

**Soroptimist  
International  
Edinburgh  
news  
notes  
anecdotes**

Issue 187

March 2020

**Kirsty received support from the 3S Fund and reported to club members  
on her time in Guyana**

**Kirsty - Volunteer Teaching in Guyana with  
Project Trust**

After leaving school in 2018, I embarked upon a year with Project Trust in Guyana. I spent 8 months fundraising through busking, hosting fundraising events and contacting charitable trusts, such as Soroptimist International, who were able to generously support me in this project.



Based in the small Amerindian community of Chenapou Village, I taught Maths, English, Social Studies and Science to Grade 3, a group of 11 students aged 7-8 years old. In total, the school had 142 students and only 6 teachers who taught within one large room separated by chalk boards. As the village is so remote and the education standard is so poor, only one of these teachers was properly qualified. She acted



as the headmistress so often found herself too busy to manage her Grade 4 class who were soon sitting exams to determine their entrance into secondary school. Teachers being unable to teach their classes was a common occurrence and almost every day I found myself working with up to 5 classes at once.

The only way in or out of the village is by foot, boat, or small plane which brings weekly provisions from Georgetown, the capital city, where 90% of the country's population reside. The population of Chenapou is about 400 which varies a lot throughout the year as secondary school students board elsewhere and men often spend months on end away from the village working in gold mines. For most men in the village, this becomes their occupation with very few being able to pursue careers in engineering or similar fields. Almost all the women are relied upon from a very young age to bring up and provide for their families, so rarely get the opportunity to pursue any occupation in their lifetime. Efforts are being made to encourage young people into new pathways such as nursing, midwifery, teaching and computing however with a lack of school grades in Chenapou, it is difficult for the students to get accepted onto these schemes.

Education is very important in Guyana, determining their future, and entry to secondary school is dependent on primary school exam results. Those who don't make it have a difficult life ahead, working in mines and subsistence farming. Students want to learn and achieve good grades at school but a lack of support, both in school and at home, often makes this difficult as many of the parents cannot read and struggle with basic maths. Project Trust teachers have become a vital part of this community, providing support in improving the education within Chenapou Village. The students find interest in our ways of teaching, through education-based activities, songs, and games, rather than the typical method of copying notes from the chalk board. Working as a teacher in the community was not just my day job, but at all hours of the day I found myself giving extra lessons to students, helping adults and parents with their learning, and reading with people in the village.

The Guyanese Ministry of Education invest a lot of money in providing textbooks however most often these are outdated or prove contradictory to the curriculum. They fail to engage the children with very few pictures and long lines of maths problems or passages of text instead. In January 2019, I received a fantastic donation of children's books for the village and they came to be adored by all of the children and parents. It





**SISSR Meeting 7<sup>th</sup> March 2020**

The meeting took place at Hillhead Community Centre, Kirkintilloch.

Region Fees 2020/2021:

These will continue to be £17.50 per member and £8.00 for the under 25-year olds. Myint Su will receive confirmation of this.

Region Vacancies:

President Elect and Vice President: both VACANT.

Safeguarding Officer: Marianne, SI Falkirk

SIGBI Project Ambassador: possible job share

Federation Council Report: The council is concerned about membership as, although during last year there were 600 new members 700 left. Also, council is worried about closure of clubs. In Scotland South two clubs have closed in the last five years (Stirling and Greenock).

Benevolent Fund: The new secretary is from Scotland South. She urged us, if we had any surplus funds to disperse, to remember this fund. She felt that due to the flood damage we may receive extra applications for assistance. Any Scottish enquiries should be made to Kay, a trustee.

Centenary: Plant a tree. Plaques and certificates will be available from April.

100 for 100 – who is she?: 100 photographs of noteworthy Soroptimists to be collected – further information to follow.

Dates for Your Diary:

22<sup>nd</sup> April 2020: CSW64 was meant to be a post-UN meeting in Beijing+25, but as the CSW64 had been cancelled, there will only be information from the other participants.

11<sup>th</sup> May 2020: Human Trafficking – at the Scottish Parliament. An all-day conference to hear Government strategy, police experience and comments from people who have been trafficked.

12<sup>th</sup> June 2020: A celebration of UN at 75. The subject is Climate Change organised by St Andrews UNA at the V & A, Dundee. Cost £50.

20<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2020: Exhibition in the Scottish Parliament. Volunteers are required to ‘man’ the stall.

18<sup>th</sup> July 2020: SIGBI Day of Action on Climate Change.

13<sup>th</sup> September 2020: The Kilt Walk in Edinburgh. Other dates in other cities in Scotland – see SIEnna 186, page 3.

Old mobile phones and laptops: The previous collector no longer collects these. Does anyone know who may do so?

Answers to Region Secretary

3S Fund: The raffle and stall raised approx. £250.

**Speaker: Gari.**

Gari told us of her journey through UNA and the establishment of UH House, the projects and seminars they had organised and the role in education using interns for the benefit of UN and their own CVs.

Margaret then told us of the co-operation between SISSR and UN House resulting in the seminar in Glasgow on Mental Health in October 2019. SI is planning a further seminar this year on dementia and is about to sign a partnership agreement with UN House for a further year.

*Isabel*

- \* - \* - \* - \* - \* - \* - \* - \* - \* - \* - \* - \* - \*

## Membership Report from SISSR meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> March 2020

Club numbers currently range between 20 and 50. Recruitment of new members via Facebook, although it elicits some responses, the enquirers rarely respond to an invitation to take it forward. Personal contact seems the best system still.

Good news – The Dumfries group has had two successful meetings on Saturday mornings at a garden centre, with no overheads! They make full use of the local publications and have had success in having the press photographer come along to activities such as the backpacks for the needy children in the area. In addition, there was a display of newspaper cuttings.

Club Health Check: Anna is working on ours, but there were quite a few comments on the ambiguity of some of the questions in the survey.

Centenary: The suggestion was made that Scotland South, and possibly Scotland North, could supply photographs and a potted biography of noted Soroptimists to feature on playing cards. Card players have vetoed putting them on the back of the cards and the suggestion is that the Soroptimist tartan would be suitable. The possible design, incorporating a photograph, for the face of the card was discussed. Melanie has taken note of this and also is exploring the cost. Isabel proposed four of our club members:

Ethel de la Cour – the first President of SI Edinburgh, Helen M Somerville, Priscilla E. Turnbull and Pat M Black.

Banners: Liz, Glasgow City, reported that her club had purchased two banners at a total cost of £104. Clubs could purchase table-top banners for £25 +VAT. These are made to the club's design. Liz will email details and comments on the finished article.

*Isabel*

\_ \* \_ \* \_ \* \_ \* \_ \* \_ \* \_ \* \_ \* \_ \* \_ \* \_ \* \_ \* \_ \* \_ \* \_ \* \_ \* \_ \* \_ \* \_

## Programme Action Report from SISS Region Meeting Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> March 2020

The afternoon meeting was chaired by Brenda and part of our discussion was around the 16 Days of Activism held last November into December. The final results are still being assessed but it was difficult to know the amount of public interest that came from Oranging the World. Most of the clubs in the Region did manage to obtain some press publicity with lighting up in orange or purple, the Heavy Horse on the M9, the Kelpies and other public buildings.

The 16 Days of Activism (25<sup>th</sup> November to 10<sup>th</sup> December) will be repeated again next autumn as one of our SIGBI special days but we will also have COP 26 (Conference of the Parties) – the UN Climate Conference being held in Glasgow, 9<sup>th</sup> November through to the 20<sup>th</sup> of November. We hope to be able to do something on social media to publicise our concern for the climate. SIGBI Day of Action 2020 - will be on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> July - our national association has made climate change the priority for Soroptimists and it is hoped we will work on it throughout the year.

The SIGBI flyer for IWD 8<sup>th</sup> March has been well used on Facebook (that's the only social media I can see) and our web mistress has had several postings during last week. Some clubs had lunches, handed out flowers in their town centres or generally raised awareness for International Women's Day in different ways. *Cont. over/*

We were given an update on the KILT Walk – information has already been circulated – which members can do in Edinburgh in September and monies from your sponsors will go to our SIGBI project 'Empowering Girls in Nepal'.

Do we have anyone in the club who goes to **Cross Party Groups** in Holyrood? Brenda would like to know.

A good point was raised – Region could have a calendar of PA activities – we could then work with other clubs on projects (might interest Edinburgh as we are now quite a small club)

Brenda attended the joint executive meeting Scotland North/Scotland South last month – some concerns included the potential of there being too many campaigns in the year ahead and the lack of direction from SIGBI and as well as SIGBI adding in new topics without discussion.

**Lindsey**

\_ \* \_ \* \_ \* \_ \* \_ \* \_ \* \_ \* \_ \* \_ \* \_ \* \_ \* \_ \* \_ \* \_ \* \_ \* \_ \* \_

**SIE Business Meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2020 at Edinburgh Central Youth Hostel.**

**Present:** Gari (in the Chair) + 11 members, a 3S returnee, a 3S applicant and a visiting Soroptimist.

**Apologies for absence:** were received from 7 members: Patricia, Trish, Morag, Irene, Anna, Nikki and Pat.

**SI Vision and Mission statement:** was read by Clephane.

**Pres. Gari** welcomed everyone to the meeting. Clephane introduced Nassim, a Soroptimist from Graz, Austria. She is currently on a research grant to study at the University of Edinburgh.

**3S Fund:** Gari introduced Kirsty who had returned from Guyana having taught 11 children in stage 3. Her first project was successful in that she enabled an illiterate eight-year old to read. A gift of books from this country was pivotal to this success. Now she is home, Kirsty's project is to collect books and to return to the village to set up a library. *See page 1.*

Next, Gari introduced Robin from Broughton High School. She is going to Cambodia to teach English. She hopes to use her musical and sporting expertise in after-school activities. Robin is currently learning the local language to enable her to connect with the local people immediately.

Later in the meeting the club decided to support Robin's application.

**Minutes of the meeting of 12<sup>th</sup> February 2020:** these were approved.

**Matters Arising:** there were no matters arising.

*Cont. over/*



**Dates for Your Diary:** this will be left until it is possible to plan ahead. There will be no SI Edinburgh club meetings in April, May and June. It is hoped to be able to meet again in September – but this cannot be confirmed at this time.

*Ed.*

**Last month's question –**

**What does S O C O stand for?**

**Answer: SOKO is a small Scottish registered education charity devoted exclusively to securing university education for women in Malawi – one of the poorest countries in the world.**

See [www.thesokofund.org](http://www.thesokofund.org)

Morag will be happy to give you more information.

### Contents

Volunteering in Guyana	page 1,2 3
Region meeting report	4
Region Membership report	5
Region PA report	5, 6
Business Meeting minutes	6, 7

**Items for SIEnna 188** should be sent to the editor by Friday 24<sup>th</sup> April 2020

SI Edinburgh web address:  
[www.sigbi.org/edinburgh](http://www.sigbi.org/edinburgh)

