**Violence and Conflict Resolution – Jackie Palin**

Goal 1 Objective 3 – Eliminate violence against women and girls and ensure women’s participation in conflict resolution.

This last year has seen the topic of violence against women raised in the world’s (and Soroptimists’) consciousness after the terrible murders, rapes and other awful acts of violence against women, particularly in South Asia.

The theme of this year’s Commission on the Status of Women’s annual meeting had violence against women at its heart with “Elimination and Prevention of Violence Against Women and Girls” as its subject. It focussed on two key areas – the prevention of violence against women and the provision of support/services responses to survivors of violence. Soroptimists round the world are all working on these areas.

Clubs round the Federation continue to work tirelessly on this objective, mainly through lobbying, raising awareness and giving practical support, all in equal measure. Unfortunately there has been a slight drop in the number of Programme Focus Report Forms submitted. There is some wonderful work taking place but some of it has only come to light through the Country reports recently submitted by the Programme Action Chairs. I did notice that in some of these Country reports, Programme Focus Report Form Numbers were given, and this is very useful particularly for the Programme Team.

Human trafficking and modern day slavery are some of the world’s worst crimes, particularly against women. It is the fastest growing “business” and the second largest source of illegal income after drug trafficking.

Just about every country in the world is affected by trafficking, either as a source country, a transit country or a country of destination. It is a very very difficult task in fighting it. There is thus plenty of scope for Clubs in the Federation to do project work on it.

Many Clubs have collected signatures for SI Poole’s Purple Teardrop Campaign petition to ban sex for sale advertising. Just over 30,000 signatures have been collected but many more are needed. However the process of collecting signatures in itself raises awareness.

Clubs in both the Uk and the Caribbean have used Purple Teardrop resources – posters and stickers etc to raise awareness of the issue.

Clubs in Midland Chase Region held a trafficking march in Lichfield, as did Soroptimists in Barbados. The Cardiff, Stafford, Lewsiham, and Folkstone Clubs and others have supported the Stop The Traffik’s Taxi Trafficking Sticker Campaign, I would like to mention here that the Stop the Traffik organisation is one of our biggest fans. SI Stratford held a Trafficking Seminar and SI Carmarthen held a Study Day for professionals and others.

SI Kings Lynn and SI Paisley put stickers and posters in women’s public toilets.

SI Bedford have set up a project called BAMS (Bedford Against Modern Slavery), holding seminars and encouraging multi-agency participation.

After the previously mentioned tragic events in South Asia, it is perhaps not surprising that Soroptimists in that part of the world rose up in protest, and joined marches and other initiatives to raise awareness, lobby and hopefully make a difference. Clubs in India especially, joined in the One Billion Rising Campaign. This world-wide project has a single agenda – to sensitise women, girls, boys and the general community on gender equality and sensitivity. The view is that sex and gender related issues are not discussed openly and youngsters grow up with a distorted view. To this end SI Pune Metro East and other Clubs went into schools and talked to pupils about the issues. SI Bangalore organised self-defence training for girls and SI North Bombay got a professional group of actors to put on plays depicting gender issues to 400 under-privileged women and girls. SI Chennai organised a symposium on sexual abuse and trafficking. Other Clubs in the Federation also supported the One Billion Rising Campaign in different ways.

There has been a slight increase in the number of Programme Focus Report Forms submitted on FGM.

SI Thames Valley have set up an FGM project in the Kori Chiefdom of Sierra leone. Although the project is still concerned with FGM, it has grown quite dramatically, and covers other Programme Objectives. We will be hearing more about this project on Saturday morning.

Grange 9over-Sands helped to support an alternative rite of passage ceremony at which girls are presented with bracelets produced by the Club. SI Lancaster raised money for Kenyan midwives working to educate Kenyan families about FGM and to introduce alternative rites of passage. Several Clubs in the UK wrote letters and lobbied their MPs to get FGM legislation enforced. SI Sunderland followed the lead of SI Darlington and wrote to the local authority asking if FGM was included in their safe-guarding procedures, and also what training is given about FGM to those working with children and young people.

Most Clubs continue to generously support their local women’s refuges, rape crisis centres, child contact centres, homes for disadvantaged women, and individual cases. This support has ranged from fundraising, provision of food, clothing, furniture, kitchen equipment and cleaning materials to services such as gardening and cookery lessons. This is all very worthwhile and I know it is greatly appreciated by those in need.

Clubs have supported Handicap International in various ways from raising awareness with shoe pyramids, signing petitions and lobbying Government ministers over the involvement of companies and businesses involved in the provision of components for these weapons of war.

Soroptimists in Nigeria are to be congratulated on getting abusive cultural and traditional practices against widows banned in one of the country’s States, and legislation introduced. And I expect they will seek to do the same in other States.

The same as last year, only one Club appears to have done any work on Elder Abuse.

The Clubs mentioned in this report are just a few examples of what work has been done over the last year.

Just a gentle reminder to fill in Programme Focus Report Forms. If you do have any problem, please remember the programme Team are here to help you- so please do contact us if you need any assistance.

Finally – do you have active Friendship Links. If so is there any way you can help or support each other.

I would like to thank you all for for the work you have done under this objective and it is very much appreciated. Also, thank you for helping to make President Pat’s theme of Vision to Action a reality.