**Environmental Sustainability**

For the year up to end of August 2013, 67 reports have been entered onto the SI database for the objective of ‘Addressing the specific needs of women and girls by improving environmental sustainability and mitigating effects of climate change and disasters’; these reports only covered three of the 29 countries in our Federation – India, Nigeria and the United Kingdom.

The work submitted on the database has been varied, including raising over $1,100 for WaterAid to provide access to cleaner water and better sanitation in developing countries, buying rice for families to grow in Sierra Leone and conducting litter picks and conducting litter picks and beach cleans in various locations throughout the UK.

Following our international theme of ‘Educate to Lead’ it has been positive to see clubs in the UK and India undertaking projects focussed on educating women and girls about the environment and is future sustainability. Topics covered in these projects have included global warming, climate change, the decline of the honey bee, sustainable development, organic farming, local food production, provision of clean water and sanitation.

When I read through your wonderful reports on the work being done in your country or national association I was gladdened to see that there is actually even more work going on under this objective than is repo9rted on the database. Although I would like to see these projects included in reports son the database, so that we can share the ideas with other clubs.

All except five reports submitted for this meeting had at least one project that covered environmental sustainability or climate change. Sometimes they were written under another objective, however, some of these projects have multiple aspect and could be reported on under both objectives rather than one. There are also instances where the project has just not been reported on. So I would like to strongly urge officers to go back and encourage clubs to think further about the work they are already doing and whether it meets this objective in any way.

Some of the excellent projects that had been included in these reports are:

* Clubs in Bangladesh, Sierre Leone, Mauritius, Nigeria, St Vincent and the Grenadines and South Africa have been planting trees to reduce the effects of deforestation and flooding
* Projects involving the growing of food crops with schools is becoming more popular with clubs as it enables them to educate the children on methods to help the environment and their future.
* Club in South Africa, Barbados and Jamaica have been helping families install piped water and storage tanks into needy homes reducing the need for the women in the family to walk miles for water endangering their health and their safety
* SI Banjul (Gambia), SI Mafeking (South Africa) and SI Port Louis (Mauritius) have been enabling women to establish vegetable gardens and have provided them with training on how to grow food for their families. SI Northern Jamaica have gone one step further and organised a farmers’ market for female farmers to sell their produce.
* Clubs in Wales, South Africa and Northern Ireland have been educating the public with leaflets about their carbon footprint, climate change, saving water and buying locally. SI Fishguard have been gone as far as producing a recipe book which details meals that can be produced using local products.
* Clubs in England have been enabling the provision of clean water wells and wind-up lamps which allow girls to continue their education whilst improving the environment and children’s health.
* Clubs have also found time to help communities after natural disaster in Bangladesh and Trinidad & Tobago with the provision of skills, knowledge and materials as they rebuild their lives. This is in addition to the five clubs in the UK who have provided aqua boxes and shelter boxes according to the database, these boxes, these boxes provide accommodation and basic tools to enable families to recover from disasters and enable girls to return to school. Projects have also been undertaken to support victims of the floods in Pakistan and the UK, the 2011 Tsunami in Japan and the Chernobyl disaster as well as providing much needed winter clothing for babies overseas.

I truly believe in the excellent project work being done by clubs and I know that there is even more work being done that is not being reported to help us further achieve this objective.

I’ll finish with this quote by Joseph Campbell…’A hero is someone who has given his or her life to something bigger than oneself’. That is Soroptimism – we’re all heros!