**Food Security and Healthcare – Barbara Dixon**

Many of you will have already seen the abbreviated report that has been sent in for Food Security and Health.

Over 400 reports have been submitted under this objective and I would like to start with a big thank you to all clubs for their hard work.

I have often been heard to say that a good project covers more than one programme goal as well as raising awareness of Soroptimist International at all levels and as I have trawled through the reports I have had this confirmed on many occasions.

We are all aware that there are faults with the reporting system and there has also been much confusion about having to cover education in order to have a report accepted, this has led to a sharp rise in the reports submitted under education that would otherwise be placed under another objective.

What I would like to stress is that there is usually an educational element to all good projects and when submitting the report I ask you to consider what the main theme is. As APD’s we are frequently e-mailing one another about reports we find under our objective that we feel should belong to another **APD. Soroptimists are not selfish so we don’t mind giving some of our work away** and what truly matters is the vast amount of work that is being carried out by clubs throughout the Federation.

Food Security is represented under many guises- one of the main problems I have is that when I type in Food with regard to Soroptimists I get every coffee morning, afternoon tea and food related social function that has been held- We all know that Soroptimists love food.

However, after a little refining I am delighted to say that over 130 genuine Food Security reports have been submitted.

Many clubs in the UK support local food banks, in fact when I started to tabulate them it reminded me of an old song called I’ve been everywhere as clubs from, **Anglesey, Bangor –Wales, Bangor- Ireland, Barry, Barnstaple, Bath , Beckenham, Birmingham, Brixham, Blackburn, , Cannock, Canterbury , Cockermouth and Coventry, Garstang, Keighley, Kidderminster and Kenilworth, Lancaster, Liverpool, Newcastle and Preston, Ramsbottom, Reigate, Selby, Slough, South Lancashire, Tamworth, Taunton, Wallasey, Weston-Super-Mare and Widnes** have all donated goods to food banks.

In addition there are many clubs that provide starter packs of basic foods for their local **Refuge or women’s shelter services, whilst other provide basic food kits for the homeless.**

**S.I. Bournemouth, in partnership with SI Dakhar,** provide funds for daily food for children

It costs £120per year to maintain a child in school with all educational materials and a nutritional daily snack.

**SI Calcutta** provide food for girls who need to study till late in the evening and cannot do so on an empty stomach. Their contribution of an evening snack helps them study better. Twice a week they are also given eggs. Funds raised every month are from members and outside and the members take turns to arrange for the snack.

**SI Birkenhead** has a friendship link with South Africa and they assist women and children from Port Elisabeth. One aspect of their work is the provision of a breakfast club which helps with nutrition and health as well as enabling pupils to concentrate at school.

The close relationship between adequate food and education is highlighted by the number of clubs such as **Runcorn and Barry** ,that support Mary’s meals and I am sure that after hearing more about this project this weekend there will be many more clubs working alongside them.

Mary’s meals has two main themes , one sources local produce and uses local people to provide a nutritious meal for the children in schools, helping them to concentrate but also providing an impetus for attending school as for many children this will be the only food they get. In addition to providing food for the children the way in which local produce is used supports the local economy thus having a roll out effect on reducing poverty in the area.

**St Albans** assisted in yet another way to provide food security in a literal sense by supporting Earthworks who had experienced arson attacks over the last year on their open site. St Albans provided funding for fencing thus ensuring security of the Earthworks site for teaching young people with learning difficulties gardening skills.

There have been many other fundraising events held throughout the Federation which help in the provision of food security either through partnership or friendship links and I look forward to reading more about them over the next year.

Projects on Health have covered the BIG project, Birthing in the Pacific , the Ovarian Cancer motion and many other Health issues.

I will not steal Rita’s thunder by talking about the BIG project in details, but I would like to say how impressed we have been with the results of the Day of Action which inspired so many varied activities in raising funds- even I got active and managed over 40 lengths in **Anglesey’s** swimathon.

Birthing in the Pacific had only realised 12 entries on the database when my initial report was prepared , this had increased to 20 by the beginning of September this year, but I am sure that many more projects were undertaken that have not been reported. Initially I think there was some confusion between Birthing in the Pacific and the BIG project as both had a similar theme. Due to the timing of the International President’s appeal many club members made a donation to the project in lieu of Christmas cards to one another and some clubs donated the proceeds of their Christmas raffle to the fund .

I would love to have had more details **of Harrogate’s** Silent Auction, which raised over £1000 for the appeal- I have never known a Soroptimist to be silent for long!.

The Ovarian Cancer motion was slow to get off the mark, but at the end of the two year period nearly 40 reports have been submitted , ranging from fund raising, through awareness and lobbying to provision of leaflets for surgeries and pharmacies and women’s centres. I shall be presenting a resume of this work during Conference, but I feel that the work that has been done has been successful.

It is may appear difficult at times to justify some of the work that we are concerned with in the UK when we have an NHS system that, in the main, provides us with an excellent standard of healthcare, is free and readily accessible. Many clubs will support funding for a specific illness which has a personal interest to them, and of course there is nothing wrong with that, for if we do not have an interest in something we will not support it.

 When we look at the bigger picture, however, we must consider ourselves fortunate in these shores to have such a service in place. Many countries do not have free health care or cannot access it due to transport difficulties, lack of trained staff or equipment which is why the projects that are covered under the blanket of healthcare are so varied.

We will be hearing of some of the projects during conference, but I have selected a few example from the database to indicate the diversity of the work that is being produced.

**Trinidad and Tobago** organised outreach clinics where candidates were screened for blood glucose, blood pressure and cholesterol levels - then streamlined to Doctors for consultation – those needing ultrasound screenings were attended to by an onsite sonographer – those with vision problems were provided with screening then further seen by a vitreo-retinal surgeon to assess retinal problems (diabetic retinal bleeds/ cataracts/ glaucoma) –some had Dental screenings others were seen by podiatrist Lectures were given on Hypertension, diet choices, foot care.

**SI PUNE METRO EAST** invited a very senior gynaecologist who has vast experience - to speak to the members about vigilance for cervical cancer. It was hoped that more members would go for papa smear and that all women concerned would be more open to early detection, and constantly be vigilant.

**Grange over Sands** knitted wraps and sent them to the Hamlin Fistula Foundation in Ethiopia.

**Smethwick & District** provided mattresses to replace the rushes used by girls at Shara Ntumba SW Senegal Girls School. The rushes were infested, the girls developed sickness as a result of being bitten. 15 mattresses cost £300.As a result of this action girls were healthier and able to attend school.

**S.I. Heswall** members have knitted nearly 400 colourful short-sleeved vests for babies as well as beanies for keeping heads warm in Africa and parts of Asia, especially those with HIV positive mothers, as often they have no warm clothing and may even be wrapped in newspaper.

**SI ONITSHA NIGER** set out to educate pregnant and nursing mothers on the importance of taking care of themselves and their babies .

**SI Bangalore** SI Bangalore worked in Rachaiana Doddi, Lambani Tribal Village organizing health checks for the villagers of all ages.

**South Lancashire** held a health awareness day to provide an informal atmosphere where members of the public could obtain information and possibly speak with health professionals without having to wait for an appointment.

Other clubs have sponsored members to work abroad with either partner organisations or through friendship links on projects as diverse as postnatal care, dentistry , administering medicines or just providing basic health care instruction . In addition several clubs are sponsoring nurse training.

As I said in my outline report with over 400 projects it is impossible to mention all the excellent work that is being carried out throughout the Federation. Reading the reports is a humbling yet dynamising experience- it certainly makes me feel that I ought to be doing more. I would encourage you all to read the reports under health , you will be surprised at the work going on.

Before I finish I would like to once more thank you for all your work on behalf of SIGBI and remind you that a picture [paints a thousand words- PLEASE attach photos of your work so that we can appreciate what you are doing and the environment in which you are working.

Thank you.

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