

February can be a dreary month with mornings still dark and short days, but it can be a busy time for Soroptimists as they prepare for changing club officers and reflecting on past achievements.



They may also be preparing to support [World Cancer Day](#) on 4 February, [International Day of Zero Tolerance to Female Genital Mutilation](#) on 6 February or [International Day of Women and Girls in Science](#) on 11 February and Fair Trade fortnight.

On another level preparations are being made for the [Commission on the Status of Women](#) (CSW) in New York in March with a lot of work going on in the background to influence governments on what they are doing to implement the [Sustainable Development Goals](#).

In the UK meetings are also being held to input to the Commonwealth Heads of Government (CHOGM) meeting in April and [The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women](#) (CEDAW).

In addition [the White Ribbon Campaign](#) Conference is being held on 2 February in Bradford.

Members of the Programme team are travelling around the country to ensure the Soroptimist voice is heard at as many meetings as possible.

We have to remember we are an International organisation and with this in mind we are changing PAM to reflect this, featuring work from outside the UK in each issue.

I hope you will read and enjoy the new format being introduced next month.

Barbara Dixon
Programme Director

Individuals make a difference

The United Nations adopted the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#). Now, we have an unprecedented opportunity to transform our world.

In many countries, women are responsible for finding and collecting water for their families; all the water they need for drinking, washing, cooking, cleaning. They walk miles, carry heavy burdens, wait for hours. Once they are old enough, girls join this effort. They spend countless hours trying to provide this basic life necessity.

Former UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, called empowerment of the world's women "a global imperative." To attain that goal, we must reduce the weight of water on women's shoulders.

Lost Hours - collecting water takes time. Simply to get water for drinking, bathing, cooking and other household needs, millions of women and girls spend hours every day travelling to water sources, waiting in line and carrying heavy loads – often several times a day.

Addressing Goal 6 of the SDG, with sustainable water management, water infrastructure and access to a safe, reliable and affordable supply of water and adequate sanitation services will improve living standards, expand local economies and lead to the creation of more decent jobs and greater social inclusion.

Matt Damon and Gary White, co-founders of [Water.org](#), brought in smart solutions to change more lives: [Water Credit](#) - a proven, powerful approach, brings small affordable, easily repayable loans to those who need access to affordable financing and expert resources to make household water and sanitation a reality. Water.org has been working in countries to provide communities in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean with access to safe water and sanitation.

Here's a story of Manjula from rural India. Without a home water tap, Manjula had no choice but to carry a 40-60 litres water container back and forth each day to a community water tank about a kilometre from her home. Water.org discovered that something keeping mums like Manjula from providing safe water for their families was a lack of access to the financing needed to construct a water tap. This insight led them to create Water Credit, enabling the world's poor with access to small, affordable loans. It's smart, simple and sustainable. More importantly, it helps the people they serve solve their immediate need, and continues to enrich their lives long after the original loan has been repaid. For Manjula, the loan allowed her to build a home water tap. Now the time she used to spend collecting water each day can be spent with her two boys. And with more time and energy to invest in caring for the 'Kakada' flowers she sells, Manjula can earn 2,000 Rupees a month – enough to repay her loan.



There is a Manjula in Africa, Asia or the Caribbean waiting to be empowered. Soroptimists can empower millions of women like Manjula to be part of their family's solution. SI President Mariet Verhoef-Cohen has chosen '[Women Water and Leadership](#)' as a theme for her tenure. At least five projects will be supported on five continents that educate, empower and enable women and girls to lead in water, and that embrace the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the targets set out in SDG 6: Water and sanitation, SDG 4: Education and SDG 5: Gender Equality. The aim is to raise a minimum of £350,000 over the two years. The projects will empower at least 500 women to be self-supporting through implementing water projects. Safe water and sanitation infrastructures will be maintained through vocational training and access to technology for women will be provided. Some 100 women will be enabled and educated to take leadership.

For more information about how you can support this vital work and how to donate please contact Chair of the SI President's Appeal Hafdis Karlsdottir: hafdis@in.is or SI Communications Manager Sarah Wilkin: sarah.wilkin@soroptimistinternational.org <https://sigbi.org/members/2017/international-presidents-appeal-day-10th/>

Naina Shah - APD Environmental Sustainability



CSW62 (2018) The sixty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women will take place at the United Nations Headquarters in New York from 12 to 23 March 2018. Representatives of Member States, UN entities, and ECOSOC-accredited non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from all regions of the world are welcome to attend the session.

- Priority Theme: Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls;
- Review Theme: Participation in and access of women to the media, and information and communications technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women (agreed conclusions of the forty-seventh session);

Why do we need this priority theme?

- 80% of the world's poor live in rural areas
- 43% on average of the agricultural labour force in developing countries are women
- Only 20% of land owners are women
- Property laws can discriminate against women inheriting family property
- Social norms often favour male relatives
- 40 billion hours a year on average are spent by women collecting water in sub-Saharan Africa.

These are just a few examples

What has happened to improve the situation since 2012 when at CSW56 the Commission failed to reach agreement? One might say, 'Not much!' Six years on and we are still trying to achieve the empowerment of rural women and their role in the eradication of poverty and hunger. Whether at home or in New York there is great determination to achieve an outcome this year. Every voice and every action counts as we gather momentum across the globe to succeed.

What can we do to help?

- Lobby your MP.
- CSW delegates can raise issues on thematic and political themes with country Missions and governments in Caucus groups. For those unfamiliar these are Regional groups consisting of Pacific, Africa, Arab States, Latin American and Caribbean and North America/Europe Regions.
- Listen to women and girls as equal partners.
- Work toward the 2030 agenda and 'Leave no one behind'.
- Urge governments, civil society, the private sector and other partners to support the recommendations contained in the Secretary General's report: *Improvement of the situation of women and girls in rural areas*.
- Soroptimist ASKS are listed on www.soroptimistinternational.org.

Soroptimist International believes that priority measures are needed for rural women to achieve gender equality and empowerment.

CSW On-line Training NGO CSW/NY has created an online orientation [video series](#) for those who are new to CSW but can be useful for others also. A new video covering different topics is released every week. These videos contain helpful information, advice, and instructions to prepare you for CSW62. See NGO CSW/NY YouTube channel. Follow NGO CSW/NY on Twitter at @NGO_CSW_NY and Facebook for updates. CSW62 delegates will be advised of dates and times of specific training and webinars.

For further information please check the [APD Advocacy website](#) and [CSW website](#)

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