MINUTES OF THE FEDERATION PROGRAMME ACTION COMMITTEE MEETING
VIRTUAL MEETING FACILITATED BY ICC, BELFAST
THURSDAY 29 OCTOBER 2020

PRESENT:
Kay Richmond Federation Programme Director
Isobel Smith Federation President
Johanna Raffan Federation President Elect
Yvonne Gibbon Federation APD People
Carol Infanti Federation APD Prosperity
Naina Shah Federation APD Planet
Nisha Ghosh Federation APD Peace
Yvonne Freeman Federation APD Partnership

REGISTERED FPAC:
Anitha Rajarajan Incoming Federation APD Planet
KimAnn Williamson Incoming Federation APD Peace
Bhaswati Biswas Federation Friendship Link Coordinator
Dr Oluwakemi M Linda Banks FPAC Anguilla
Zakia Sultana Shahid FPAC Bangladesh
Lisa Topin-Corbin FPAC Barbados
Glenys Hunt FPAC England
Naina Shah FPAC India
Mary Courtney FPAC Ireland
Sonia Black FPAC Jamaica
Kabita Thapaliya FPAC Nepal
Rita Allen FPAC Northern Ireland
Janice Wilson FPAC Scotland
Yatisha Ramdarie FPAC South Africa
Bebe Ajodha FPAC Trinidad and Tobago
Rachel Taylor FPAC Turks and Caicos
Liz Dominey UKPAC

APOLOGIES:
Lina Borg Vasallo FPAC Malta

1. WELCOME
Kay Richmond, Federation Programme Director, welcomed attendees to the FPAC meeting. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted many inequalities which SIGBI has been trying to address over the past years, but do we have an improved opportunity to do so now that the inequalities have become so clear to everyone? We believe we do.

Kay then introduced Federation President Isobel to make her address.
2. **FEDERATION PRESIDENT ISOBEL SMITH**  
Membership and Programme are the two pillars to the SIGBI Strategic Plan. Programme attracts and retains Members, and working to improve the lives of women and girls through Advocacy, Awareness and Action and our service projects are what we are about. How does “Build Back Better” influence this activity? This afternoon’s programme may provide some of the answers, with details of current work perhaps providing ideas for future activities.

Women and girls are being disproportionately affected by the pandemic, both financially and health-wise. Gender-related violence has greatly increased, placing the lives of many more women and girls at risk. It has also interrupted the education of millions of girls around the world.

Soroptimists have continued to undertake strong activity to help women and girls. The UN Secretary-General has said “The goal will be to build a better world in which we can take the opportunity of an economic reset to ensure the rights to life, dignity and security for everyone. Recovering back better must reach beyond governments. It needs the private sector, academia and institutions of all kinds to be fully engaged.”

We must “rethink the future”. Every member in every club across the Federation has a role to play to build a better world for future generations.

See Isobel Smith’s opening presentation (PDF with presenter notes)

3. **PRESENTATIONS FROM THE CLUSTERS: ASIA, CARIBBEAN, EUROPE**  
Presentations were compiled by the representatives of each country within each Cluster, to show how different countries are reacting to the pandemic and to suggest ways in which they might move forward to Build Back Better. Factors such as wealth and accessibility to health and social care impact on how the pandemic affects people in the different countries, but in each case Soroptimists have risen to the challenge of providing support to the most vulnerable. Projects such as sewing masks and PPE, providing food in the form of hampers or cooked meals, shopping for elderly residents and making sure migrant workers receive the help they need, were common to all countries.

The individual presentation from each cluster can be accessed below. They are in PDF format with presenter notes.

- Asia
- Caribbean
- Europe

4. **Q&As 1**

There followed a Q&A Session. Questions asked and a summary of the responses were:

1. *Do you think how we deliver PAC has changed as a result of lockdows and meeting restrictions?*

The way we deliver our projects has changed as they have been tailored to meet social distancing requirements, and delivering information by webinars has become common place. There have also been benefits to holding virtual meetings, such as being able to join in other Clubs' meetings, even Clubs in other Federations. Speakers are also easier to engage as they don’t have to travel to venues.
2. Have clubs been able to recruit new members during lockdown and the pandemic? If so, how? We need new members to continue the projects.

Clubs have invited non-Members to zoom meetings and they have been interested to learn about the activities of the Club. Fundraising has been amazing, with online facilities being used. It has enabled Region/National Association Membership Officers to attend Club meetings, or hold meetings in remote areas with a view to starting new Clubs. Some people have expressed a desire to meet the Club members before committing themselves to joining, but hopefully these people will join at a later date when face-to-face meetings are possible again. Several Clubs have inducted new members on zoom meetings, and some new members like not having to physically attend meetings due to other commitments. Johanna will be looking at virtual clubs as a way forward during her presidential year.

3. It would be useful to put together a list of creative ways which clubs have found to raise funds during the pandemic.

Nisha, as incoming PR & Marketing Director, will look at ways in which fundraising can take place online, and producing YouTube videos to disseminate more information to Clubs. Videos produced by SIGBI need to be structured to make it easy to find the video you need.

4. Zoom meetings are great but how do we support those members who are not online?

Members who can zoom should help those who cannot access this technology. Relatives who are in the member's bubble could help them to join in zoom meetings, or other members could form a bubble with less IT literate members, in order to be able to include them. If none of this is possible, then a buddy system should ensure that remote members are contacted by phone regularly and kept up to date with news.

5. What about women suffering domestic abuse in their own homes. Could we be doing anything specifically for these women?

Clubs should ask their local women's refuge what support they need. It may be a case of providing food and essential items. They could offer, via Facebook, a private messaging service so that if they receive a message they can pass it on to the appropriate authorities. It can be difficult for women to make phone calls in secret, but if they are able to do this, there are resources on the UKPAC website with phone numbers for them to ring which will not appear in their dialled number list. The Domestic Abuse Bill is going through the UK parliament at the moment, and there are opportunities for Soroptimists to advocate for the amendments which are on the UKPAC website. It's important to do this now as the opportunity to influence the bill will not be around for long.

5. ASSISTANT PROGRAMME DIRECTOR PRESENTATIONS

Kay invited each of the five Assistant Programme Directors (APDs) to give a presentation on their programme area, both in terms of what Soroptimists are doing now and what should be done for the future. The usual order of the 5Ps was partially reversed, as SDGs 17 (Partnerships) and 16 (Peace) are both essential in order to achieve the other 15 SDGs.

All the presentations can be seen in full below. They are in PDF format with presenter notes.
6. **Q&As 2**

This session was followed by another Q&A session. Questions asked and a summary of the responses were:

1. **Should we as a Federation (either a stand alone or with partners) start a project to provide girls with appropriate technology to learn on-line? Some years ago SIGBI looked at a partnership with WAGGS. Is it worth re-visiting?**

Nisha said that the Programme Action Officer in her Club was putting together a paper on digital education that she would share with members when available.

2. **Has the current pandemic damaged WHO credibility as guardians of Global Health or has it enhanced its reputation?**

WHO are doing their best to ensure that vaccination will be available in all countries, and to increase collaboration across the whole world, but currently countries are locking down and becoming more insular. The only way to get to the end of this pandemic is for countries to work together, and the actions of some countries in working on their own, locking their borders and not sharing is not going to help. The rich countries need to help the poor countries, and the rich people in both rich countries and poor countries need to help the poor people everywhere, because unless we share, we will be sharing the virus forever. Kay recommended that people should follow the advice issued by WHO which was the most consistent and reliable.

3. **How can Soroptimists influence government policy decisions, as many of these proposals being presented suggest? In our advocacy work we set limitations on what we can do. Has the time come to get involved at a different, and more effective level in our advocacy activities?**

We could be much more effective in our advocacy. SIGBI will be looking for a panel to address the issue of advocating on contentious and sensitive issues.

4. **Given the latest tragic loss of a migrant family trying to get from France to England and our work on Human Trafficking - does FPAC/SIGBI have a stance on how things could be improved and how Soroptimists can help?**

UKPAC sit with the Human Trafficking Forum, and lots of Clubs work with their local Human Trafficking/Modern Day Slavery networks, in the UK, to try to have influence. A couple of years ago a survey was conducted on the general public’s knowledge of Human Trafficking and Modern Day Slavery (within the UK), and we do have access to training materials from the University of Nottingham about how to raise awareness. The UK has laws in place to help migrants and asylum seekers, some of which are not being adhered to at the moment, so Soroptimists have a role to play in lobbying to ensure that the
laws which do exist are upheld, and also in raising awareness in our communities of the signs of Modern Day Slavery so that the appropriate local authorities can be alerted. In the case of unaccompanied children, perhaps Soroptimists could volunteer to be "proxy Grandparents" to help them get appropriate guardianship, although safeguarding issues would need to be considered.

5. Does this all have to be UN, WHO or State led? What can we do at Club level?

The work we do is local, but Clubs should understand that every bit of work done gets reported on the database, and goes to the SI UN Representatives for use in their working with UN Entities. It’s important we educate ourselves on the UN, and that activities are reported on the SIGBI Database. It had been noticed that a project undertaken by a SIGBI Club had been picked up by SI and included in SI report to the UN. Local projects are also important for attracting new members. Different things attract different people - some may just want to do local projects, others may like the international aspect. Make sure that members read the SIGBI News Briefings as there are lots of ideas in them that can be replicated. The most important thing is that every Soroptimist does something, it doesn't matter what or how much they do. Collectively, a lot can be achieved.

7. JOHANNA RAFFAN – CLOSING STATEMENT

Incoming President Johanna Raffan thanked Kay for an excellent session and reiterated the importance of filling in programme report forms. She said that our work with women and girls must remain at the forefront of what we do.

Johanna picked up on a few key messages from the APD presentations, which are easy to remember and embody the work that Soroptimists should do:

- Planet – Think Globally, Act Locally and a resilient recovery must be found for climate change;
- Prosperity – we must invest in a better society and what is the purpose of a city;
- People – Build Back Equal - Girls are affected much more by the COVID-19 pandemic and education must be a priority for Soroptimists;
- Peace – Peace cannot wait, Peace cannot be a casualty of COVID;
- Partnerships – Johanna said she is much clearer now on what Partnerships are.

Johanna concluded by urging members to read the UN 75 – Declaration & Plan for Global Action report and said that human trafficking is becoming the largest earner in the world – it is estimated that every person trafficked is worth £100,000. This demonstrates how vital our work in this area is.

8. CONCLUSION

Kay closed the meeting. You can see her short presentation, [Moving forward to 2021 presentation](#), which is a PDF with presentation notes.

14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING
The next meeting will be held on Thursday 27 October 2020 in Llandudno, UK.