**Johanna Raffan MBE President SIGBI**

**SI London Chilterns Human Rights Day Presentation**

**SLIDE 2 Cartoon**

As you know my theme for the year is “Believe to Achieve” so I would like to start with a short story: Peter was 4 years old and he was just about to start school, but the staff were worried about how they would cope with his extraordinary abilities, so they asked me to help. He had an amazing grasp of Mathematics, plus his bedroom was his Kingdom with its on language and you were not allowed to entry unless you spoke his specific language, correctly! Peter had a map on the wall showing his kingdom, its cities, ports, farms, rivers, mountains etc. Because of his mathematical ability it was suggested that he learnt to play the piano, which he learnt to master very quickly including sight reading. The night before I met him he had played a piece he had not seen before and commented at the end on how many flats and sharps were in the piece. The school certainly had a challenge on their hands and yet, many of the children like Peter, have poor social skills and the ability to make friends is limited. He actually fitted into school life better than I had feared and one of the reasons for this was the Head set a Mathematical puzzle each week that was open to all pupils but aimed at the 10 year olds. By week two Peter was getting all the answers right, despite being only 4 years old and this gave him kudos with the other children and thereby a point of contact. After one term it was arranged that he would do his Maths Lessons with the local Secondary school but everything else with his peer group.

**SLIDE 3 Eleanor Roosevelt**

Human Rights Day is observed every year on the 10th December, which is also our final day of 16 Days of Activism - do you know why we mark these days with orange? Eleanor was Chair of the drafting Committee of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and therefore a name we all remember when we talk about human rights and yet there were a small number of equally influential women from around the world involved in drawing up the Declaration, such as Minera Bernardino from the Dominican Rebublic, Begum Ikramullah from Pakistan, Hansa Mehta from India, Evdrokia Uralova from Soviet Socialist Republic, Bodil Begtrup from Denmark and Marie Helene Lefaucheux from France. All amazing women in their own right.

Eleanor Roosevelt said in her **book “You learn by living”**, ‘*The purpose of life is to live it, to taste experiences to the utmost, to reach out eagerly and without fear, for newer and richer experiences. You gain strength, courage and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You are able to say to yourself “I have lived through this horror. I can take the next thing that comes along” You must do the thing, you think you cannot do!’* How true this is in today’s situation.

**SLIDE 4 Generations**

The 10th December is the day in 1948 that the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It was a milestone document that: Proclaims the inalienable rights which everyone is entitled to as a human being – regardless of race, colour, religion, sex, language, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Sorry to give you it in full but I think it is helpful to remind ourselves just how far reaching the Declaration is. The international Magna Carta for all men and women everywhere.

**SLIDE 5 5 Soroptimists**

This year’s Human Rights Day theme relates to the Covid 19 Pandemic and focused on the need to build back better by ensuring Human Rights are central to our recovery efforts. We will reach our common global goals only if we are able to create equal opportunities for all, by addressing the failures exposed and exploited by Covid19. We must apply human rights standards to tackle entrenched and systematic inequalities and discrimination.

Human Rights must be at the centre of the post Covid 19 world. The Covid 19 crisis has been fuelled by deepening poverty, rising inequalities, structural and entrenched discrimination and other gaps in human rights protection. Only by closing these gaps and advancing human rights can we ensure we fully recover and build back a world that is better, more resilient, just and sustainable.

**SLIDE 6 Build Back Better**

We need sustainable development for people and the planet. Human Rights and the 2030 Agenda are the corner stone of our recovery we must Build Back Better. As the UN 75th Statement said “We will emerge stronger and better equipped to work together. 2021 must be a year of dialogue and action, when we come together to discuss our priorities as a human family and how we can build a better future for all. Covid 19 is a stark reminder of the need for cooperation across borders, sectors and generations. Our response will determine how fast the world recovers, whether we can achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and how well we handle pressing challenges: from the climate crisis to pandemics, inequalities to new forms of violence, to rapid changes in technology and in our populations.”

**SLIDE 7 1 Soroptimists**

What sort of world do we want?

What are our hopes for the future?

These are questions the UN is seeking to get people to answer – to date they have had over a million responses, including our organisation.

As Koffi Annan said “When women thrive all society benefits” and as Cardinal Suenens said “Happy are those who dream dreams and are prepared to pay the price to make them come true”.

**SLIDE 8 SI Clubs**

At a National level we have much to do, the statistics are appalling - Domestic abuse was up by 40% in the first lock down, it is now nearly 70%. When Baroness Scotland was a member of the Government, the figures were 1 in 6 women and 1 in 10 men: now it is 1 in 3 women and 1 in 6 men. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office have just set up a research project entitled “What works to prevent violence” and they are encouraging organisation to become involved and have also set up a fund to support Women Rights Activists. This initiative is involving countries around the world. The convictions for Rape are at an all time low, out of 60,000 reported cases only 11,000 were submitted to the CPS, of which 164 went to court and of that a very small number were convicted.

The amount of Trafficking is increasing due, in part, to lessening of controls at boarders and the profit from this trade is now £100,000 per woman or girl. Trafficking affects 164 countries worldwide. There is so much work Clubs could do in these areas.

**SLIDE 9 Membership & Programme**

Membership and Programme are the two pillars of SIGBI and will be the main focus of my year under the theme of Believe to Achieve. These two pillars are intrinsically linked, you cannot have one without the other. Research by Dishi Attwood, who is the Ambassador taking the Growth Plan forward, shows that strong Clubs undertake a lot of Programme Action, though of course the more programme action you do the more Programme Report forms you have to fill in. I do not think we make enough of this work that we undertake and at the moment there is a huge amount of work to be done as an outcome of the pandemic.

**SLIDE 10 We stand up for women…**

My passion is Education hence “Believe to Achieve” so it would have come as no surprise that I wish to support the Diamond Education Grant Fund during my year: the perfect vehicle to Educate, Empower and Enable women to achieve their potential. So, if you have not heard I am challenging all clubs to raise a £100 for our 100th year for the DEG.

For our Centennial celebrations we have a reception at the House of Lords, an exhibition at the Parliaments of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland plus other events around the Federation. A Centennial brooch, First day cover stamps, own labelled red and white wine, a Birthday Party at Llandudno and the WhoIsShe campaign showcasing more than 100 Soroptimists for the centenary. For more see the centenary website [www.sigbi.org/soroptimistcentenary2021](http://www.sigbi.org/soroptimistcentenary2021)

JMR December 2020