

Thank you fellow Soroptimists for the honour bestowed on me tonight by installing me as your Federation President for 2017-18. Before I set out my vision I should like to pay tribute to the hard work and commitment that has been shown by the IPP Ann Hodgson. Ann has, this past year, steered the good ship SIGBI and all who sail in her in an exemplary way. Congratulations on a job well done. I should also like to take the opportunity of thanking those members, the Club, Region, National Association, Network and Federation officers who have worked hard for the organisation over the last 12 months. Your dedication has been first class and I thank you all.

The theme for the year of the Federation Presidency which will culminate in Liverpool in October 2018 is “Empower today, Enable tomorrow”.

As good Soroptimists we instantly recognise the dynamic verbs of empower and enable; two of the key words for Programme Action, the life blood of our organisation. We educate, empower and enable women and girls to reach their potential. We have been doing so as a

Federation since 1932 and we intend to be doing so for many more years to come.

Soroptimist International of Great Britain and Ireland is at an interesting time in its development as a leading women's service organisation. We are in the process of becoming a charity which will aid our project work and thereby empower and enable yet more women and girls to achieve their potential.

Charitable status will allow us to apply for grants to carry out our work locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. All members know that our membership fee is not the end of the monies which we fork out on an annual basis. Every penny we use on project work at the moment comes from the members, their friends and families and the general public. What a difference there might be if members could concentrate less on fund raising and more on the service element and the project work for which we are known.

Our Club projects empower and enable many women and girls to fulfil their promise of contributing to their societies.

We partner with charities and voluntary organisations such as Wateraid, Plan International and Toilet twinning to deliver projects in many of our countries outside the UK.

Across the Federation we come together to support projects which aid women and girls' empowerment. In the Gambia our Big Project made it possible for two hospitals to reduce infant mortality significantly. We built a 10 bedded labour ward extension, installed an ultrasound scanner, supplied emergency drugs and provided 800 copies of the text book required by maternity nurses in the Gambia.

In rural Kenya we are supporting Meru Women's Garden Project which is focussed on providing economic empowerment opportunities to women and girls. Improved food production and education will support them to transform their lives and those of others thereby reducing poverty, improving health and increasing employment.

Our special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council allows us to contribute orally at a high level to change the lives of the most disadvantaged in our society.

Our Diamond Education grants help women and girls to update their skills, empowering and enabling them to move on with their lives.

We also respond to help those in need after disasters. Donations from the Emergency Relief Fund have been made to our partners Save the Children, Oxfam and Plan International. We all have to agree that we do make a difference to the lives of women and girls in the world today.

But what about the difference to our own lives as Soroptimists? Too often we are so tied up in empowering and enabling women and girls that we often forget the need to look after ourselves as well. There is an enjoyment in being a Soroptimist.

So this is where the second part of the theme kicks in. We must learn to empower and enable ourselves to thrive. We have to empower and allow ourselves to think differently about how we operate. We have

to enable ourselves to pass the enjoyment onto others. We need to remember why we first became a Soroptimist, what made us decide that this was the organisation for us, what keeps us attending meetings month after month? We should review and reflect because this organisation is too important to sink into the mire of mediocrity.

At the heart of this desire are the club and the membership. We must empower and enable ourselves to develop our clubs, our membership offers and our meetings. Our Growing our Brand workshops are doing just that. The resurgence is starting, long may it continue.

We need to enable ourselves to be kind to each other. It is never going to be possible for us all to like or get on with absolutely everyone else.

We are all different but we must remember that we are proud of our high ethical standards. We need to enable ourselves to be tolerant of each other's differences. We can all learn from each other. We are never too old or too stuck in our ways to learn something new. Too often members leave our organisation not because they cease to believe in what we do, but because of the attitude of some members

in the clubs they join. This kind of behaviour does not empower nor does it enable us to carry out the project work so necessary in society today. We all have something to offer however large or small. We must remember that. We need to focus on new and different ways of carrying out what we do as well as still using the tried and tested methods. We are all able to learn from one another.

There is a really inspirational song from 2000 the lyrics by Heather Small of M People who asks what have you done today to make you feel proud? To me that is such an easy question to answer: I became a Soroptimist in 2000. It has changed my way of thinking, and for the next year my whole life will be changed. I am so grateful to the people who asked me to join.

We have to seek out that pride in ourselves and empower today, enable tomorrow. And then when we have re-energised ourselves and our Clubs we will need to go somewhere to celebrate all that energy. That place will be the Arena and Convention Centre, King's Dock Liverpool from 25 to 27 October 2018. So get yourself "A Ticket to

Ride”, “Act Naturally” on the way there. You could even be “A Day Tripper”. I could go on but you get the drift.

We will be women inspiring action, transforming lives whilst empowering today, enabling tomorrow and what is more important than anything else, we will do it together.

Thank you.