

Programme Director's Blog November 2016

This is the time of year when many Soroptimists from all over the Federation gather for the annual Conference, this year on the beautiful Island of Malta.

It is a time of reflection, reviewing much of the Programme Action work that has been done over the preceding year yet a time to look forward with new ideas, renewed enthusiasm and the inevitable buzz that members always get when they attend Conference.

We will listen to inspirational speakers, be humbled by what they and presenting clubs have achieved and wonder what else we can do in this changing world of ours.

Looking over the Programme Database for the last twelve months is time consuming but wonderful, there are so many good things being done to Educate, Empower or Enable women, not just in our Federation, but throughout the world.



October saw anti-slavery day in the UK and many Clubs held events, raised awareness or collected signatures to attempt to eradicate this horrendous crime.

When we work on Anti-trafficking or Modern Slavery we have the opportunity to improve the lives of women and girls and of course some men all over the world.

Modern slavery is when one person possesses or controls another person in such a way as to significantly deprive that person of their individual liberty, with the intention of exploiting that person through their use, profit, transfer or disposal. There are more "slaves" today than there were before the work of William Wilberforce – an estimated 29.8 million, 68% in forced labour and 1 in three is a child.

From 25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, to 10 December, Human Rights Day, the **16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence Campaign** is a time to galvanize action to end violence against women and girls around the world. The international campaign originated from the first Women's Global Leadership Institute coordinated by the Centre for Women's Global Leadership in 1991.

One of the major challenges to efforts to prevent and end violence against women and girls worldwide is a funding shortfall, resources for initiatives to prevent and end violence against women and girls are severely lacking. Frameworks such as the **Sustainable Development Goals**, which includes a specific target on ending violence against women and girls, offer huge promise, but must be adequately funded in order to bring real and significant changes in the lives of women and girls.

Whatever Clubs do to help victims of violence **may** be small, but it all adds up and makes a big difference to those helped; **enabling** them to look forward to a brighter future, **educating** them in life skills and **empowering** them to become a stronger individual.

We cannot end gender based violence and inequality overnight, but by persistence we can make a difference, nibbling away at the outer edge until the problem is manageable.

How do you eat an elephant?

One bite at a time!

Barbara Dixon
Programme Director