

I am delighted to see 185 reports have been entered in the month, 18th January to 19th February, with 1,046 beneficiaries.

This month I would like to focus on the work of [SI London Central and South West](#).

Their project works on education by developing links with educational establishments through a literacy project.

Students were provided with stimulus materials for the school, photographs of girls in difficult situations and were then asked to write a short story about them. The submissions were judged and prizes awarded.



SI London Central & South West members were interested in literacy and realised that this project would enable them to support one of the main SI goals of education whilst forging valuable links for the future.

There were some excellent entries and Joy Brown, joint President, attended the school and gave out the three prizes. The club hopes to develop this idea further in the future.

The students enjoyed the challenge and the school enjoyed working with the club.

What a wonderful way to educate students about SI, and about the problems in the world - whilst encouraging creativity.

Barbara Dixon
Programme Director

Soroptimists as Advocates of Peace

In 1948 at Harrogate about 1,500 Soroptimists gathered for the International Convention of Soroptimist. The theme adopted at the Convention "Working for the World We Want." This was the first post war Convention when the growing organisation had clubs in 15 countries with less than 20,000 members. Soroptimists then, were acutely aware of the need to support clubs in countries affected by war and displacement. The wartime friendships resulted in taking sons and daughters of British and European Soroptimists into the homes of American Soroptimists. And when leading Soroptimists, kept alive the international spirit in the face of national difficulties, European gratitude post war was, "We were not forgotten, left to our fate, we had friends we would hold on to". To build again the world they wanted, one of international goodwill and understanding. The desire for peace was the overriding factor.

Flash forward to 2017, Soroptimist International has grown to 135 countries and membership over 80,000. Unfortunately, the dissonance of conflicts at almost every border is served to human beings with no respite. Does peace have a chance? In this hard-nailed automated world, can the fragility of peace survive? What of the thousands of women victims caught in conflict situations – what can peace mean to them. Is this the world we want?



Built into the Soroptimist vision are steely words that reiterate our purpose:

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.



Soroptimists, here committed to creating spaces of peace through their work where women reach out to others to rekindle the peace for this world in disarray.

Amid the gloom and the doom that feeble voice of peace is heard in the efforts of women reaching out to women to help build a livelihood in [Meru Kenya](#), and in contributions for a natural disaster stricken community.

Peace permeates the clothes, stationery, woollen mittens sent by women for other women. Sustainable peace is heard in the lives of women rescued from violence or the economically empowered women of [Kori](#). This is the power of women as agents of peace - their action.

In this ever-changing world, we are facing newer challenges, newer trials, but the promotion of peace remain the foremost for Soroptimists. They make it their path not their destination working toward a world they want.

An enduring image of a banner I saw during CSW-59 march: "Her voice, Her peace, She matters"

This is what we want for women everywhere.



Nisha Ghosh - APD Violence & Conflict Resolution

World Book Day 2nd March

We live in a technological world, children are growing up with mobile phones, laptops and iPads taken for granted, so sharing the enjoyment of books is even more important.

[World Book Day](#) was first designated an international event by [UNESCO](#) in 1995 after being observed for over 70 years in Catalonia, Spain, where giving books to friends and family had become an annual tradition. It was first marked in the UK two years later in 1997, in response to an increasing concern over poor reading and writing standards.

World Book day is a celebration of authors, illustrators, books and of course a celebration of reading; in fact it's the biggest celebration of its kind designated by UNESCO, marked in over 100 countries all over the world.

Now in its 20th year, the main aim of World Book Day in the UK and Ireland is to encourage children to explore the pleasures of books and reading by providing them with a book of their own. Many schools encourage younger children to come to school dressed as characters from their favourite books.

Thanks to the generosity of [National Book Tokens Ltd](#), publishers and booksellers, millions of book vouchers are sent to children and young people (15 million, in fact one for nearly every child aged under eighteen in the country).

They can take their voucher to a book seller and can use it to pick one of ten books, (new and completely free) or they can use it to get £1 off any book or audio book costing over £2.99 at a participating bookshop or book club.

In over 100 countries World Book Day is observed on 23rd April, when UNESCO declared it a day of celebration of knowledge sharing through books. The day was originally chosen to observe the anniversaries of the birth and death of William Shakespeare.

Several countries in our Federation also observe World Book Day with a local flavour, giving children the utmost prominence. In fact short story writing competitions are organised with an aim of promoting the practice of reading and writing amongst children, and young adults.



A great opportunity for Soroptimists to make links with local schools. SI Cirencester's [Literacy Project](#) (ID 37429) has held annual writing competitions involving up to 15 primary schools, which raises the profile of Soroptimism locally and associates their name with Education.

Across the Federation many clubs have supported the Thames Valley [Kori Women's Development Project](#) in Sierra Leone. Rose Simbo, founder and a director of the the Kori Project and member of SI Thames Valley, set up the project in 2011 with the main aim of educating the women and girls of the Kori Chiefdom, thereby enabling and empowering them to say no to FGM.

At the end of 2016 there were great celebrations for the opening of the Sandy Raffan Memorial Library, built in memory of the husband of fellow Thames Valley member and chair of the Kori Project, Johanna Raffan. A recent video on Facebook showed the shelves packed with books.

World Book day will be every day in this village!

Jan Hemlin - APD Education



World Book Day Resource Packs for schools

Federation Programme Team



Barbara Dixon
Programme
Director



Rita Beaumont
Food Security
& Healthcare



Margaret Clark
APD - Advocacy



Nisha Ghosh
Violence & Conflict
Resolution



Jan Hemlin
Education



Rayner Rees
Economic
Empowerment



Naina Shah
Environmental
Sustainability