.

With the hospital so devastated, many babies and children have to be treated in a field hospital or in huts. The paediatric service treats 150 children per week coming from surrounding camps. SIE continues to finance equipment for this hospital."

## Red Toxic sludge in Hungary

In October 2010, red toxic sludge from an industrial site destroyed several villages in Western Hungary, claiming 10 lives and leaving hundreds homeless. SI Budapest has been working to help the victims and will contribute to building a kindergarten.



Katalin Juhos on behalf of President Erzsébet Varsányi, SI Budapest, reports:

"We have raised a significant sum of money from Soroptimist donations - mostly from Europe but also from some



Flooded street in Northern Hungary



Children at a post flood camp in Pakistan

US clubs. We are most grateful for this immediate help! It gives us strength to dedicate ourselves to this important project.

In January a delegation of Soroptimists visited the sites of the red toxic spill in Devceser and Kolontár and met the two mayors of these villages. It was deeply moving to hear their account of the tragedy. Except for a one-year-old child, most of the victims were elderly. 840 people were taken to hospital. Thousands of families, many of whom had lost their homes, were affected.

After evaluating a number of options among the local reconstruction plans, we decided to contribute to building a new kindergarten in Kolontár. A member who has run a kindergarten in Budapest for 10 years will advise, enabling us to contribute expert knowledge as well as financial aid.

Once the facility is functioning, we intend to invite paediatricians, psychologists etc. for meetings with parents to raise awareness of the possible effects of this toxic exposure on children. It is important to prevent and treat any repercussions quickly. Experts will also be invited to workshops for medical physicians to discuss the latest international best practices. We also plan to provide educational toys for the kindergarten.

We thank all Soroptimists who have helped Hungarian people in need and hope to have your continued support, as every euro counts." For further information, contact: [suba@soroptimisteurope.org](mailto:suba@soroptimisteurope.org)

### Floods in Northern Hungary

While the red sludge spill received extensive media coverage, the devastating floods in Northern Hungary in 2010 were given far less international attention. Katalin Párdutz, President, SI Szeged, Hungary, reports:

"After heavy rain in June, the rivers of Hernád, Sajó and Vadász overflowed their banks, forcing 270 people to abandon their homes. In spite of heroic efforts by the community, the evacuation of Ócsanálós was unavoidable. The flood and

the standing water damaged or destroyed houses and public institutions.

Members of SI Szeged decided to raise money to help the flood victims, and our Friendship Links, SI Berne-Arcadia, Switzerland and SI Ilkley, England, generously joined this initiative. The substantial donations are covering the cost of rebuilding the village's school. A plate will acknowledge this international co-operation by the Soroptimist clubs.

### Floods in Pakistan

**We have all seen the heart wrenching media coverage of the devastating and widespread floods in Pakistan last summer. The members of Soroptimist clubs in Pakistan witnessed the misery and the horror on a daily basis. Talat Pasha, Assistant Programme Director, SIGBI reports:**

"The 2010 Pakistan floods wreaked havoc following heavy monsoon rains in Pakistan. The Pakistani economy has experienced collateral damage to infrastructure and crops. Structural damage are estimated to exceed US\$4billion, and wheat crop damage is estimated to be over US\$500 million. Officials estimate the total economic impact to be as much as US\$43 billion.

The United Nations has made its largest ever appeal for funding to assist Pakistan flood victims. As millions of people around the world helped Pakistan to overcome this natural disaster, Soroptimists in Pakistan also rose to the occasion and worked tirelessly towards flood relief. SI members in Pakistan have demonstrated their solidarity and support to the Pakistani nation in this hour of grief by contributing immensely in the relief efforts.

"SI clubs in Lahore, Karachi and Hyderabad have worked tirelessly to assist the victims of the floods, with

fundraising and donations of food, clothing and equipment which they took to the various camps themselves. They have also helped to establish medical facilities.

"We are still calling on Soroptimists across the world to help us raise desperately needed funds for this appeal. Please consider supporting our partner UNICEF which receives no funding from the UN budget – it is funded entirely by donations.

Clubs can donate online by visiting [www.unicef.org.uk/Pakistansoroptimists](http://www.unicef.org.uk/Pakistansoroptimists).

### Mudslides in Brazil

In January 2011, floods and mudslides caused nearly 1000 deaths in the Brazilian state of Rio de Janeiro. SIA President Sharon Fisher and SIE President Eliane Lagasse reached out to Brazil Region Governor Mariza Soares de Azevedo to express the support and concern of both federations.

They reminded Governor Mariza that Soroptimist disaster grants – supported by both federations – were available for projects focused on the special needs of women and girls rebuilding their lives following the disaster. Clubs were encouraged to make donations to the Soroptimist Disaster Fund so that the resources would be available when needed.

Because Soroptimist disaster grants focus on helping women and girls to rebuild their lives, it frequently takes several months following a disaster before a gender-specific project can be identified for support.

### Mudslides caused devastation in Brazil





# Montréal 2011

## The countdown has begun!



says Yvonne Machuk, Convention Chair

[www.si-convention.org](http://www.si-convention.org)

**Soroptimist 2011**  
19<sup>th</sup> International Convention  
July 10 to 14, 2011 - Montréal, Québec, Canada

## Soroptimist International Convention July 10-14th 2011

The countdown has begun!

As of March 8th 2011, 334 Soroptimists have already committed to being part of this exceptional experience.

Please consider booking a room at one of the hotels with whom we have contracted for space. This will ensure that we make the commitment and do not incur additional costs. Because of our arrangement with Tourisme Montreal to manage our selected accommodation, they are unable to recommend hotels outside the committed hotels. While the Sheraton and the Marriott are located a 15 minute walk from the Convention Centre, both hotels have offered free shuttles for Convention participants.

For those who need letters of invitation for visa purposes, please be advised that letters can only be issued once registration

fees have been paid. This is standard practice not only for SI International Conventions but for international conventions for other organisations as well.

The deadline for the early registration fee for the full convention of CAD\$600 is rapidly approaching. After April 15, full registration will be CAD\$700. Please visit [www.si-convention.org](http://www.si-convention.org) to register and to book social events and tours. You may register now and book events at a later date as you will have your own convention account. The Convention Committee has been working diligently to provide you with a meaningful and enjoyable experience.

Information regarding how to be a sponsor and/or exhibitor is now on the website. In the exhibit area, there will be many Canadian products of high quality

to satisfy your shopping needs as well as informative booths from SI and related projects. If your club would like to be a convention sponsor, please visit the website.

We have confirmed most of our speakers for the convention and know that they will inspire and inform us in our Soroptimist work. All of our speakers are Canadian women of note in their respective fields. These speakers will be followed by break-out sessions where participants will engage in meaningful activities and discussions to inform awareness, advocacy and action in the Soroptimist world.

Let's break the attendance records in Montreal and make this the largest SI Convention ever! I look forward to you joining us for four days of friendship, learning and fun. It won't be the same without you!



## Project Sierra

### education: the road to progress

Alison Sutherland, SI Quadrennial Project Liaison reports

Project Sierra continues to transform lives of women and girls! Jemi, a single mother, unable to work due to a severe disability, struggled to care for her three children. Their living conditions deteriorated, family support evaporated, the children's behaviour became increasingly out of control.

Project Sierra developed a tailored support package to help them back into community life and self sufficiency. Jemi's children returned to school, social workers guided the family to mend broken relationships, including engaging Jemi's extended family in building her a new home. After three years, Jemi successfully exited the project;

with her health much improved, she runs a small business trading in household goods so she can provide for her family's basic needs.

This year you are directly supporting 350 young women and many families and single mothers who would otherwise be at risk of breaking up and abandoning their children. 32 young mothers who enrolled in the Bo programme in 2010 were all successfully reconciled with their families and communities within 6 months. Social workers worked with religious and community leaders to reduce the stigma and encourage their reintegration. These young women are now settled, learning skills, taking exams, receiving guidance on health and life skills to care for their babies.

In rural areas, more families were ready to exit the programmes last year than expected. Three single mothers received business start-up support of relevant skills training and a cash grant, so they can generate income to continue sending their children to school. One buys and sells food produce in her community and surrounding villages, and has already been hugely successful - her

monthly profit increased by nearly 40%, and her turnover almost doubled in three months since starting in October 2010.

Another started a retail business in local food produce and imported household items; her progress will be monitored. Children's school attendance is also monitored after formal exit from the programme. The 62 children who left the project with their families in 2010 all completed their first semester examinations.

Rick Foulsham, SI's partner CEO wrote to SI President Hanne: "The crucial thing you are giving these young people, most of whom have faced hardship and deprivation beyond our imagination, is the chance to regain their self respect. Thank you so much for your support."

This support has already raised GB£811,647 for Project Sierra - well done! With just four months to run for SI's last Quadrennial Project, let's give one final push, so we reach our target and transform more lives!

[www.projectsierra.org](http://www.projectsierra.org) and  
Facebook: Friends of Project Sierra