

About our Best Practice Awards

Each year we showcase one project from each of our programme focus areas, currently:

- Advocacy;
- Economic Empowerment;
- Education;
- Environmental Sustainability;
- Food Security and Healthcare;
- Violence and Conflict Resolution.

Our federation database of reports is trawled in order to shortlist several projects in each category. There are criteria against which each is appraised:

- There are clear SMART objectives - specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time bound;
- The project has been researched and an action plan put in place - including reviewing and evaluation;
- The project responds to an identified need and focuses on women and girls;
- It involves club members and is inclusive of other clubs/friendship links/organisations where appropriate;
- Were the outcomes of benefit to the recipients;
- Have the outcomes promoted Soroptimist aims and objectives?

The Federation Programme Action Team discusses and agrees the final selection.

Each winner presented their project at conference, explaining:

- What they did;
- Why they did it;
- How they did it;
- Outcome;
- Lessons learned.

We trust that other clubs will be able to learn from and, perhaps, adopt information gleaned for their own projects.

BEST PRACTICE AWARDS 2019



**Women inspiring action,
transforming lives**



Advocacy Award Winner

SI Northern England - Domestic Violence Special Courts (SDVC)

Most victims in Domestic Violence Courts are women. Are they being treated fairly? These courts should understand victims' vulnerability and how perpetrators can coercively control them, making these cases different from ordinary cases. We asked: 'Special Domestic Violence Courts? How special are they?'

Northern England Soroptimists addressed this by observing local SDVCs at work in 223 cases over a 3 month period, filling in a questionnaire, drafted by local CPS and analysed by the PCC's office, producing valuable information.

In 12 of 21 not guilty pleas, defendants changed to guilty on the trial date, as soon as the victim entered the court building, which one judge called 'gaming the system.'

Independent Domestic Violence Advisers (IDVAs) represent victims on important issues like bail conditions but funding cuts and court closures meant that few IDVAs are available. When the complainant didn't attend, cases were dismissed, though a brief police inquiry could have checked her safety and ensured her absence was voluntary.

The 15 recommendations made by the final report are bringing change through a 'task and finish group' led by local victims services.

The full report is at www.sigbi.org/northern-england/category/club-news/.



Economic Empowerment Award Winner

SI Chennai - Vocational Training Centre for Women

SI Chennai has been working in an impoverished locality where a lack of education and job skills leads to unemployment and dependence on others, resulting in loss of self-esteem and abuse.

The club set up an after-school club and sponsorship programme for children. As a result of this, the women of the area approached the club and appealed to them to help develop an income generation scheme. After discussion with the women, Club members thought that starting a vocational training program would be a good way of helping them become economically independent. The club sought the help of an NGO, Shine Trust who was operating in the area.

The project was launched on International Women's Day 2018. Shine Trust provided accommodation for the training unit and oversight for running the unit. SI Chennai purchased five sewing machines and funded the employment of a sewing teacher. The course is for one year, during which time the women are taught hemming and paper cutting, sewing skirts, petticoats, simple frocks for little girls and embroidery.

The club then approached wholesalers who agreed to source out some of their basic stitching jobs to the women. The club bought heavy duty, industrial sewing machines to assist with this. This project has gone a long way in helping the women stand on their own feet and hold their heads up with pride.



Education Award Winner

SI Pune Metro East - Girls Moving Forward 2010-2019

The aim of this project was to improve the lives of young girls from marginalised sections of society. Although the girls attended school, a huge gap existed between formal education and necessary life skills required to lead a productive life. The 'Girls Moving Forward' modules were designed to bridge this gap.

The first modules were basic modules like Personal Grooming, First Aid, Nutrition, Home Budgeting etc.

In 2014 a year-long "Train the trainer" programme was introduced to encourage members to get involved by passing on their own expertise to the girls.

Since 2014 the programme has been conducted in partnership with Deepgriha, an NGO that works with marginalised communities and in 2016 the modules were linked to the SDGs for greater impact.

Some of the modules included: self-awareness, personal grooming and etiquette, Menstrual hygiene, nutrition, financial literacy and many more.

The impact on the girls has been tremendous. Coming from backgrounds where discrimination, indifference and violence are common place, meeting women who treated them with respect and as equals made a huge difference to the girls' self-esteem. They learned to handle situations of violence and abuse and greater confidence and better communication was evident after the life skill modules.



Environmental Sustainability Award Winner

SI Madurai - Go Green Exhibition

SI Madurai joined hands with the Corporation of Madurai and a group of Mahatma Schools to promote the ideals of an eco-friendly world by hosting a 3 day "Go Green Exhibition" in 2019.

There were 125 stands which were free of charge to the exhibitors. The innovative ideas of woman entrepreneurs, local farmers and artisans engaged in eco-friendly, organic and natural products were showcased. The importance of rainwater harvesting and water conservation, sustainable waste water treatment systems and solid waste management using composting techniques, as well as the concept of roof/kitchen gardens were showcased. The public were made aware of alternative solutions to single-use plastic.

This exhibition received an overwhelming response with 6000 people visiting each day. It raised the profile of SI with an extensive coverage by the electronic and print media and the radio.

A woman selling cutlery, plates and bags made of various leaves said "many were happy to see that so much was available as alternatives"

This initiative provided an excellent platform for business opportunities for many women-entrepreneurs, and the government has expressed its interest in conducting similar exhibitions in future with SI Madurai.



Food Security/Healthcare Award Winner

SI Grange over Sands - Singing for Memory

There are over 850,000 cases of dementia in the UK; two thirds of sufferers live in their own home and often lack social interaction. Singing can reawaken memories and for a short time restore a sense of identity.

SI Grange over Sands started their "Singing for Memory" sessions five years ago. They are now a firmly established, well loved and respected service in the local community, with 98% of the attendees being women.

During 2018, 874.5 hours of volunteer work were needed to provide the 37 sessions. Each session involves 3 hours of work and the Club manages the whole process with the vast majority of the volunteers being Club members. Each session is a carefully structured programme using music therapy techniques. The format is the same each week so that there is a recognisable framework.

A new introduction during the past year has been the provision of a CD of 17 favourite songs and 43 page digital photo album for every attendee to enable them to relive happy memories in their own homes between sessions. The feedback has been very positive including a detailed thankyou letter naming "The Soroptimists" being published in the local paper

This project is targeted and demonstrates very positive outcomes for clients and their carers.



Violence/Conflict Resolution Award Winner

SI Republic of Ireland - Safe Home: Safe Community

The Republic of Ireland has an austere attitude towards domestic violence and deep stigma and secrecy surrounds the subject. "Safe Home: Safe Community" aims to remove stigma, promote acceptance and support victims of violence in the home through education and advocacy. All Clubs in the Republic of Ireland have been involved in this for the past two years.

The Clubs' involvement came in many diverse ways, from holding public speaking competitions with domestic violence as a topic, to distributing over 30,000 bookmarks containing strong messages on healthy relationships which found favour with students and the younger generation.

Soroptimists were connected to domestic violence and refuge services, and trained to speak to the community in a structured way. Acceptance & discussion of violence was promoted in the home and public meetings, thus starting a conversation on a stigmatized problem.

Each club sponsored at least 2 people to attend the World Summit in Oct 2018, to bring back information to the community. On return they made powerful presentations to the sponsoring Club.

The work of Soroptimists in Ireland has been appreciated and acknowledged by government agencies.