

SIGBI Programme Director's Blog August 2017

Last month I highlighted the issues of health care for refugees and residents on the Greek islands as I had spent four weeks in Skopelos.

I returned to a whirl of Soroptimist and academic activity which has been a mixture of fun, friendship, hard work, frustration and elation.

Interspersed with this we are finally moving house, so I am alternating between work and packing boxes- currently my home looks like a warehouse.

I spent a day at Stockport discussing revamping the "Making a Difference " booklet which so many of us use for promotion of our organisation- hopefully the Board will agree on the final format for us to go to production for Conference.

FMB was a full on meeting in Solihull on 30th June to 2nd July. We had 2 excellent presentations on how we move forward with Board structure and develop new style clubs and we also covered a lot of work. Believe me FMB meetings are not a social event- there is so much to discuss, debate and decide that we all come away tired, but hopefully happy at what is achieved on behalf of our Organisation.

The following weekend was back to Solihull for UKPAC, as an ex-officio member of the committee this is now part of my role and one I am happy to undertake. The meetings are efficient, slick and informative. Two excellent speakers, all business discussed, changes agreed and even time to start planning the next Study Day in 2018.



Three lectures later and it was time to start baking for our Meru Coffee morning – a great social fundraiser although numbers were small but we managed £163.00 for the project.

With time only to put food away and wash pots it was down to Cowbridge to celebrate Bridgend's 70th Birthday at the Bear Inn. What a lovely welcome we had.

We were wined and dined and entertained by an excellent choir and soloist and I came away with a beautiful basket of flowers.

Home for a day then off to London for a short lecture tour – work really does get in the way of my Soroptimist activities.

Next week I will be in Cardiff for 3 days, work again, but I know I will be spending the evenings on the laptop, that is when I find it amongst the packing!

Plans are well underway for the first study tour of Meru, some 25 people have booked and the itinerary looks amazing. We will have the privilege of attending the graduation of the first group of women you have helped by your fundraising. We will see the effects of their anti FGM work, food advice and education – on their behalf I thank you for your efforts.



In between times I have been working on finer details for Conference and the FPAC day on the Thursday before Conference opens. It should be a good day. Having listened to your previous comments we will have presentations, group work, time for you to have your say and guide us on

what you want in the future. It will be a longer day so that we can fit in as much as possible but still allow delegates to attend all the other meetings they have to go to.

This is the month when the best practice awards are allocated and the PA team will be scanning the database and deliberating on finalists. It is not an easy task as every project deserves recognition and sometimes I wonder if we ought to be changing the criteria or even if the idea is outdated – one of the points for discussion at the FPAC meeting perhaps?



On 2nd August I will leave behind the chaos of moving house and return to Greece for another four weeks. I know I have work to do over there as they have suffered severe storms on the island and I have already been told there has been property damage, but I am lucky in that I have the means to repair or replace damaged goods. Many people around the world do not have that luxury and when bad weather damages their homes or crops they lose everything. No income, no food, no access to health care, fresh water or education.

Doing something to help those less fortunate is why I am a Soroptimist and I am certain I share that ethos with you all.

Have a good summer everyone.

Yours in friendship

Barbara Dixon
Programme Director