

JENNY VINCE'S INCOMING PRESIDENT'S SPEECH  
DELIVERING THE DIFFERENCE

It is my privilege to address you as our organisation now enters its 81<sup>st</sup> year. During this year, it will be my role to provide leadership, to steer the organisation for the next twelve months *through listening to its members* – and to take responsibility for seeing that the organisation is run efficiently for the benefit of the membership and for the women and girls we try to help worldwide.

We have enjoyed an inspirational conference and I join Margaret in thanking all those who have been involved in the organisation of this event. *It is a huge undertaking, and an epic demonstration of just how well people work together.*

*We have all been touched over the past few days about the Kori project in Sierra Leone and I am delighted to tell you that you have raised £7500. This will pay for two shipping containers!*

We have witnessed democracy in action when clubs have voted on the resolutions proposed. Every member in our 29 countries has a voice, and each club has a vote on how our organisation should conduct itself in the future.

We now have a task ahead of us, which is the same task we have faced for the past fifteen years – our membership is falling and if we are to survive we must bring in more members. We need to continue to look at different forms of membership and growth and my colleagues responsible for Membership and Organisation

Development will work with you on this. We have exciting new marketing and club growth plans – so look out for correspondence on this. However on a brighter note, I am looking forward to chartering SI Chester in February 2015.

Our other target must be to increase our profile in every country: members have been asking for this for some time and I know that my predecessors have worked hard to try to do this in different ways. Our decision a year ago to appoint a Communications Officer has already resulted in an increased profile in some areas. *I believe it is more than fair to say that, when people get to know about Soroptimism, they want to become part of it.* However we all need to work on this, locally, nationally and internationally.

This brings me to the theme for my year – Delivering the Difference. This theme has been chosen carefully to be relevant to you and your Soroptimist activities. Whether it be locally, nationally or globally, our organisation has the opportunity to make a difference to the lives of women and girls throughout the federation. The scale of the difference may be large or small but every impact is vital.

To focus on this, I urge you to consider the word ‘encourage’. Dictionary definitions include to inspire with hope, to give support and confidence to, to stimulate the development of, to persuade by giving support and advice. This word, originally from Middle English and Anglo Norman, in my book means to literally give someone courage.

I understand that sometimes it is hard to stand up for what you believe in, to man a stand raising awareness of human trafficking, to

raise funds for an overseas project, to talk about modern day slavery: *Soroptimists are proud to do both: they contribute financially, AND they get actively involved in publicising, lobbying and so on.*

So remember the word 'encourage' and try to give someone else the courage to join you in your Soroptimist activities, to give them support and confidence, but above all to inspire with hope. This will enable us all to deliver the difference.

I am pleased to announce news about a new Federation Project. Our project with MCAI has come to an end. We listened when you said how much you missed the past quadrennial projects and you felt that this had a unifying effect on our work. We will use the next twelve months to invite clubs to submit projects for consideration for a new four year project which will then start in Glasgow 2015. Our Programme team will have the criteria, timescale and other information for you to make your application. The shortlisted projects will be invited to present at the Glasgow Conference, when clubs will vote for their preferred project. This is your opportunity to nominate a project that could be the focus for the Federation from 2015 – 2019. I look forward to your applications.

This year has highlights already in the calendar:

- The Commission on the Status of Women in New York in March when we can make a contribution to the discussion on Beijing + 20 and the new UN sustainable development goals that will be initiated this year. Soroptimists have already had an input into these, in an effort to make the new goals less woolly and more defined. Our ECOSCOC status gives us these opportunities to report on the work that we do and to lobby for the work we

hope to achieve. We are also working with SIE – the Soroptimist federation of Europe in a co-operative long term project on violence against women. Here we hope to bring data together to have a validated report to submit to the UN. Not everyone can attend the meetings in New York, but you can follow our federation's activities there on the daily blog on the website.

Each year national governments have had to report their progress against achieving the Millennium Development Goals. In 2015 these will change to sustainable development goals. These 17 goals cover poverty, health, education, gender equality, access to energy, peaceful societies, economic growth, combatting climate change, conservation of the earth's resources, global partnerships for sustainable development.

The Soroptimist International Convention, held every four years, will take place in July in Istanbul. I know our Soroptimist sisters in the Turkish Union have been working hard for some time to ensure that this is a convention to remember. Istanbul is a fascinating city, full of history and beauty, so there is a lot to see outside the convention. I hope many of you will join me there.

And to end the year – the federation conference in Glasgow. This will take place in the SECC convention centre, a location we are used to, having had SIGBI and SI conferences there in the past. Glasgow is an exciting city, with many attractions – museums, galleries, shopping – it will be a job to entice you to stay in conference! No I don't really think so with the speakers we have lined up for you.

I look forward to seeing you at one if not all of these events during the coming twelve months. Equally I hope to visit clubs and their projects so that I can listen and see you all 'delivering the difference' in action.

*No-one can deliver the difference on their own, and I am no exception. I will be relying on the Federation Board for their support and contribution over the coming year. I hope you will all think about how you can support each other, so that the year's activities make us energised and encouraged! It is a challenge for every individual member to think about 'delivering the difference' in 2015.*

Thank you for listening.