

'Women, Water and Leadership'

the current Soroptimist International President's Appeal will support projects that educate, empower and enable women and girls to manage water resources and gain careers in water-related professions.

Safe, accessible water is crucial to preserving life. Water makes up 80% of our bodies, drives industry, generates energy and irrigates crops so is not surprising that several of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) relate to water.

The President's Appeal will give women the opportunity to be empowered to improve the food security of their families and their community, whilst contributing to achieving (SDGs) 1, 2, 4, 5, 6 and 7.

Currently, four billion people experience severe water scarcity with women and girls being disproportionately affected – instead of earning an income or attending school, they are the primary water carriers for their families.



It is accepted that women should play an important role in water management. Women are experts and agents of change, but of the millions of paid water-related jobs worldwide, currently less than 17% of positions are filled by women.

The President's Appeal seeks to raise £350,000 to support at least five projects which will empower at least 500 women to be self-supporting through implementing water projects.

For more information visit the members' section of the [SI website](#)

Barbara Dixon
Programme Director

Holocaust Memorial Day - 27 January



The entrance to Auschwitz Concentration Camp - with the infamous words: 'Work Sets You Free'

The theme for [Holocaust Memorial Day](#) 2018 is: **The Power of Words**

Anne Frank wrote in her diary 5 April 1944:

"I want to go on living even after death! And that's why I am so grateful to God for having given me this gift which I can use to develop myself and to express all that's in me. When I write I can shake off all my cares; my sorrow disappears; my spirits are revived."

Spoken and written words from individuals, corporations, community organisations or the State can have a huge impact good or bad.

Words during the Holocaust written by perpetrators were used to incite ordinary people by using negative stereotypes; words by people who challenged the perpetrators were brave and put themselves in danger; words by those who wrote to survive or record their experiences found solace in poems, letters and diaries. Some of the most powerful words written since the Holocaust are those that form the text to the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) developed in response to the Holocaust and the Second World War.

Today the words we hear and read have power and can shape our views. Social media enable words to travel faster and further than ever before and can unite to achieve positive goals, but also to whip up prejudice, to intimidate and harass people.

With free speech and censorship some institutions have initiated policies of 'no platform' to prevent extremist and offensive speakers from airing their views publicly. However this can be counter-productive in serving to draw attention to the proscribed speakers. Moreover, it can be used to render unheard a wide range of perspectives and can entrench views when those in power silence people with whom they disagree.

In the UK Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) is concerned with remembering the victims and those whose lives have been changed beyond recognition as a result of the Holocaust, Nazi persecution and subsequent genocides. The HMD Trust says *"HMD provides us with an opportunity to honour the survivors, but it's also a chance to look to our own lives and communities today."* In this way we are able to learn about the Holocaust and other genocides.

Remembering the Holocaust not only honours the martyrs who fell in the cause of the Jewish people, it also underscores the awareness that despite its ravages, we still flourish as a dynamic people which fortifies and strengthens us. Read the [HMD Statement of Commitment](#) here.

Memory is an integral aspect of being alive, the glue of one's self-identity. Memory is also an integral element in the life of a people, for a people that forgets its past has no future. Let us remember the Holocaust.

Margaret Clark - APD Advocacy

Christmas Around the World

While many of us are preparing to celebrate Christmas, or say goodbye to this year, many other cities or countries are also enjoying a festival or two. Some of them are Christmas themed while others are centred on spirits or evoking good fortune for the New Year.

In MALI, throughout December, they celebrate the Crossing of the Cattle at Diafarabé.

In JAPAN, on the 2nd and 3rd of December, they celebrate the Chichibu Night Festival . Teams of costumed men drag six massive, illuminated floats around the town's narrow streets, while children perform dances and drama on board, backed by drums, flutes, fireworks and fuelled by barrels of saké.

On the 10th – 17th December in TURKEY there is the Whirling Dervishes Festival, at the Museum of Mevlana, Konya to honour a Sufi saint, Mevlana.

In DUBAI the Al Dhafra Festival – held over three weeks in December into January, celebrates the Bedouin culture and shows off local crafts, cooking and other traditions.

Whilst on 26th December & 1st January in the BAHAMAS, there is the Junkanoo festival – an energetic nationwide celebration with music and a massive street parade full of colour, marking it's slave history.

There are also many UN days to be remembered in December with the most relevant to Soroptimists being:

- 1 December – World AIDS Day
- 2 December – International Day for the Abolition of Slavery
- 5 December – International Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development
- 10 December – Human Rights Day

Increasingly relevant to us all is 18th December – International Migrants Day. Millions of people find themselves displaced through war, climate change and persecution. Every country in our Federation, and beyond, has an increasing number of migrants and their needs are many and varied.

There are so many ways in which we can help; volunteering at local centres, donations of essentials, food, clothes, befriending and language skills. As an organisation we have women with many skills and from various backgrounds which will enable us to assist in this increasing issue.

Women and children always suffer more, they are vulnerable, abused and exploited as they have no homes to protect them.

We are in the middle of the 16 Days of Activism on violence against women contained within two UN days - 25th November, International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and 10th December – Human Rights Day.

So as many of us are preparing to celebrate the festivities let us give a thought to those who have nothing to celebrate and help them rebuild their lives.



Barbara Dixon- Programme Director

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