

SIGBI's overriding theme for project work is Educate, Empower and Enable women and girls to achieve their full potential.

Between the 25 March and 24 April 2017, 62 reports have been filed under Education with £11,634.99 being raised to help an estimated 1,336 people.

Inspired by the SIGBI theme of the Malta Conference, SI Blackburn gathered two partners, Darwen Vale High School and a local company, Lucite UK, to complement the delivery of a project, hoping to tackle the low uptake of STEM subjects by girls in their area and empower them to consider these careers in the future.



Assisted by a [STEMNET](#) adviser, SI Blackburn devised a programme of activities to deliver to 50 Year 8 girls. This comprised preparation of venue and materials by the school and a practical design challenge by Lucite UK.

The girls were divided into teams. Their SI trophy was awarded to the team judged the most successful by all project partners.

The school and STEMNET were delighted at the high profile given to STEM subjects. The girls who took part were enthusiastic and enjoyed their day. Lucite UK hoped to increase local knowledge of their work and were pleased with the result and all partners hoped the project would be repeated next year.

Many such projects are occurring all over our Federation, promoting STEM subjects and providing education for the future of girls in areas currently sparsely populated by women.

**Would you consider this a future project?**

**Barbara Dixon**  
Programme Director

### Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict

At the [United Nations' General Assembly](#) in 2015, all 193 members, unanimously declared 19 June as the [International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict](#). The day is now being observed annually – and aims to raise awareness of the need to end conflict-related sexual violence and urge the international community to stand in solidarity with the survivors of sexual violence around the world.

As the [UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict](#), Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, said, "Sexual Violence in conflict needs to be treated as the war crime it is; it can no longer be treated as an unfortunate collateral damage of war."

For several years the Security Council wrangled to bring onto the international stage war crimes against women; Security Council Resolutions: [1325](#) (in 2000), [1820](#) (2008), [1888](#) (2010) and [2106](#) (2013) are stepping stones to a concerted effort.



United Nations General Assembly

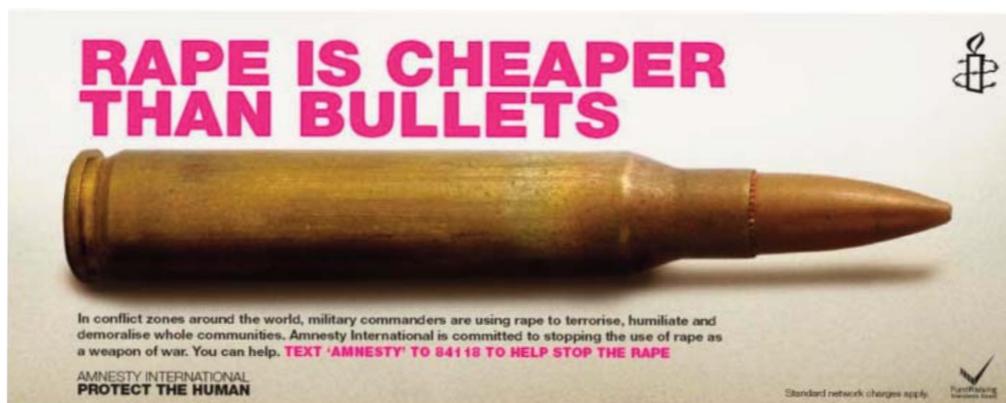
History is witness to the heinous crimes committed against women during wars. Civilisation and sustainable progress of humans unfortunately has not shown a decrease. In fact, the sexual violence has become more explicit, brutal, and rape is used as a weapon of war to harm, humiliate and shame. In present day conflict zones, such violence continues unabated.

Violence and war can also weaken systems of protection, security and justice. For these reasons, conflicts escalate sexual violence. Increased levels of sexual and gender-based violence can often persist well after the end of a crisis. Women and girls are usually disproportionately affected, and crimes such as these have devastating, long-term effects on the lives of survivors, their families, and the communities in which they live.

The UN directs Nation States to take primary responsibility to combat sexual violence in conflict, and the international community to support the adoption of national zero-tolerance policies.

In that regard, it was the primary responsibility of governments to ensure the meaningful participation of women in peace processes. The collective and coordinated response of all stakeholders was crucial in ensuring long-term strategies that would allow "scarred communities" to heal and rebuild. As civil society stakeholders, Soroptimists can work with their governments to push the zero tolerance agendas. Secondly, they can help survivors of such violence to re-enter society and re-integrate to a normal life.

Ms Bangura goes on to say, "We have arrived at a new juncture with an opportunity to change not only the way in which this crime was perceived and understood, but also the manner in which we respond to it in our security and justice sectors, and in terms of services for survivors."



Poster by Amnesty International and creative design agency Different Kettle, from a campaign in 2009

**Nisha Ghosh - APD Violence & Conflict Resolution**

## World Environment Day

Environment isn't asking us to conserve her for her, but, for our future generations. Careful management of this essential global resource is a key feature of a sustainable future.

"Connecting People to Nature", the theme for [World Environment Day 2017](#) (5 June, held this year in Canada), implores us to get outdoors and into nature, to appreciate its beauty and its importance, and to take forward the call to protect the Earth that we share. This year's theme invites us to think about how we are part of nature and how intimately we depend on it. It challenges us to find fun and exciting ways to experience and cherish this vital relationship.

The vision of the [Paris Agreement](#) on climate change is to curb global warming. This cannot be achieved by national governments alone, but requires a "climate action agenda", bringing in local governments, NGOs, businesses and individuals.

Education is the most powerful tool we have for solving environmental problems. We must empower children with information, leadership skills and confidence and they will change the world. A little baby step from all of us can make a sea change in our environment.

### Women and the Environment

Soroptimists can play an important role in creating a sense of solidarity towards those impacted by climate change, by identifying stories that help understand the role of climate change better. However, by raising awareness, we can ensure the ecosystem remains sustainable for future generations.

This brings us back, as do all our aims, to sustainable development and particularly the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs).

We are committed to making sure that the understanding and implementation of the SDGs remain our focus. Already several clubs are working with environment issues and bringing the message to the younger generation through contact in schools, whether it's about bees, sea creatures or depleting wild life. Through their projects, Soroptimists are drawing attention to pollution, afforestation and water renewable energy.

SIGBI's [Meru Women's Garden Project](#) supports some of the poorest women-led households in Kenya. It is entirely focused on providing opportunities to women and girls who may never otherwise be given the chance to earn an income and gives them status within their community. They educate women to increase their knowledge and skills so that they can use the most efficient, organic methods for food production to reduce extreme hunger by becoming self-sufficient with sustainable gardens at home.

The [UN Women's Flagship Programmes](#) were launched with the SDGs as parameters. The 12 flagship programmes are using a human-rights-based approach focused on strengthening the voice of women and girls. They seek to remove structural barriers to gender equality and women's empowerment. Each programme is guided by international human rights treaties and contributes to achieving [UN Women's Strategic Plan](#). Of the twelve programmes – three cover environment, and are designed to ensure the effective integration of gender. These programmes display a global concern to work towards transformative change.



**"Saving our planet, lifting people out of poverty, advancing economic growth . . . these are one and the same fight. We must connect the dots between climate change, water scarcity, energy shortages, global health, food security and women's empowerment. Solutions to one problem must be solutions for all."**

former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

**Naina Shah -APD Environmental Sustainability**

## Federation Programme Team



**Barbara Dixon**  
Programme Director



**Rita Beaumont**  
Food Security & Healthcare



**Margaret Clark**  
Advocacy



**Nisha Ghosh**  
Violence & Conflict Resolution



**Jan Hemlin**  
Education



**Rayner Rees**  
Economic Empowerment



**Naina Shah**  
Environmental Sustainability