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The Team

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President's Message



Dear Friends,

“Life is an opportunity” my mother once told me, “Transform it into an experience that makes us worthy of the gift that this opportunity has offered to us”.

Let us make most of this opportunity by giving to those in need and deprived, what we are capable of giving by using our talents, skills and resources with sincerity and dedication.

It is not easy to compress in a capsule all the programme work accomplished by our clubs. Many of them are showcased in our newsletters, magazines and at the meetings. Each and everyone deserve recognition. As it projects your competence, vision and vigour. The journey of service is long, for we have miles to go before we can sleep, miles to go before we can sleep...

Much has been asked about the pathetic condition of the people living in slums and villages. It has been quite clear right from the day we attained our “tryst with destiny”. There has been enormous effort to translate the answer into action. But the fact remains that among the poorest of the poor, we continue to linger on, at the lowest rung of the ladder. There is a law against the “dowry system” yet the system prevails. There is a law against “child marriage” yet minor girls continue to be packed to their in-laws homes, as if they are mere boxes of sweets and mechanical toys. Less than 30% of women in the country have the benefit of education. Due to lack of clean water, surroundings, sanitation and health facilities, many of them live in unhygienic conditions.

In 2013, we also witnessed horrendous gang rape and aftermath, drought, natural and manmade calamities and destruction. Atrocities against women/girls and children continue unabatedly in spite of agitation and stringent laws.

These people oppressed by traditions, superstitions, caste system, religion, victims of abuse and violence and calamities are screaming out for help - only their screams are silent! We must make ourselves sensitive to hear these silent screams - let us reach out and give them hope. Einstein had once that “Only by widening our circle of compassion will we find a way out of violence, mistrust and poverty that we see around us”. Because of the spirit of Soroptomism, we are committed to make a difference by giving them opportunities, by making options possible, by simply opening the doors of opportunities for those who just cannot reach the handle. Unless we cease this opportunity now for many of them tomorrow maybe too late.

We were shocked and reduced to tears to watch relentless wave of deaths, massive destruction and unimaginable devastation that swept across the state of Uttarakhand, a pilgrim and tourists centre in Himalayan zone. We have taken this opportunity to act as catalyst to make a difference in the lives of these unfortunate victims of nature’s fury by planning to build ‘ICDS Centre’ to empower, educate and enable women/girls and children. Let’s have positive mindset and say-“Yes we can do it and will do it”. Through this message I urge every Soroptomist and fellow citizens wherever you may be, to contribute generously to rebuild their lives.

I leave you to reflect on this quote written by Kahlil Gibran in his book “The Prophet” in a section on giving - “There are those who have little and give it all. These are the believers in life and their coffers are never empty.”

Yours in - Soroptomist International

| Annette Mascarenhas |President & Councilor | Nasi – India



Know Your Member

Laxmi Pursuram



The year was 1978. A friend from Inner Wheel called me to say that Wishart from England was in Calcutta to attend a Geriatric Conference and she wanted to start a Soroptimist Club in Calcutta. “ Would you like to join,” she asked. I had not even heard of Geriatrics or Soroptimism, but since I was always looking out for the unknown I could not help saying ‘yes’. That is how I became a Soroptimist and was chartered as the Founder Secretary of the Soroptimist club of Calcutta.

It is amazing how many doors this membership in Soroptimism has opened for me in the following years. It has enabled me to meet hundreds of members across the globe, attend several of their conferences and the travel length and breadth even to remote places.

Well, how do we do it? What are the strategies through which we achieve a global vision of sisterhood? Our well- thought of projects reaching out to the needy, our conferences and workshops to thrash out the issues, our Grant of Friendships to enable us to know more of one another and of different cultures, our extended hand of understanding and friendship for everyone in the Sisterhood.....is there anything more the women of our country need to learn at this juncture of social development? Should we not do our utmost to initiate more soroptimists and soroptimist clubs in different parts of our country?



ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AWARD
SI Pune Metro East - Organic Farming Education
Project



Venue of our NASI Meeting held on 25/1/2014

The Moevenpick Hotel and Spa Bengaluru

Open Heart-Open Door

The Open Heart-Open Door programme was established in 1995, to encourage friendship, exchange and hospitality, as part of Soroptimists ongoing programme of International Goodwill & Understanding. Registration to the programme is open to all Soroptimist members, who are interested in opening their homes and their hearts to Soroptimists from around the world; offering accommodation and/or services as guides (in cases where Soroptimist may not have any spare room in their houses) to visiting Soroptimists. There is even an active youth exchange programme, where you can offer hospitality to the young relatives of other Soroptimists.

Perhaps you intend to travel and would like to meet up with some local Soroptimists? The Open Heart-Open Door programme can put you in touch with Soroptimists from around the world who have already offered their hospitality. Often, exchange opportunities are advertised in the published Soroptimist magazines that are sent to members periodically.

To register for the programme, please download the [Open Heart Open Door Application Form](#).

Open Heart - Open Door

Home Hospitality Programme of International Friendship

Dear Soroptimist Friends,

There must be many club sisters in our Federation who have a spacious flat or house, and for some reason cannot travel but would like to welcome guests into their homes. On the other hand, there are club sisters who would like to visit Soroptimist friends. For you all there is our programme of International Goodwill and Understanding in Soroptimism.

I would like to (please just write “Yes” if you want to join!)

1. Offer home hospitality to one or two Soroptimists or a couple
2. I have no guest room but will be a contact person and guide in my own town
3. Take part in an exchange programme
4. Take part in an holiday exchange programme e.g. house-exchange (city home/chalet/ apartment/holiday-house) you and your exchange partner will stay at each others homes for a certain period mutually agreed on:
 - 4a. at the same time?
 - 4b. at different periods?
5. I am interested in a youth exchange programme for my daughter/son, niece/nephew, grandchild, year of birth:; I am aware that the idea is to offer hospitality for a young person in exchange, for a period (eg. 4 days, 2 weeks) of:

Name:

Club:

Street:

Union/Single Club:

Country code,
town:

Email:

Tel. No:

Fax No:

Profession:

Interests/hobbies:

Languages:

Date of birth
(optional):

Please email this completed application form to Heidrun Konrad, SI Europe Past President and founder of the Open Heart-Open Door Programme at kon.rad@netway.at

UTTARKHAND FLOODS

What caused the June 16-17 devastating floods in Uttarakhand? A report of an expert committee, constituted by the Union Ministry of Water Resources to find out the causes of the June calamity, has said that a combination of many factors led to the flash floods and the subsequent destruction. But the cloud burst is certainly not the reason behind the deluge, it says in its 64-page report submitted recent to the ministry.

The loss of human life in some areas was due to less reaction time, it said. The loss of property was due to heavy encroachment near river banks for commercial purposes like hotels and restaurants on routes leading to religious places like Kedarnath and Badrinath.

Contrary to the general perception that cloudbursts had caused massive floods in June this year in the hill state, which left hundreds of people dead and rendered thousands of others homeless, the report said the natural disaster mainly occurred due to high melting rate of glaciers during the period and unprecedented heavy to very heavy rains in the catchment areas of the rivers. Another factor of heavy snowfall prior to rainfall, which melted rapidly due to rainfall, could not be verified owing to non-availability of data related to snowfall. The committee rejected the general perception of cloudbursts causing massive floods saying none of the observatory in Uttarakhand recorded the cloudburst type of rains during the period.

We appeal to all SI clubs in India to start sending your contributions (even in Parts) to our **FIRST NATIONAL PROJECT @ UTTARAKHAND WHERE WE**, soroptimists are constructing a community centre for women and children of uttarakhand to provide them a shelter and vocational training. The Details of the project have already been informed to you. Please send your cheques in the name of "National Association of Soroptimist International of India" NASI – India.

Rema Ramchandran



Report SIGBI Conf 2013

It was a great privilege for Nisha, Anitha and me to be present at the SIGBI Conf 2013. Anitha was a first timer.

Opening Session of 79th SIGBI Federation Conference.

Twelve hundred members experienced the Flags of the Federation ceremony, which were paraded by adult guiders from Girl Guiding North East England to the music, *Crown Imperial*. This year the flags were paraded around the auditorium, and then crossed over on the stage, where President Pat walked with them to symbolically welcome each country (from Anguilla to Zimbabwe)..

Greetings started with The Lord Lieutenant of Tyne and Wear, Nigel Sherlock, read the message from Buckingham Palace. Greetings were also received from David Cameron, President SISWP, SI Brisbane, World Endometriosis Society, SI Scotland South and SI Northern England.

President Pat joined Soroptimists in Performance Square, outside the Sage, on Friday morning to make a sea of red in raising awareness of endometriosis.

FPAC Meeting Report:

Economic Empowerment report – Talat Pasha The diversity of projects submitted this year is very inspiring and the projects are mostly result oriented. In some, women are given an opportunity to increase their confidence and some give them a chance to increase their income through training. Each project helps to empower women at different levels. **Environmental Sustainability** Laura Redhead - Following our international theme of 'Educate to Lead' it has been positive to see clubs in the UK and India undertaking projects focused on educating women and girls about the environment and its future sustainability.

Food Security and Healthcare – Barbara Dixon Over 130 genuine Food Security reports were submitted.

Learning Opportunities – Janet Hodgson -Over 400 reports have been submitted under this objective 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. Although the number of reports received was less this year the standard of reporting is much better.

Violence and Conflict Resolution – Jackie Palin- 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. A special mention of 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. Besides all this there has been a slight drop in the number of Programme Focus Report Forms submitted.

Friendship Link Co-ordinator – Nisha Ghosh

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. Three Friendship Link newsletters have been uploaded showcasing the wonderful results of Friendship Links between Clubs. She reiterated the fact that Programme Action and Friendship Links, the two can be beautifully interlinked to convey the international vision of Educate to Lead. Many Clubs have had successful collaboration on projects that covered all the programme focus areas.

Ann Garvie – Soroptimist International President

She for the first time consulted and floated with the International Programme Team her vision, to enable, empower and engage women and girls in primary education and lifelong learning.

The chosen project is “Going Solar”

“By financing green solar power and promoting and enabling education and life long learning for women and girls, we will help many more women and girls to fulfil their dreams. The project is ‘Going Solar’ will give cooking pots and lanterns to women and girls

Announcement

The city of Istanbul hosts the 20th International Convention. Ann announced the launch of an inter-federation public speaking competition for girls aged 16-22 years. Five girls will participate in the convention and learn why they should become Soroptimists. The Project co-ordinator will be Maureen Maguire.

Contributed by Naina Shah

From the Editor's Desk



Compliments of the Season to all!!

What gives me hope are the creative responses that are bubbling up in every sector of society and all over the world; these responses are, I believe, creating the seeds of a new era, the DNA for a new civilization.

The fault lines that run through this time of transition penetrate deeply into our lives -- dreams go unfulfilled, relationships fall apart, careers are stillborn; the foundations of life seem shaky and unreliable.

For some, this creates a nostalgia for the past, when life was seemingly more stable and easy to understand. Some look for scapegoats to blame for the rapidity of change.

But there are others who are energized by the possibilities that are arising from a time of historic transition. Whether or not they are conscious of the connections, they are creating ways of living, working, and interrelating that integrate our recently acquired planetary awareness with modern know-how and ancient wisdom. These new experiments integrate self, nature, and community within an implicit or explicit awareness of the sacredness of all life.

This creative process is happening now within every realm of society and within a number of social and political movements. In each case, it may be just a few individuals who have the vision, curiosity, and persistence to take the lead in exploring new possibilities. But it is happening across disciplines and sectors, and with astounding creativity and persistence.

Long Live Soroptimism!!

Rema Ramchandran