**Friendship Link Co-ordinator – Nisha Ghosh**

Programme Director Sue Biggs, Federation team and delegates to this meeting - good morning to you .

I began my tenure in Oct 2013 as Friendship Link Coordinator with a vision - a vision for action. An action for change. A change for better and stronger links with meaningful and purposeful friendship.

First let me share with you some figures.

* Since Oct 2012 to this October 2013 Clubs in SIGBI have been able to forge links, and I have sent out 36 Friendship link certificates - which according to me is a pretty healthy number. New Clubs like SI Kathmandu - who have taken on 9 links- are a little overwhelmed with how to manage, but I’m sure all will fall in place with a little hand-holding.
* Three Friendship Link newsletters have been uploaded showcasing the wonderful results of Friendship Links between Clubs. I’m particularly satisfied with the wonderful feedback, for the changes implemented. Thank you for your appreciation.
* Some more figures – this time regarding the Register Forms – I received only 156 forms from the 356 odd Clubs in SIGBI. It’s important we have these forms as an annual exercise and yes, one can send them in by snail mail if the computer is the frightening monster for you. But please do send in the forms.
* I have put together a one-page guide line on A good Friendship Link Correspondent. I request clubs to grab a copy from the Friendship Link Stand.
* Sometimes the links with Clubs fall by the wayside, and a de-link follows. Clubs have often asked for current contacts of their links in other Federations and I’m glad to report a sizeable number have been revived.
* Now for Programme Action and Friendship Links. The two can be beautifully interlinked to convey the international vision of Educate to Lead. If we are all working towards one goal, joining hands to educate, empower and enable women and girls – this isn’t a tall order. It is a question of finding common ground with your link Clubs and delivering to suit the local needs.
* Many Clubs have had successful collaboration on projects that covered all the programme focus areas.
1. **LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES**

There have been a variety of activities and joint projects ranging from supporting a teacher’s salary, to even publishing a book with the joint effort of three link clubs.

SI CANTERBURY- supports literacy in a poor district jointly with SI CAPE OF GOOD HOPE and they also have brought out the volume *Teller of Tales*, a joint effort that will be available at this Conference.

SI CAPE OF GOOD HOPE - Five members contribute to pay the salary of a teacher at a school established by SI KARACHI.

SI COLOMBO, supported by SI ANGUILLA for the building of a Pre School in Panadura.

SI CROSBY gives financial support for a women’s adult literacy project at SI BONABERI DOUALA

SI PENRITH & DISTRICT support annually for Literacy Centre run by members of of SI DHAKA

SI THAMES VALLEY providing text books to SIERRA LEONE under the Skirting Science project along with SI WESTON SUPER MARE.

1. **FOOD SECURITY AND HEALTH**

Strong support for health projects of links in developing countries has gone a long way**.**

SI GRAVESEND & DISTRICT raise funds for a girls’ school toilet block project of SI FREETOWN

SI CHENNAI DOWNTOWN is jointly working on the Sanitary Napkin Advocacy Programme with help from SI RUNCORN FRODSHAM & DISTRICT

SI DURBAN is supported for the Embo Valley Aids Orphanage by SI KYOTO AOI

SI SWINDON & DISTRICT send hearing aids to deaf children after SI SURULERE conducts the hearing tests.

SI ST AUSTELL & DISTRICT sew cushions for cardiac child patients in hospitals of SI NORTH CANTERBURY NZ

1. **VIOLENCE AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

A major attention this year was the issue of violence against women- Clubs across the Federation have joined hands to directly or indirectly work for victims of violence and to promote gender equality and equity.

SI BIRKENHEAD supports Women’s Refuge Centre of SI PORT ELIZABETH

SI BOLTON supports SI KISUMU Kenya for women prisoners.

SI WIDNES support a Children’s Home project of SI BOURGAS

SI CHENNAI DOWNTOWN is supported by SI DAVIS for the salary of the Counsellor at the Aashraya Refuge Centre

1. **ENVIRONMENT SUSTAINABILITY**

Soroptimists through their friendship links have explored several ways to be part of the global effort to adapt to climatic change while mitigating the environmental degradation. These small efforts have often been in term of raising awareness or advocating better usage of natural resources.

SI CANTERBURY- support the Joint water Wheel project with SI BULAWAYO

SI CHENNAI DOWNTOWN- is supported by SI BARRY & DISTRICT in the project Say No to Plastic

1. **ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT**

Many Clubs have written to me asking for suggestions for joint projects. While some ideas may be to support with money or material, I am strong votary for getting local hand work, crafts and other things made by women as a means for economic empowerment. This way the women in rural communities work in the environment with materials they are used to, at a product they are good at, and with a little help from Soroptimists their products can find bigger markets and exposure. The consequential benefit is that a craft is kept alive, a culture is preserved, promoted all through the efforts of women.

SI KETTERING & DISTRICT support SI SOUTH KOLKATTA by selling the handicraft products.

SI DUBLIN sent financial help to SI KANDY for their project to help women start small scale businesses.

SI PRETORIA sells products from the Mapula Embroidery project made by women – bought and supported by SI MARIAGER FJORD and SI TAUNAS

SI THAMES VALLEY- support the KORI Women’s Development project of SI SEIRRA LEONE

Now I draw your attention to Tsunamika.

Ladies I want you to pause for a moment and read these slides. Extend a hand of support to women who lost everything in recent disasters. Your generosity will support the Project Tsunamika as well as the distressed women and girls of Uttrakhand.