



Best practice Awards Economic Empowerment

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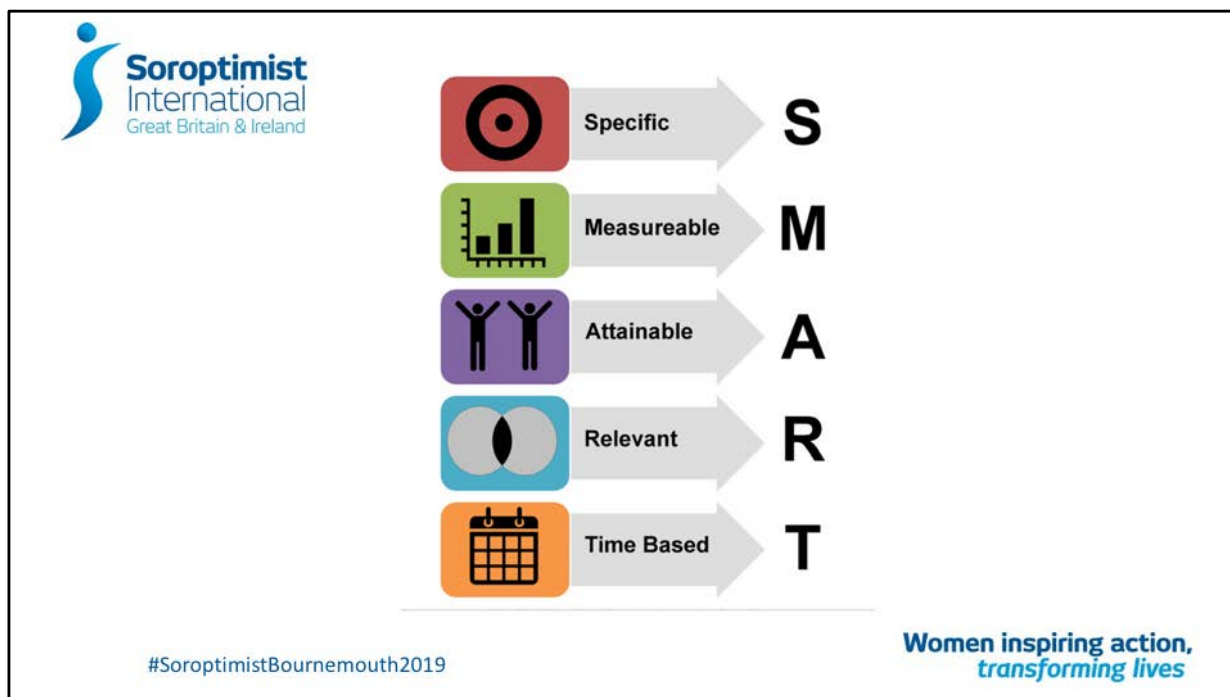
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**Women inspiring action,
transforming lives**

Good morning

It has been a pleasure and I must say, an enormous challenge to select just one project that should be presented to you at conference. I had over 300 projects to read, which were filed on the database, as projects which aimed to support the Economic Empowerment of women and girls.

I would like to thank you all, those here today and your club members who were not able to join us at Bournemouth, for the excellent and inspiring work that you are doing to make a real difference in the area of Economic Empowerment. One of the key things for me is not just the project itself, but that it continues giving, that it will help more women in the future



It is important that the projects which we do are SMART. Those of you who have had experience working in project management will recognise this.

Specific – a project needs to be focussed

Measurable – you know what your baseline is at the start and you can measure the outcome or change that you have made

Achievable – That’s obvious – you can do it!

Relevant - to the goals and vision of Soroptimist, and

Time-bound – you need to be clear when it is completed so that it doesn’t drift.

Projects that are SMART are more likely to be effective and achieve their desired results.

One project that I think worked in this way was the project undertaken by SI Chennai.

I am really sorry that they were not able to be here today to tell you about it themselves, so I am speaking about it on their behalf. They have prepared the slides; I hope I do justice their hard work.

First, I would like to tell you a little bit about the club.



SI Chennai in Vyasarpadi

- Providing teachers for afterschool tuition programme
- Medical camps
- Finding sponsors to support bright students in '1 Child 1 Sponsor' programme

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Some of the other work that they have been doing.

SI Chennai has, for some years, been working in this impoverished and squalid locality. They have been working with children in an after school program which helps the children use their leisure hours fruitfully and keeps them off the street; they have started the "One Child One Sponsor" programme which identifies bright children and finds sponsors to sponsor their education through school and college/vocational training.

They also have had regular health camps every year.



Vocational Training Centre for Women

Project of SI Chennai at Vyasarpadi

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This is the project that I want to tell you about today.



About Vyasarpadi

- A squalid, urban, over-crowded area with very poor inhabitants and poor infrastructure
- Collaboration with Shine Trust, working for the welfare of children and women

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The club has been working in a very poor district of Chennai, South India. For this project they have collaborated with the NGO Shine Trust. The Trust was set up by a woman who was a child labourer herself. SI Chennai have been working with the Trust for 8 years.

They had to be very careful that what they did in the slums was done properly. The sheer volume of people in the slums, the slum mafia and to ensure that they are not taken for a ride, were challenges and is where Shine Trust helped them.



A request from the women

- No access to good quality education, or are not able to finish their studies due to circumstances at home
- Lack of job skills= unemployment, dependence on others, loss of self-esteem and abuse from their husbands



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This is really important, a request from the women - as it was something that they needed they were already on board which means that the project is more likely to be a success.

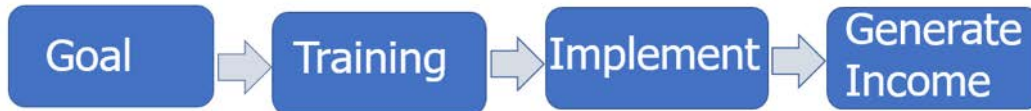
Women and girls from the economically weaker sections of society have no access to good quality education or are not able to finish their studies due to circumstances at home.

Lack of job skills leads to unemployment and dependence on others for their existence, resulting in loss of self-esteem and abuse from their husbands.

Soroptimist Chennai has long been thinking of addressing this issue, they wanted help women and girls earn a living. It was very fortuitous when a group of women approached the club, requesting help to start an income generation programme the club were quick to agree.



Inauguration of the Project



Discussion with women



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8th March 2018

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You can see how they went about the project. Every step of the way they involved the women.

It took a year from when the women first approached the club to opening the centre. What an auspicious day to launch on International Women's Day 2018.



Project Modalities

- 5 basic sewing machines
- Lady teacher
- 1-year course for 30 women
- 1st group completed
- The students learn pattern making, cutting, sewing and designing



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The key elements of the project – the club purchased 5 sewing machines and the club pays the salary of the sewing teacher.

The course is for 30 students and is one year long. The first cohort has completed their training and the second group is currently going through.

The students learn a range of skills as you can see.

Income generation

- July 2019 two industrial sewing machines purchased & the women were trained to use them
- The women have begun to receive orders for nightgowns and gift bags



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SI Chennai realized that just giving women the training would be futile without some income generation plan.

Club members approached wholesalers who agreed to send some of their basic stitching jobs to the women at the training centre. This has gone a long way in helping the women stand on their own feet and hold their heads up with pride. To enable the women to accept orders from shops, in 2019 the club purchased two heavy duty, industrial sewing machines. This has assisted the women in expanding their source of income generation. At present, they are augmenting their income by stitching night gowns and gift bags.

We wanted an end to end project. So we trained them in tailoring and connected them to the market.



Trainees speak...

Surya: I am a student of the 1-year course. I was taught to make blouses, nighties, frocks and churidars. I can make my own clothes and also clothes for my children. We also undertake tailoring on orders.

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Trainees speak...

Maheshwari: didn't know anything about tailoring when I joined. I have learnt to stitch blouses, frocks, churidars and nighties. We are able to undertake orders from outside which brings us income. We are able to stand on our own feet!

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One of the club members said “The joy on the faces of the women as they sat for the first time in front of the machines was what we were looking for when we started the course”.

Future Plans

- Eco-friendly Sanitary Napkins
- Basic computer skills
- Communication and leadership training



SI Chennai would like to create more income generation programmes

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SI Chennai said “We are enthused by the success of our tailoring unit and would like to implement more economic empowerment programs for the women and girls. Our plans for the future include Eco-friendly sanitary napkins, computer training and communication and leadership skills.

If the orders keep coming in the club plan to purchase 2 more industrial machines this year.

Their biggest project was the one we had after the Chennai floods. S I Durban sent us a container of clothes by ship. Thousands of families in the slums benefited.

A Glimpse of the Transformation

Distribution of
certificates to the
successful candidates



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I asked the club what were some of the challenges that they faced. Finance, but they were fortunate to have donations from various organisations. Space was the main problem. The women were working out of a makeshift shed. Shine Trust provided a hall for the training unit at no charge and for an indefinite period. If we could do it again, and if we had the funds, which we unfortunately don't, we would have put up our own unit and not depended on another NGO for support.



Thank you

“There is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women.”

Kofi Annan

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SI Chennai meetings in progress

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SI Chennai said ... It has been a delight for us to watch the women march ahead with entrepreneurial zeal using this initiative as a springboard to economic independence and fulfilment.

When opportunity meets a spirit of free enterprise, the horizons for a better tomorrow do not seem very distant.