• SIGBI Conference in Cardiff 2017: Plans in place for a great event
• SIGBI Leadership and Club Development Day: Why you should attend
• SIGBI Club News and Celebrations

Women inspiring action, transforming lives  www.sigbi.org
Welcome to Soroptimist News from the Editor

I was musing, the other day, on the changes in our lives since I first prepared Soroptimist News in 2004. Wow, what a difference!

We were already using computers then of course, but many items were still sent in by post, with photos needing to be scanned and all the text having to be typed in.

Well, its so easy now isn't it? Everything comes by email, photos taken on mobile phones, so you don't have to get the item ready days before the deadline... and so on.

All of the above is true, but... there is a but. Many submissions come in neatly typed, legible, with clear information about which Club has sent it; what happened when; who was there. Many do not. Some instruct us to 'look it up on our website' or 'Phone Jenny for more information.' Some don't make sense at all, assuming that we know which Club 'Jenny' is from; assuming we know what's going on across every region and country.

Some photos are also great... but many are not. We cannot use photos taken on an old phone at low resolution – many phones take good pictures, but many don’t – they take postage stamp size photos that break up in the printing process.

We are asked to ‘fix’ photos, but I regret to say... we have good Photoshop skills but we cannot fix a photo that is wonky, blurred, dark, or tiny.

This is not a complaint, it is a quest! We want to produce the best possible magazine for the best women's organisation in the world, but we need your help!

Please send your submissions in as soon as possible – don’t wait for the deadline – and make them clear and concise.
January was a month of planning, catching up with emails, and taking part in face to face meetings, and many teleconferences including discussions on the Growth Plan, Cardiff Conference, and Soroptimist International business.

This quiet time has allowed us to update the Vision 2021 presentation, which will be sent out to Federation Councillors shortly. As usual, Board Members will be visiting Regions throughout 2017 to deliver the presentation and listen to your comments and questions so I hope you will take the time to come and listen to one of them. Alternatively, invite your Federation Councillor to deliver the presentation at a Club Meeting.

Much discussion time has been about the Club Growth Plan, and how we can implement it across the Federation given the excellent feedback that we received from the pilot. A copy of the feedback can be found in the members’ area of the website. Please look out for more information over the coming weeks, and grasp this opportunity to learn from external consultants about how to grow your Club.

I also spent time on planning for the first Federation Management Board meeting of the year. These meetings take place over a weekend, so from Friday evening through to Sunday lunchtime or later we use every minute that we are together to discuss Federation business.

Our Strategic plan will most definitely be on the Agenda in February to ensure that our work plans focus on our big goal – to be the leading Organisation for today’s women, but so will Charitable Status, following the decision taken in Malta to become a Charity. At our reflection session in Malta, we spent time reviewing our governance against the Good Governance Code as a first step to understanding what we needed to put in place going forward if the resolution was successful. Thank you for making this decision, and we will keep you informed as we move towards implementation.

I also attended the 63 Annual General Meeting. It is always a pleasure to stay at No 63 – the rooms are lovely and all have en suite facilities. It is also well situated for many tourist attractions and near Paddington station. If you have never been, then it’s worth a visit! This was followed on Sunday by a meeting with Past Federation Presidents when we discussed our plans for the year so that we could benefit from their experience.

I know at this time of year many of you hold your annual ‘Time of Reflection’ events to help with planning the new Club Year. This is your opportunity to look at how successful your Club is at recruiting new Members and making its voice heard through good Programme Action work. It is said that, “If you change what you believe then you change what you do”.

We need to make ourselves relevant to younger women to achieve real membership growth so I hope you will take the time to have this important discussion. Why not base your discussions on, “What a younger woman would think looking at your Club meeting and activities?”

Before finishing, I want to reflect on another piece of my speech in Malta. My theme “Step Up, Lead the Way” equally applies to our programme action work. Whilst there are many great examples that I could choose to talk about, the one that I concentrated on is our project work on Anti-Human Trafficking. Whilst I have no intention of giving you new project work to focus on, I would ask that you continue your work on Anti Human Trafficking because it remains such a heinous crime in modern day society. It is also a great example of how we can work on a significant world issue alongside partner organisations and governments to change the lives of women and girls.

I am beginning to get excited about plans for the next Conference and look forward to welcoming many of you to Cardiff. We pack our Annual Conference with so much content that it always feels like a whirl wind, but an enjoyable one. I attended my first conference in Bournemouth many years ago and have not missed this annual injection of inspiration and friendship ever since. So, I hope that seasoned conference goers will be able to persuade new members and potential members to come along and experience a warm welcome, great presentations and the chance to meet Soroptimist sisters from across the Federation.

Ann

Ann Hodgson, President,
Soroptimist International Great Britain and Ireland
Girls’ Education: A lifeline to development

Education is one of the most critical areas of empowerment for women. It is also an area that offers some of the clearest examples of the discrimination suffered by women. Among children not attending school there are twice as many girls as boys, whilst among illiterate adults there are twice as many women as men.

Offering girls a basic education is one sure way of giving them much greater power — of enabling them to make genuine choices over the kinds of lives they wish to lead. This is not a luxury. The Convention on the Rights of the Child recognises that every child has the right to go to school to learn. That right begins in early childhood, which is one of the reasons why the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) call on Governments to “ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education.”

The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child met for its first formal session in September 1991 and concluded that The Convention on the Rights of the Child established it as a basic human right. Additionally, The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women also established it as a basic human right.

UNICEF


Despite great progress in school enrolment in many parts of the world, the number of children aged between six and eleven who are out of school has increased since 2011.

About 124 million children and adolescents do not attend school, and two out of five leave primary school without having learnt to read, write or do basic arithmetic, according to the 2013 data.

This challenge is compounded by the increasingly protracted nature of armed conflict. Nearly 250 million children live in countries and areas affected by armed conflict, and millions more bear the brunt of climate related disasters and chronic crises.

“When we provide education, shelter and protection for children caught in conflicts, we help mend their hearts and minds — so that someday, they will have the ability and desire to rebuild their countries,” says UNICEF.

An educated woman

In addition to educated women having a happier, healthier life, there are important benefits for society as a whole:

• An educated woman has the skills, information and self-confidence that she needs to be a better parent, worker and citizen.

• An educated woman is likely to marry at a later age and have fewer children. Cross country studies show that an extra year of schooling for girls reduces fertility rates by 5 to 10 per cent, and the children of an educated mother are more likely to survive. In India for example, the infant mortality rate of babies whose mothers have received primary education is half of that of children whose mothers are illiterate.

• An educated woman is also likely to be more productive at work… and be better paid. Studies from a number of countries suggest that an extra year of schooling will increase a woman’s future earnings by about 10 per cent, compared with 11 per cent for a man.

Access to learning

Over recent decades there has been significant progress in girls’ education but what would it take to improve girls’ access to education?

• Parental and community involvement – families and communities must be important partners with schools in developing curriculum and managing children’s education.

• Low cost and flexible timetables – basic education should be free or cost very little. Where possible there should be stipends and scholarships to compensate for the loss of girls’ household labour. Also school hours should be flexible so children can help at home and still attend classes.

• Schools close to home, with women teachers – many parents worry about girls travelling long distances on their own and many parents prefer to have daughters taught by women.

• Preparation for school – girls do best when they receive early childhood care, which enhances their self-esteem and prepares them for school.

• Relevant curricula – learning materials should be relevant to the girl’s background and be in the local language and should also avoid reproducing gender stereotypes.

Throughout our Federation Soroptimists recognise the value of Educating, Empowering and Enabling the girl child and do this through their project work.

A number of Clubs sponsor girls’ education to ensure that the girls stay at school as long as possible. This will increase their chances of delaying marriage and reduce the number of children produced.
SI Jamestown: Woodcarving project

SI Bangor & District were presented with their Certificate of the Federation Programme Award 2016. They have been successful in raising £750 to support the Itala Project in North East Kenya. The chosen candidate was Pampa, a partially sighted girl in Calcutta, who since receiving 2 years of education and support has passed her Grade 12 exam and is now studying at a Nursing school.

SI Barnstaple collected 90 books and delivered them to a local shop that supports Book Relief UK. In the last 2 years, they have collected over 270 books and raised £1100 for the Syria project.

SI Bridgewater raised funds at a car boot sale and were able to present a cheque for £220 to Team Baldwin, the founder of St Peters Life Line, an amazing charity providing education to orphaned and impoverished children in a remote, harsh area of North East Kenya.

SI Crosby President Elect Sheila Chatterton and Margaret Cole, PAC Officer, attended the Selton No Limits Challenge Awards for 2016 in November. No Limits recognises the achievements of looked after young people in the care of Selton Council in an educational setting, whether it be school, college, University or in their local community. SI Crosby has sponsored this event for a number of years and, hopefully, will continue to do so in the future.

SI Jamestown's Woodcarving for Female Orphans and Poor Children in Kenya has raised £1100 five years ago, during Andrea Robertson's presidential year, for The Itala Foundation, a small but successful charity based in Calcutta, India, which provides a home and education for orphaned and needy children, breaking the cycle of poverty.

SI Solihull sponsored a girls’ conference for 60 vulnerable, disaffected girls with challenging behaviour in Staffordshire in 2016. The chosen candidate was Hellen, a partially sighted girl in Uganda, initially raising £2000 for Back to School Syria in partnership with FOAG (Farmers Overseas Action Group) is sponsoring Esther, a partially sighted girl in Uganda, initially for 12 years. Long term, hopefully Esther will continue her education and become empowered to find gainful employment.

SI Bridgewater: Education in Kenya

The three month intensive programme gave girls some basic start up knowledge, which added to their education and gave them immense self-confidence.

The chosen candidate was Hellen, a 24 year old girl who had to leave school at 12 when her father died and since then she had helped her mother to raise her siblings and extended family by working at the local market. 12 years later, and with a young child about to start at the Itala School, Hellen was very unhappy with her lack of prospects and wanted to finish her education and pursue a career in Nursing. The Club has been delighted with her dedication and progress that Hellen made, and has continued raising funds for her. After passing her grade 12 exams Hellen won a place at Nkana College of Nursing in Kitwe, where she has now started her career, and SI South Caernarfonshire continues to fund the equipment necessary for the course.

SI Rugby has been paying an education bursary for a girl in The Gambia since 2005. She will be 18 years old in 2017. Throughout her education the family have received six sacks of rice per year, on the understanding that the gift of rice would stop if the girl stopped attending school.

SI Stourbridge in partnership with FOAG (Farmers Overseas Action Group) is sponsoring Esther, a partially sighted girl in Uganda, initially for three years. Long term, hopefully Esther will complete her education and become empowered to find gainful employment.

SI St Vincent's Youth Summer Programme, Girls on Fire 2.0, is a project aimed at empowering girls and equipping them with necessary skills to build self-esteem, educating them with skills of self-sufficiency.

SI Winchester raised £2000 for Back to School Syria, a project initiated by Dutch Soroptimists in 2015. Members and residents were very moved by Ban Ki-Moon's statement “Syrian refugee children continue to suffer on a scale that haunts the soul.”
All the women pictured above were murdered by those who should have protected them - their families. Violence against Women happens in every country and community. Everyone has a role to play. What's yours?

Hello to a New Year, to new challenges, and to the new Secretary General at the United Nations. By the time you read this, Antonio Guterres will be in position. After a momentary disappointment of not having a woman at the helm, initial statements from him that “achieving gender equality in UN staff appointments will be a clear priority” were welcomed. At present women fill less than one in four leadership positions at the UN.

2016 marked the first implementation year of the Sustainable Development Goals, which put women’s empowerment and gender equality at the centre of development efforts. “Gender equality is key to development and there is a growing evidence of its critical role in building and maintaining peace,” says Antonio Guterres. In this world besotted with Violence against Women of every kind, these statements are soothing. And women are leading the change.

#ICchange—a UK based initiative, urges the UK Government to “get serious about ending Violence against Women.”

IC stands for the Istanbul Convention, which offers greater legal protection and supports victims of domestic Violence against Women. In this world besotted with Violence against Women of every kind, these statements are soothing. And women are leading the change.

Nisha Ghosh
Assistant Programme Director, Violence and Conflict Resolution reports

Violence: what are you doing to stop it?

Programme
Objective:
Violence and Conflict Resolution

Nisha Ghosh
Assistant Programme Director, Violence and Conflict Resolution reports

Violence: what are you doing to stop it?

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India’s Aishwaryaa Dhanush, UN Women’s Advocate for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in India, said, “Gender equality is the norm and any person that questions that is an aberration. I hope that the goal of an equal society is taken as a given by the future generations.” Much needed thought for change.

Meanwhile at grassroots, Soroptimists continue their amazing work. 16 days of Activism beginning 25th November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, to 10th December, Human Rights Day, has drawn the imagination and the creativity of Soroptimists across borders. Soroptimists are committed to support actions to end all forms of Violence against Women. Colours are used - White Ribbon, Purple Teardrop, Orange the World – to send across powerful messages.

A young girl in India innocently said, “We did not know that we could send a statement against Violence against Women by sporting orange....”

For the Orange the World campaign, Clubs across the Federation demonstrated their support for dramatically sending signals of no tolerance to Violence against Women. The event calls upon activists to mark the day 25th November and indeed every 25th of the month by this orange reminder.

SI Bangor, Northern Ireland President Teresa Doherty spent some days in Amman working with Palestinian judges on issues of Violence against Women. Teresa was there at the request of United Nations Women. She spoke about the Human Rights convention recently adopted by Palestine in particular CEDAW.

Closer to home Club member Irene Miskimmon had the opportunity to speak on Radio Ulster about the 16 days of action and the stand that Soroptimists were taking on the issue of Violence against Women.

SI Bilston and District works with Karma Nirvana selling their lapel spoon badges to raise awareness of Forced Marriage. Forced Marriage became a criminal offence in 2014. Wearers of spoons explain the significance of the pin – great awareness and advocacy.

SI Bingley distributed book marks to a school in the Bradford community, aimed at empowering and enabling young children to develop healthy relationships in order to stay safe.

SI Calcutta held a Legal Aid Camp for teenage girls and their parents, from underprivileged backgrounds. They were introduced to legal resources available when faced with issues of child marriage, dowry, sexual harassment, rape, property and divorce.

SI Coventry and SI Leamington & Warwick supported the Purple Teardrop Campaign, obtaining over 1,000 signatures to their petition.
SI Weston-super-Mare: Marching on Bristol

SI South Kolkata: Women’s Rights event

SI Yaounde: Theatre of the Oppressed

SI SW & Channel Islands: Orange the World

SI Weston-super-Mare distributed 800 White Ribbon stickers to men and boys on the streets in Kendal. They educated men about UN Day for Elimination of Violence against Women and asked them to pledge never to commit, condone or remain silent about Violence against Women. The action was preceded by a “thunderclap” on social media and in the local paper. Shortly afterwards the Clubs contacted their MP about ratification of the Istanbul Convention which complements existing measures by establishing a more detailed catalogue of legally binding obligations to prevent and respond to Violence against Women.

SI Jamestown lobbied and advocated on behalf of young women and girls and arranged a town hall meeting where they discussed the background to many of the abuse cases reported in Barbados.

SI Kodaikanal, India held a productive and much appreciated afternoon on 25th November where they, with Childline, attended a meeting of parents on the street and performed skits showing different forms of abuse and Violence against Women.

SI Lisburn and District promoted The White Ribbon Campaign. While handing out White Ribbons they heard some heart-breaking stories from both women and men. Time to say ‘STOP’ in the collective voices of men and women.

SI London Chilterns simply lit four candles – one to remember those in the world who are denied their human rights, the second to celebrate the work of women across the world, the third to celebrate the work of Soroptimists across SIGB, and the fourth to celebrate the work of Soroptimists across the world.

SI Lurgan went into a male environment (Glenavon Football Club) to spread the White Ribbon message “Never commit, condone or remain silent about men’s Violence against Women in all its forms.”

SI Northern Ireland Clubs supported the White Ribbon campaign, meeting at the Waterside station to walk across the peace bridge to the Guildhall. Local President Mary McLaughlin presented everyone with a white ribbon with the pledge “I pledge never to commit, condone or remain silent about men’s Violence against Women in all its forms.”

The Mayor Hilary McClintock welcomed the Soroptimists to lend her support to the white ribbon campaign. Karen Elliot from Lisburn explained that the white ribbon campaign had been started by American men to raise awareness of the terrible consequences of Violence against Women, both physical and mental on women and their families. Karen quoted PSNI figures of 28,000 incidents last year with a call out every 19 minutes.

The reception of the Guildhall was followed by the launch of the White Ribbon ambassador in the Long Hall at Stormont on the 5th December.

SI Pune Metro East marked Human Rights Day that ended 16 days of Activism about Violence against Women, with two sessions on related topics. At a multinational corporation 35 young employees attended the session which focused first on Modern Day Slavery and the Women’s Legal Rights.

Member Nisha Ghosh presented the module on Modern Day Slavery as an attempt to create awareness of this modern day menace. Heena Panjabi, a young lawyer, enumerated the various laws that were important for women, especially in the working environment.

SI South Kolkata observed International Human Rights Day by organising a talk with Advocate Vinay Saraf, bringing Awareness among the local women on their rights. Advocate Saraf, a Civil Lawyer addressed their problems and identified the different categories of the Complaints.

He enlightened members about the various governmental agencies present that could be approached for assistance and discussed a special cell in City Civil Court which provides free legal advice and court assistance.

This was followed by an interactive session where several women discussed their problems and sought advice on how to tackle them. We also told them that they should not continue to live in fear but openly oppose any kind of domestic Violence against Women and abuse they face especially, the young girls. Toll free phone numbers and other related information was also shared. Seeing the overwhelming response, SI South Kolkata plans to set up a cell to provide counselling and legal guidance to the underprivileged women. Advocate Saraf has promised to visit periodically to provide legal assistance.

SI South West and Channel Islands’ new Regional President, Daphne Dowssing and Immediate Past Region President Diane Steele joined members at the recent Region Meeting. Wearing orange for the 16 days of activism for the elimination of Violence against Women.

SI St Austell President, Shirley Ho Cemo and Club PA Officer Libby Moore collected donations for the local women’s refuges, from members of the public at their local supermarket. The Club also recently gave each of the refuges £900.

SI Staffordshire Moorlands, SI Cannock and District and SI The Wrekin have extended support in kind to women rescued from violent situations, to disturbed children and joined with other NGOs to strengthen the work for Violence against Women.

SI Yoaundé carried out advocacy on issues such as forced early marriage, educating the girl child and empowerment of African women. Theatre of the Oppressed techniques used by SI Bangalore in a workshop alerted participants on the implicit gender biases against young women.

SI Weston-super-Mare travelled by train from Taunton to Bristol Temple Meads, members climbing onboard at each station en-route. They were joined by Soroptimists from Barnstaple, Bath, Bridgewater, Bristol, Cirencester, Jersey, Tiverton and Yeovil & Sherborne who had travelled by rail. 40 women then marched to the Lord Mayor’s Chapel in Bristol, where they were addressed by Lucy Lord of Women’s Aid, Bristol (which mans the Domestic Abuse helpline) and Tara Newley Arkle who read a moving poem she had written about experiencing abuse. The Deputy Lord Mayor, Cllr Chris Davies, thanked the Soroptimists for drawing attention to this important issue.
Step Up, Lead the Way
SIGBI’s 83rd Federation Conference

Welcome to Cardiff 2017

Wales Millennium Centre (WMC)
The SIGBI Conference has been held in Wales on previous occasions, however, this is our first visit to the amazing Wales Millennium Centre.
This exciting building, situated in the centre of the Cardiff Bay area, was designed to reflect the many different parts of Wales and all of the materials used in its construction actually come from Wales.
Fully opened in 2009, the WMC is home to the National Orchestra and Opera, as well as to dance, theatre and literature companies.

Conference Theme
The theme of President Ann’s year is: ‘Step Up, Lead the Way to a brighter future for women and girls, and a successful year for SIGBI’ and this theme will be reflected in the content of the Conference.

Keynote speakers
Those of you who attended the International Convention in Istanbul will be familiar with the name Michael Kaufman, Co-founder of the White Ribbon Campaign, a global movement to put a stop to male violence against women and girls.
We are delighted that Michael has agreed to join us in Cardiff and tell us more about the work of the White Ribbon Campaign in supporting men to take a stand against gender violence in their workplaces, schools, communities and families.
www.whiteribboncampaign.co.uk

Keynote speakers are confirmed subject to contract so keep your eyes peeled for more information on the conference website and in the next Soroptimist News.

Conference Programme
The General Meeting will take place on the Friday afternoon.
A call for Resolutions went out in the 16th December Mailing and Resolutions (which may be Financial, General or Procedural) should be submitted by 31st March.
It is planned that the Friday afternoon session will close by 16.00 hours and that the Exhibition will remain open until 19.30 hours.
There will be a significant Exhibition area this year featuring Club projects as well as stands from Charities and Commercial Exhibitors.
We hope that you will enjoy having this additional time to browse the range of interesting stands.
Details of how Soroptimist Clubs may apply for a stand in the Exhibition will shortly appear on the Conference Website.

SIGBI President Ann Hodgson
Keynote speaker Michael Kaufman
Conference Chairman Helen Murdoch
Entertainment
And now for the wow factor! Whilst not all of our evening entertainment plans are yet finalised, we can reveal that one of the concerts will feature the Phil Dando Big Band.

Phil is a professional trombonist with the Chamber Orchestra of Wales. In 1992 he formed his own 15 piece Big Band and plays a range of music including swing, jazz, Latin and classical pop.
We think you are in for a treat!

Accommodation
SIGBI have enlisted the assistance of ‘Meet in Cardiff’ who have negotiated the best accommodation rates for our Conference.

Whilst we recommend that you use this service to book your accommodation, this is not compulsory and you are free to choose other hotels in the area. Details of how to book, as well as the list of recommended hotels and a map of the area are available to download from the website.

Transport
Cardiff can be easily reached by either road, rail or air. A regular bendy bus service connects the city centre with Cardiff Bay. Details of local transport from the railway station and airport to the Bay area can be obtained from www.visitcardiff.com.
Details of other local attractions and entertainment can also be accessed via this website.

Eating and drinking
There are numerous interesting places to eat in the area around the Bay, but once again, it is intended to offer delegates the choice of having a packed lunch and details about this will appear on the Registration Form available in March 2017. There are also several cafes and bars in the WMC, which members will be able to enjoy.

Friendship Links
Attending a conference is a wonderful opportunity to meet members from across our Federation. There will be a designated Friendship Link area where you will be able to meet friends old and new. Why not make contact with them now and arrange to meet in Cardiff?
Registration forms will be available from mid-March, so book early to take advantage of the early bird registration fee.

Make it memorable
President Ann suggests that we need a willingness to challenge the way we do things, build on what we do well and change what we could do better. In planning your conference this year, the team has tried to do this and we hope that you will like some of the changes that we have made.
Come along to conference and take advantage of ALL that Cardiff and Cardiff Bay offers – a great location, unique attractions, top class food, exceptional places to stay and quality shopping all on your doorstep. Help us make Cardiff 2017 a memorable occasion!

In the meantime, please check the Conference Website regularly. A list of recommended accommodation is now available and there is also a page of FAQs. (Frequently asked questions).

And finally
If you require any information not yet featured on the website, please do contact us. (www.sigbi.org/cardiff2017)
• Registration Form available March 2017
• Early Bird Cut off 30th June 2017
• Registration Closes 30th September 2017

Join us in Cardiff 2017! We’re looking forward to seeing you!
C Anne MacDonald,
Deputy Chair of Conference.
Friendship Links: Successful joint projects

Zarreen Babu, Friendship Link Co-ordinator 2016-17, reports

We have completed a year of reporting joint projects on this page.
I know that many of you are involved in joint projects and I emphasise the need to share them. For those who are still in a quandary on how to do joint projects please read the recent Friendship Link Newsletter for ideas and see how Clubs here have managed to work together with their Friendship Links. Some Clubs also join hands with different charities to do projects, as you will see below.

SI Hamilton first heard about SI King Sabata Dalindyebo’s Bethany Children’s Home project at the SIGBI Glasgow Conference in November 2015. Their Friendship Link was then established in February 2016. Their international convenor, Myra Toms, began a correspondence with Irene Kolosa about the progress of their relatively new Club and in particular about their Programme Action work.

It seemed that there was so much needed at Bethany Children’s Home that after a discussion at one of their business meetings they agreed to make a financial contribution as a tangible way of expressing friendship and support for their Club and its work.

The money was handed over at the Malta Conference in November 2016, by the three delegates of SI Hamilton. Within a week acknowledgement was received of this donation from their Friendship Link Club.

SI Cardiff and District has formed Friendship Links with SI Kenilworth and District in England and with SI Gentofte in Denmark. Members of all three Clubs have travelled to meet on many occasions and have cooperated to support projects and fund raising events. The relationship continues and the exchange of ideas between the Clubs has been very positive and worthwhile.

Highlights of the events and co-operation between our Clubs include: SI Cardiff members joining SI Kenilworth and District in a Swimathon in support of the Alzheimer’s Society and Help for Heroes. Members from SI Kenilworth & District reciprocated by making the trip to support SI Cardiff & District in a white water rafting event in support of Water Aid.

In November 2016, a group of Soroptimists from Crosby travelled to Yorkshire recently to visit colleagues in Keighley. They attended a special event to mark the International Day for Ending Violence against Women and Girls.

The Keighley Soroptimists – in partnership with several other organisations – invited local women to hear about support networks for those experiencing abusive relationships. This was part of the ongoing ‘Women of Keighley’ initiative. This aims to bring together the town’s diverse communities in order to increase understanding and promote greater interaction, all for the benefit of women and children.

Speakers covered the Domestic Violence Services, Keighley (DVS), the refuges run by Bradford Women’s Aid, and the Freedom Programme (run by DVS and ‘Staying Put’) which is for survivors of domestic abuse. Principal speaker was Ruqqaya, a survivor of forced marriage, whose personal testimony moved some of the listeners to tears. Education she believes is the key to overcoming cultural attitudes that perpetuate violence against women and girls. Of her own journey to take control of her destiny she said, “This is my life and no-one can take it away from me.”

Yvonne Atkinson (SI Crosby) said, “Soroptimist International of Crosby and Keighley are Friendship Link Clubs, keeping in touch and supporting each other’s events whenever possible. We look forward to seeing our Keighley friends again in the not-too-distant future.”

SI Lewisham and South East London has been working with various organisations and have:
- Supported a girl’s school in Sierra Leone, initially with solar lanterns to help them study and now with sewing machines so they can make hygiene kits.
- Supported Days for Girls (who make hygiene kits) “Knit a Square” (a charity in South Africa that makes blankets for orphans - we knit squares and toys)
- Supported “Dress a Girls Around the World” where they make simple dresses that get distributed mostly in Africa.
- They are continuing to support to a village of women in Uganda with blankets, sheets, towels, solar lanterns and clothes but this year they have asked for goats so we are funding that through an organisation that trains the women to care for them, provides a billy goat at the right time and distributes the spare kids to other women in the group so they all become self sufficient and can feed their family.

Such programmes can probably be combined with Friendship Links to facilitate distribution. I look forward to your report with pictures for the May issue of Soroptimist News.

Please send your reports on joint projects for the next issue by 1st April to Zarreen Babu, SIGBI Friendship Link Co-ordinator, at sigbfirlinky2016@gmail.com

OFFICER VACANCIES AT UKPAC

The current Secretary’s term of office comes to an end shortly and following the resignation of the Treasurer there are two officer vacancies at UKPAC. Currently there are 3 meetings a year. Applications are therefore invited for the following positions:

Honorary Secretary
The role involves arranging and attending all meetings of UKPAC, drawing up the minutes of meetings, circulating information to all members of UKPAC, coordinating arrangements for Study Day.

Honorary Treasurer
The role involves keeping proper accounts; drawing up a statement of accounts and preparing the accounts for annual audit. Drawing up a budget for the year and operating the UKPAC bank accounts as required by the Committee; attending and reporting to UKPAC meetings.

For full job descriptions and application forms please contact Jan Doyle UKPAC Hon Secretary jdoyle.12@btinternet.com

Closing Date: 31st March 2017
SIGBI Leadership and Club Development Day
You’re invited!

Isobel Smith, Director of Organisational Development, writes

This year’s event is being held at Conference Aston, which is part of Aston University in Birmingham on Saturday the 10th June 2017 http://www.conferenceaston.co.uk

The theme of the day is Leadership, the purpose is to learn how to strengthen our voice and presence to have the impact that we want to have locally, nationally and internationally.

How we can develop the influence we need and achieve our ambition to be the leading international organisation for today’s women.

Live events might seem old-fashioned in an increasingly virtual world; however, they can still provide a powerful and effective way to improve relationships, deepen networking and build and create a buzz around our goals and aspirations.

Ann Hodgson, Federation President, will open the day with her theme Step Up and Lead the Way.

Our main speaker this year is Jasvinder Sanghera, CBE, the founder of Karma Nirvana.

Jasvinder will speak on how leadership and her partnerships have allowed her to influence – and make a difference locally, nationally and internationally and allowed her to change the mindset of cultural leaders and politicians.

There is a choice of three workshops:
• Understanding our relationship with the United Nations and strengthening our voice
• Getting our voice heard – Media Training (Radio/TV interviews)
• Make your Club a success – new ways of enriching Members’ experience.

This day is valuable to all and in particular to officers, or those thinking about taking office, at Regional and Club level. The focus of the day is you.

You can register now using the downloadable PDF registration form from the website, and online registration will be open from beginning of March 2017.

Visit http://sigbi.org/members/federation/devdays/ for the Agenda and to Register.

Conference Aston
Aston University Campus
Aston Street, Birmingham B4 7ET

10th June 2017 10am to 4pm
Cost £42.50 to include a 3 course lunch and refreshments (Subsidised by SIGBI)

SIGBI Fees for younger Members (16-25)

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<th>Band</th>
<th>Full Year</th>
<th>Q1 (April/May/June)</th>
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The Resolution to offer reduced fees for Younger Members, aged 16-25 was passed at the SIGBI General Meeting in November 2016.

The fees payable to SIGBI for Younger Members in 2017-2018 are listed here.

The list of Countries in each fee banding is underneath.

Please can all Clubs and Regions/National Associations/Networks also review their fee structure, so that Younger Members will pay no more than half the fee payable by full Members.

New Members joining throughout the year

Band

Bangladesh, Cameroon, Gambia, Malawi, Nepal, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda, Zimbabwe
Band 2
Anguilla, India, Jamaica, Pakistan, Sri Lanka
Band 3
Barbados, Grenada, Mauritius, South Africa, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Turks and Caicos
Band 4
Channel Islands, Isle of Man, Malta, Republic of Ireland, Seychelles, Trinidad and Tobago, United Kingdom

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Channel Islands, Isle of Man, Malta, Republic of Ireland, Seychelles, Trinidad and Tobago, United Kingdom
Pat Black, International Director of Advocacy, Soroptimist International, reports

Good News!

Soroptimists do some amazing things and as volunteers contribute hugely to communities around the world; locally, nationally and internationally. Occasionally these activities get well deserved public recognition for example in the UK through Queen Elizabeth II Honours lists.

In some cases recognition comes through other routes. Soroptimist International is delighted that at the end of January 2017 International president Elect Mariet Verhooft-Cohen is to be presented with an award for her services as a Soroptimist and as President of the Women for Water Partnership.


The theme for the WEF-EU 2017 is “EU: Reinventing Itself: Women Empowerment & Inclusion.” Over 400 women and men from across the EU and Europe are expected to join along with delegates from across the world.

Speaking for the Women Economic Forum, Dr. Harbeen Arora, Founder & Global Chairperson congratulating the awardees said that we need to uphold role models in a variety of sectors and used for grouping comments; how to use photographs – and why they are so valuable and much more.

Before you get Tweeting, you also need to understand just why it is so useful to Soroptimists and our work.

Twitter is an amazing way to get people to notice you – for example, most MPs have a Twitter handle and you can use Twitter as a lobbying tool – reaching the right people with your tweets that can be about the issues that you are working on, examples include @TeardropPurple; @UN_Women

To download this infographic just go to the SIGBI website: www.sigbi.org/members/communications-2/digital-tools.

You could print this off and keep it in your handbag if you need a bit of guidance whilst out and about at events - I hope you find it useful. Facebook – are you asking post likes to like your page? If you have a Facebook page for your Club you could be getting many more page “likes” by inviting your Facebook post “likes” to like your page.

It’s quite surprising that many of the people who like your Facebook posts have not actually liked your page.

Here’s how you invite them to do so:

• Go through your Facebook posts and click on the link which shows the people who have liked the post
• This will bring up all the people who have liked the post, it will say to the right of their name if they already like your page, if they don’t it will say “invite”
• Click invite to invite them to like your page
• Do this regularly for all your Facebook posts and see your page likes increase

If you need any help with this please contact Lisa Roscoe lisa@sigbi.org.

Award winning Soroptimists

Marie Christine Gris de La Barbelais has been selected against stiff competition to the NGO Liaison Committee for UNESCO in Paris which will provide the leadership for NGOs working with UNESCO over the next two years. For more details http://www.ngo-unesco.net/en/

Dora Vrdlovec in Vienna has taken on the role of Vice President of the NGO Committee on Sustainable Development. NGOs have a major part to play in achieving the UN 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development so it is important for SI to be a part of that leadership. https://congocsd.wordpress.com/

All of these women are valued because of their dedication and commitment to improving the lives of women and girls in every country. They are passionate advocates for gender equality and work to bring about the changes which enable, empower and educate more and more women and girls. They are backed by the invaluable work which is done at the grassroots level by so many volunteers and which can be reported to the UN via the federation database systems.

Soroptimist International is proud of their achievements and thanks them for their service on your behalf. They are the global voice for women and girls in need.

Communications
Twitter for Soroptimists Cheat Sheet

Lisa Roscoe, SIGBI Communications Officer

Are you using Twitter? We’ve created a Twitter for Soroptimists Cheat Sheet Infographic.

It’s packed with really useful tips that will give you the inspiration (and confidence!) to get on to one of the most useful social media platforms. It’s also great fun!

The infographic starts with the challenge of Twitter — many people don’t believe it’s possible to get a message across in just 140 characters (including spaces between words!) but that’s the challenge, Twitter makes wordsmiths of everyone! We also tell you about hashtags, which are also great fun!

To download this infographic just go to the SIGBI website: www.sigbi.org/members/communications-2/digital-tools.

You could print this off and keep it in your handbag if you need a bit of guidance whilst out and about at events - I hope you find it useful. Facebook – are you asking post likes to like your page? If you have a Facebook page for your Club you could be getting many more page “likes” by inviting your Facebook post “likes” to like your page.

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If you need any help with this please contact Lisa Roscoe lisa@sigbi.org.
Sue Williams, Director of Membership, reports

Soroptimists around the Federation were enthused in 2016 by our campaign to raise our profile and increase Membership. May 2017 is just around the corner and it’s time again to use all of the tools available to Clubs to promote Membership.

**New to the 2017 Campaign**
- Template event invitations
- A new poster design
- Ideas and tips for producing a video for your Club like SI Pune Metro East and SI Nottingham
- Advert templates for you to download and use in local free papers and online
- Finally, if your members can sing, act, dance or recite poetry why not consider a flash mob? There are instructions on how to develop your very own flashmob on the website so what are you waiting for? All this can be found in the Members’ Area of our website http://sigbi.org/members/clubs/recruitmentevents/recruitmenteventstoolkit/

More tools will also be available in the coming months, such as a new infographic, headers for Twitter and Facebook and a new Thunderclap. We will also be using Facebook adverts to promote our work. Look out for these in May. Facebook adverts are cheap, simple, quick adverts targeting prospective Members. Consider advertising in this way - the cost is as little as £5!

**New Membership Leaflet**
A new Membership leaflet is now available. Each Club has received five free copies but you can buy further supplies from SIGBI HQ - a pack of 50 costs £6 plus P&P.

**Promotional Items**
There is another opportunity to order the T-shirts (a minimum order of 100 T-shirts is required) and badges.

Now for this year - you can also order a very handy bag to beat the 5p plastic bag charge that many of us face during our routine shopping trips. Order yours from SIGBI HQ.

If however, you would like something different to wear at your event this year why not contact Joanne@sigbi.org and hire the SIGBI sashes for only the cost of the postage.

These do need to be returned to SIGBI HQ after the event at your own expense, and please order them at least a month in advance.

If you would like to purchase your own personalised roller-banner, further details can be found on the SIGBI Website: http://sigbi.org/members/sigbi-shop/club-retailing/ or alternatively please contact Joanne at SIGBI HQ.

Clubs were very inventive about how they celebrated Membership Month in 2016 and we can’t wait for the 2017 campaign.

**#Whysoroptimist**
Putting the FUN in FUNdraising: SI Northwich & District raised over £800 for their charities and had a great time doing it. #Whysoroptimist influence policies affecting women locally and global. Well done to SI Killarney.

**#WhySoroptimist?**
Because we are women making a difference St. Albans and District #WhySoroptimist?

“Because we inspire action, transform lives & educate empower & enable women & girls to achieve their potential” Rosalie Muir.

**#WhySoroptimist?** “If you enjoy the friendship of a group, enjoy trying to make the world a better place, join!” #Why Soroptimist “Because I want girls and women to get educated.” Alicia Casper.

**Blog it!**
During all of this excitement and activity don’t forget to record what you are doing through a simple written blog to be included on your Club’s website, Pat Black did just that in 2016, why not look at hers on the website and be inspired. It’s not too late for your Club to hold an event as some events are running into June and July. Just remember to let us know what you are doing and tell us when you are successful!

Perhaps your Club will be sitting with 10 new Members this time next year just like SI Selby!

So Step Up, Lead the Way!
Pink by the pool: proceeds presented to the President of Malta

Mary Rose Bonello, President, SI Malta, reports that Club members were delighted to be able to present the money collected during the SIGBI Conference in aid of breast cancer research to Her Excellency Marie Louise Coleiro Preca, President of Malta.

Mary Rose says, “Today we presented a cheque of €1,500 to the Malta Community Chest Fund Foundation in aid of breast cancer research at San Anton Palace.

“President Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca thanked us for the donation and assured us that it will go for cancer research. We had a small chat with the President and we told her about the SIGBI Conference and the Pink by the Pool event and also shared with her some of our initiatives in the last year. During the afternoon, after the presentation, I received an email inviting us to meet with Her Excellency, The President of Malta, again, in March to talk about Soroptimists and the work that we do.

Financial reporting
Handy tips for Club Treasurers

Judith Lewis, Director of Finance, writes

Club Treasurers – Handy Tips for Financial Reports
1. The financial year for SIGBI Clubs commences on 1st April each year and ends on 31st March each year.
2. Club Treasurers are required to keep comprehensive accounting records to illustrate openness and transparency.
3. It is recommended that a Club has two bank accounts, the first to operate the Club’s income and expenditure, and the second (traditionally called the “Charity Account”), to record the Club’s fund raising activities and expenditure (payments to charities etc).
4. There should be at least three authorised signatories to the accounts and two will be required to sign each cheque or authorise each payment. This allows for “checks and balances.”
5. Under no circumstances should blank cheques be signed.
6. Incoming and outgoing cheques/payments should be recorded as follows:
   - Name of payer/payee
   - Amount
   - Date received/Date paid
   - Purpose of receipt/payment
7. Online banking is a quick and alternative method to cheque banking, although the same principles apply. If your bank does not offer a dual signatories facility for online banking, Treasurers should ensure that they print out the payment sheet and get the second signatory to authorise the payment. This, together with the original paperwork, is filed as evidence of the purpose of the payment and is essential for audit requirements.
8. When making online payments or bank transfers, there is only a limited field for the payment reference. It is very important that the organisation receiving the funds can identify where the payment is from and for what purpose. For example, if a Club is paying its annual return to SIGBI the reference could be first five characters of Club name, followed by a hyphen and then the purpose: SI Manch - Annual Return or SI Manch - AR or for an invoice – SI Manch – Inv 123
9. The treasurer should produce an annual statement of Income and Expenditure for the year ended 31st March and a Balance Sheet as at 31st March. All financial records need to be filed for an annual independent examination of the Club accounts and should be retained for a minimum of 6 years. A signed report from the examiner, who should be a person with appropriate knowledge and experience, should be made available to all members and kept on file.
10. It is advisable that the Club Treasurer provides a monthly report, detailing income and expenditure, to the Club Executive. This enables the Treasurer to highlight any issues, and for the Executive to examine the Club’s financial situation.
11. Many Clubs organise trips on behalf of its members, for example to the SIGBI Conference or visits to Friendship Link events. Often this is administered by a Member other than the Treasurer, but the same principles apply. Accurate income and expenditure records must be kept and all monies administered through the Club’s account or a separate account set up for that purpose. The Member needs to work closely with the Club Treasurer.
12. If you have any questions regarding accounting procedures please contact SIGBI HQ in the first instance – hq@sigbi.org
2000 Club

Corrected: There were errors in the listing for the August draw, the correct list is below.

Winners August 2016

Jane Smith £100 SI Barnstaple
Lorraine Gillings £100 SI Plymouth
Joan Hellowell £50 SI Halifax
Daphne Dowsing £50 SI Tiverton
Jenny Tasker £25 SI Guernsey
Joyce Chesney £25 SI Stockton-on-Tees

Winners November 2016

Theresa Nixon £100 SI Bangor N. Ireland
Jean Jolly £100 SI Hertford & District
Dorothy Buck £50 SI Croydon
Jennifer Lawrence £50 SI Birmingham Central
Dr M O’Farrell £25 SI Cheltenham
Elizabeth Gourlay £25 SI Perth

Winners December 2016

Sue Robilliard £1000 SI Guernsey
Sue Curr £500 SI St Austell
Jaye Tefer £500 SI Perth
Barbara Hulmes £250 SI Ramsbottom
Margaret Shipman £250 SI Yeovil

Winners January 2017

Valerie Nuttall £100 SI Swindon
Suzanne Storer £100 SI Leicester
Sue Ruse £50 SI Weston-super-Mare
A. Ewing £50 SI Guernsey
Carole Nicholson £25 SI Kenilworth
Margaret McGowen £25 SI Newtowndwards

Winners February 2017

Si Plymouth £100 SI Plymouth
Joani Stansell £100 SI Plymouth
Cherrl Pritchard £50 SI West Bromwich
Christina Ellaby £50 SI Northwich
Anne Ainsworth £25 SI Cambridge
Marion Merkens £25 SI Derby

The 2000 Club was set up in 2000 to raise funds for the upkeep of Number 63, our Club in London. Anyone can join, the cost is £1 per week. Six winners are chosen each month by SI Plymouth. The first two win £100, the next two win £50 and the remaining two win £25. Twice a year in the big draw, the first prize is £1,000, the second prize is £500 and the last two win £250. On the Number 63 website there is an application form to join the 2000 Club - http://www.number63.co.uk/
Memorial Fund recipients report on the SIGBI Conference

Ayushi Kundu, SI Calcutta

On a hot May evening last year, I had an email from SIGBI saying that I was one of four Memorial Grant awardees for 2016 – I squealed with delight in the middle of the road.

Six months later, I was in Malta. The blue skies and the sea seemed to be embedded with the spirit of Soroptimism!

My first experience of a Federation Conference began at the FPAC Meeting. While I was trying to grasp the ways of SIGBI, I did learn a lot. The reporting format was demonstrated, the importance of reporting in line with the UN SDGs was emphasised.

That evening we attended the formal opening of the Conference, followed by the Flag March of all countries and the lovely Paul Curmi dancers; a great opportunity for us to bond with fellow Soroptimists!

The second day began with the ‘Pink by the Pool Party’ in support of Breast Cancer. Every Soroptimists came dressed in pink, some such as Federation IPP Margaret wearing cute little pink tutus, some with pink headgear and wigs! I was in awe seeing everyone’s fun loving nature.

Later, we had heard accomplished speakers; The striking feature of Dame Professor Sue Ion’s talk was how young girls are not encouraged to study engineering, how it is really important to make them take up this stream for steering change.

Sara Ezabe Malliue, a young social activist from Malta spoke of discrimination against her because she wore the hijab and was a Muslim. Her message was to embrace multiculturalism to help us engineer the future.

Steve Arthur, who is associated with Water Aid, spoke about gender discrimination against women and girls due to access to clean water and sanitation, and Water Aid’s goal to provide universal access to clean water and sanitation by 2030.

Dave Coplin, Chief ‘Envisioning’ Officer of Microsoft kept us spellbound telling us to harness the power in our pocket, make technology work.

Dr. Helen Sharman was the first astronaut from Britain. She spoke of her journey to space, inspiring us with the words ‘seize the moment.’ Very soon we approached the end of the Conference, which passed in the blink of an eye! The Change of Insignia took place with the installation of Ann Hodgson as the new President of SIGBI and the exchanging of chains by the outgoing and incoming presidents of National Associations, Regions and Networks.

The Conference was over, months of waiting left me with lessons and memories which I will always cherish. I thank SIGBI for the opportunity it gave me, I urge it to encourage more young girls like me to participate in such conferences, because Soroptimist is not just another NGO or charitable institution, it is a movement which gives us the chance to participate in policy making and decide a better future for ourselves and the generations to come!

Shobhanna Badri Maharaj

SI Chaguanaus (Trinidad & Tobago)

I remain grateful to SIGBI for providing the opportunity to attend the 82nd Federation Conference in Malta. I was in awe to see so many fellow Soroptimists gathered in one place all in the spirit of Soroptimism.

It gave me immense pride to see Trinidad and Tobago’s flag held high, side by side with other countries, the Soroptimist International flag and the United Nations flag on the opening night. To receive greetings from Her Majesty the Queen of England, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and other highly distinguished individuals really cemented to me the power and influence Soroptimists can have.

It was an absolute joy to participate in the Pink by the Pool event. My fellow sisters really went out in support of Breast Cancer Awareness however I must admit I felt terribly under-pinked. It will be hard to ever forget pink panther or IPP Margaret’s pink tutu.

The speakers were all incredibly inspiring. Dame Professor Sue Ion DBE, FREng, highlighted the lack of women in STEM. She is truly a role model for all young girls who wish to study STEM subjects.

Bandana Rana to me embodies, what it means to be a Humanitarian. I was brought to tears to see her work and how she has fought for the women’s movement in Nepal. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to speak to her. Her words of encouragement will never be forgotten, inspiring me to do more in my own country.

Sara Ezabe Malliue has accomplished so much at such a young age. Her life journey is inspiring and it was an honour to speak to her.

Steve Arthur’s presentation left me speechless as he highlighted how access to water and sanitation can have a massive impact on a school girl’s education.

Dave Coplin was entertaining in his presentation as he indicated the importance of technology and its transformational potential. Finally Helen Sharman DBE - Britain’s first Astronaut. Her journey into space, along with the preparation and training illustrated to me the dedication and passion she has for her field of work. She is incredibly inspirational for young girls who dream of going into space.

SIGBI project awards this year were mind-blowing. The creativity that went into these projects were incredibly inspiring. They were all deserving winners. The nominees in each category were just as impressive as the winners.

As a first time attendee I wore an orange lanyard. This became a conversation starter for many delegates. The ladies were very warm and friendly and I thank them for their kindness. The first time attendee tea break with President Margaret was also very memorable. She was a very down-to-earth easy person to speak to and quite entertaining. During this tea break I also meet with my fellow Memorial Grant Awardees as well as incoming President Ann. I am grateful for the opportunity to chat with them.

I now truly understand and have a better appreciation of what it means to be a Soroptimist. This experience has made me think harder to be more creative and work much harder in designing projects and coming up with ideas focused around women and girls and particularly in STEM. I will take everything I have learnt back to my Club and emphasise to them that more needs to be done in our community.

I am grateful for all the wonderful ladies I have had the pleasure of meeting and hope that we will continue to keep in touch. I realise that I have used the word ‘inspiring’ quite often throughout this report however this conference has been nothing but that – INSPIRING. I am inspired to EDUCATE, EMPower and ENABLE myself and my Club to work harder and remain committed to Soroptimism.
SI Bridgend members were delighted to learn that Anne Morgan had been awarded an MBE in the United Kingdom New Year’s Honours List. A Soroptimist since 1983, Ann has been a dedicated and much valued member, an officer of the Club and President in 2001. In addition to her numerous roles in the community, she has worked tirelessly supporting the many projects and causes of Soroptimism. Her recognition is well deserved.

SI Chelmsford celebrated its 65th Anniversary and their ‘Best of Sisters Awards’ with a Charter Lunch at Channels Essex Barn Chelmsford on 20th November. The lunch was attended by Lord Petre Lord Lieutenant of Essex, The Rt. Hon. Sir Simon Burns MP, The Mayor of Chelmsford, Councillor Patricia Hughes, Ann Ganile, SI Immediate Past President and Alison Charles, SI London Anglia Regional President. The Club’s Best of Sister Award, sponsored this year by the business growth professionals CEO Strauss, was presented to Daphne Field, who in 2008 was co-founder of the organisation to promote the women of Essex - The Essex Women’s Advisory Group. The award was presented by The Mayor of Chelmsford, Councillor Patricia Hughes.

SI Drogheda members celebrated Nolagh na mBliain with an Italian theme while focusing on one aspect of the Republic of Ireland’s National Project – “Women Sharing Learning” – understanding and celebrating cultures within the community. They also acknowledged the dedication and service of six Soroptimists, three with 30 years and three with 35 years’ service.

SI Ilkley member and Past President Anne-Mary Inglehearn has been honoured with the National Mentoring Award 2016, by the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP). Anne-Mary is the Librarian at Leeds College of Building and received her award from Kate Robinson of Bath University, Chair of the CILIP Qualifications Board.

SI Kodaikanal celebrated its 4th Charter anniversary in January, with 12 members and three new members, having fun with a tasty Chinese meal and a cozy fireplace at the Kodai Club.

SI Sydney celebrated International Friendship Day with a candle lighting ceremony in recognition of their ten Friendship Links across the world. President Pat Shore welcomed guests, including Yorkshire President Liz Lyle. Pat spoke about International President Yvonne Simpson’s project Educate to Lead: Nepal Appeal and its focus on helping to rebuild lives, whilst providing educational opportunities for women and girls. Candles were lit for each of the Clubs as well as Soroptimist International. The event raised £530 for the Appeal.

SI New castle upon Tyne member, Vera Baird QC, was made a Dame Commander of the British Empire in the New Year’s Honours for her services to women and equality. Dame Vera, as a lawyer who has defended feminist protesters, fought in pregnancy discrimination cases and helped to shape the law in domestic violence. As Solicitor General for England and Wales, she launched the first CPS strategy to counter violence against women and girls and played a key role in shaping the 2010 Equality Act. Dame Vera became a Soroptimist in 2015 and gives time and advice to projects to raise awareness of domestic violence particularly with Northern England Soroptimists who hosted the Stop the Traffic GIFT BOX in Newcastle upon Tyne.

SI San Fernando, celebrated the 90th birthday of member Ursula de Castro with a tea at the historic Ortinola Great House in the scenic Maracas Valley. Ursula has been a member for 38 years, serving as Club President and at the National Association of Trinidad and Tobago, and at SIGBI and Caribbean Conferences. The Charter Member who spoke on her behalf said, “We applaud you on reaching this milestone in good health and being able to compete with the proverbial Energiser Bunny. They don’t make them like this anymore!”

SI Port Talbot President Judith Morgan presented Long Service Awards to four members, who, between them, total almost 140 years Service to Soroptimist International. Between them they have held many positions in SIGBI, including Regional President Wales, National Project – “Women Sharing Learning” – understanding and celebrating cultures within the community. They also acknowledged the dedication and service of six Soroptimists, three with 30 years and three with 35 years’ service.

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SI Port Talbot President Judith Morgan presented Long Service Awards to four members, who, between them, total almost 140 years Service to Soroptimist International. Between them they have held many positions in SIGBI, including Regional President Wales.
SI Smethwick celebrated its 65th Anniversary Dinner at The Lodge in Dudley on 7th October. They enjoyed wonderful food and a great show with entertainer, Chris King. SIGBI President Elect Ann Hodgson (now President) and Midland Chase Regional President Alyson Green attended along with members of Smethwick and other Clubs and friends.

SI Southport Member Diana Beldam celebrated her 100th Birthday on 31st January 2017 with a party put on by the members. Diana joined the Club in 1974 and is an amazing lady who still attends all Club meetings and events. The photo shows Diana with President Elaine Tenneson and the Mayor, Councillor lan Brodie-Brown.

SI Swindon welcomed 30 guests to its 56th Charter lunch with Angus Macpherson PCC for Wiltshire and Swindon as speaker and SWCI Regional President Diane Steele. Joint President Ruth Hiller was host. The day was also special for Treasurer Jackie Webb who was presented with a certificate by Regional President Diane, celebrating 25 years as a Soroptimist.

SI Tamworth celebrated long service awards with two members. Joan Morris, retired hospital matron celebrated 40 years and Vera MacDonald a retired ward sister celebrated 30 years. They received their awards from Chris Fulwell one of three presidents this year.

SI Tiverton members, Di and Daphne attended a friendship weekend in Jersey. Daphne spent time with a former member Marie, and they all enjoyed the Wine Tasting on the Friday evening, a buffet supper in a windmill and Dinner at the St Brelade hotel.

SI Torquay celebrated its 75th anniversary with a Garden Party. Cheques were given to Rowcroft Hospice, Children’s Hospice South West and Meru Women’s Garden Project. Guests enjoyed a delicious cream tea at Rosegarth, Penny Crump planted the ‘Benstar’ Soroptimist Rose and Regional President Di Steele cut the ribbon on a bench, inscribed in memory of past members: ‘A life that touches others goes on forever.’

SI St Vincent & The Grenadines
The theme of International Day of Older Persons for 2016 is Take A Stand Against Ageism. SISVG celebrated with their Annual Tea for the elderly, serving 50 guests and they all enjoyed the Wine Tasting on the Friday evening, a buffet supper in a windmill and Dinner at the St Brelade hotel.

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SI Aberdeen members enjoyed an afternoon at the Town House in Aberdeen where they were presented with individual gold awards for volunteering within the Aberdeen area. A delicious afternoon tea was also provided by Aberdeen City Council.

SI Barnstaple members joined in the fun of Barnstaple Fair Carnival with a Hanky Panky tombola stall.

SI Belfast President Yvonne, IP President Elaine and Avril, Programme Action Officer, are pictured with Edith Kadammanja who was visiting Northern Ireland from Malawi. Edith heads a Nursery School for orphaned children in Malawi. The children then move on to Makata Primary School which is supported by Belfast Soroptimists.

SI Blackburn held a Friendship Evening at Wilpshire Golf Club where the guest speaker, Julia Goddard of Bee Ed in Kendal, gave a very informative presentation on “Gardening for Bees” ensuring that everyone went away knowing how best to help the survival of bees and which plants to grow. Raffle proceeds went to Blackburn Foodbank.

SI Bridgend held a Fashion Show at The Heronston Hotel with fashions from Samantha B Boutique in Ewenny. Club members took to the catwalk in great style modelling garments ranging from Casual right through to Occasion Wear and Glamour with Bling. The evening realised £700 for her nominated charity for her year, Y BONT, Bridgend.

SI Brixham members are having fun trying to do line-dancing at the Berry Head Hotel, proceeds of which went to President Pru’s charities for this year of Anode and Young Genesis.

SI Cape of Good Hope’s Val Christoffersen organised an Opera Gala Concert raising funds for their project, Thandokhulu High School. They need benches for the children to sit on and stationery.

SI Carlisle held a Charity Lunch to raise money for the Carlisle Stroke Association and Carlisle Mencap’s respite centre for local children, The Grace Little Centre. They were joined at the Lunch by the Mayor and Mayoress of Carlisle and the CEO of Carlisle Mencap.

SI Edinburgh members enjoyed an afternoon at the Town House in Edinburgh where they were presented with individual gold awards for volunteering within the area. A delicious afternoon tea was also provided by Edinburgh City Council.

SI Exmouth members enjoyed an early dinner at the St Michael’s Windmill followed by a Dance the following evening at the Mill in Tiptree.

SI Harrogate members enjoyed an afternoon at the Town House in Harrogate where they were presented with individual gold awards for volunteering within the area. A delicious afternoon tea was also provided by Harrogate City Council.

SI Lancaster members enjoyed a birthday bash at her home. Sandra Dieffenthaller hosted a memorable, fun filled evening.

SI Malvern members enjoyed a memorable, fun filled evening.

SI Newport members enjoyed a memorable, fun filled evening.

SI Okehampton members enjoyed a memorable, fun filled evening.

SI Plymouth members enjoyed a memorable, fun filled evening.

SI Redhill members enjoyed a memorable, fun filled evening.

SI Rochdale members enjoyed a memorable, fun filled evening.

SI Reading members enjoyed a memorable, fun filled evening.

SI Richmond members enjoyed a memorable, fun filled evening.

SI Swindon members enjoyed a memorable, fun filled evening.

SI Torquay members enjoyed a memorable, fun filled evening.

SI Truro members enjoyed a memorable, fun filled evening.

SI West Bridgwater members enjoyed a memorable, fun filled evening.

SI Worthing members enjoyed a memorable, fun filled evening.
Monies raised will go to Book Aid.

Chatterton’s house and it was an evening of fun and friendship.

Pam Ayres to Rudyard Kipling, evening of poetry ranging from members enjoyed an enjoyable afternoon raised £600.

There were stalls selling garden paraphernalia, books, homemade preserves and a raffle. A thoroughly enjoyable afternoon raised £600.

SI Downpatrick held the 35th Youth Award/Public Speaking Competition. The winner of this heat goes through to a Northern Ireland final. The competition is run to encourage girls to play a more prominent role in public life, to improve the art of communication, to develop speaking skills, self-confidence and personality.

The winner was Brianna McMullan, second was Charlotte Leslie and third was Chloe McCullough.

SI Kodaikanal held a fundraiser “Musical Expressions” with singers from Chennai. It was an evening of live music, dinner, games, fun and fellowship. Proceeds went towards their project Burning Need which installs smokeless stoves to needy homes in Kodaikanal.

An SI Lichfield member has been an uplifting supporter in more ways than one, collecting 1180 bras. The Star Bra Collector built on the foundation of 120 collected bras destined for the Kori Women’s Development Project in Sierra Leone. By motivating friends, colleagues and local businesses, she exceeded her 1000 bra target in weeks. SI Thames Valley will ensure the bras are delivered to the project to benefit ‘at risk’ women in Sierra Leone. Maureen Little, Club Secretary said, “Incredible achievement: I’m speechless.”

SI Mansfield provided afternoon tea party for clients and carers at the ‘Forget-Me-Not Cafe’, Kirkby in Ashfield. The Cafe, for clients with Alzheimers/Dementia, meets monthly, supported by SI Mansfield. Homemade sandwiches, savouries, cakes and drinks were provided.

SI Medway Towns raised £240 to provide toilets for a school in Sierra Leone. With each member “spending a penny” in the true sense of the word they raised enough to provide latrines for an entire school and clean water, basic sanitation and hygiene education.

SI Darlington decorated a tree in the Christmas Tree Festival held by St Cuthbert’s Church in the town centre. As well as highlighting the existence of our Club and Soroptimism, it supported Handicap International. The tree was decorated with shoes to represent the lives and limbs lost because of landmines.

SI Londonderry held a fundraiser in September in memory of the late Leona Reid who sadly died before graduating from University. A charity close to Leonas heart was ‘The Little Princess Trust’ which provides real hair wigs for children suffering hair loss. They raised in excess of £1100.

SI Dhaka observed International Day of the Girl Child within the public health programme where a specialist conducted a Health and Personal Hygiene class for the girls and their mothers at a Literacy centre run by SI Dhaka.

SI East Grinstead, having forged a link with ‘Safe in Sussex’ a women’s refuge, decided that they would donate their Christmas boxes to them. The refuge wouldn’t know how many children they would be there at the time, so they filled decorated shoe boxes with gifts for the women, covered empty boxes for the children and collected gifts and goodies for girls and boys.

SI Inverness & Nairn manned a stall at a Tesco supermarket raising awareness of our Club and the International Day of World Peace on 21st September. They distributed information packs that also contained a candle requesting that it be lit on Wednesday 21 September between 7 and 8pm. Although not fundraising they received over £50 in donations!

SI Leigh has, for several years, provided transport for people attending a volunteer-run local Park Tearooms on Christmas Day. They provide lunch, food hampers and gifts to approximately 30 people of all ages who would normally spend the day alone. All the items were donated from local businesses and people. Even the turkeys were cooked in the Fire Station kitchen - a real team effort!
The Club was very happy to present patients with Ebola staff, who lost their life treating schools, provided education in two (also available for disabled children) built toilets for two projects. They have raised funds who updated them on their year they welcomed Doreen Deigh of members worldwide and this year at their International Evening they celebrate the achievements of women and girls. The Mayor of Nantwich, Deputy Mayor of Crewe, Deputy Mayor of Cheshire East, Chief Constable for Greater Manchester Police and a Major from the Salvation Army all visited their stand. They collected £147.00, from the Salvation Army all visited Manchester Police and a Major East, Chief Constable for Greater Crewe, Deputy Mayor of Cheshire Nantwich, Deputy Mayor of Cheshire West, Deputy Mayor of Cheshire East, Chief Constable for Greater Manchester Police and a Major from the Salvation Army all visited their stand. They collected £147.00, which the Club will make up to £200 for the Salvation Army.

SI Nantwich marked Anti-Slavery Day, for the fourth year, with a Purple Teardrop Event outside St Mary’s in Nantwich. Members made Purple Teardrops, some used as bunting and some which people took home in return for a donation to show solidarity with trafficked women and girls. The Mayor of Nantwich, Deputy Mayor of Crewe, Deputy Mayor of Cheshire East, Chief Constable for Greater Manchester Police and a Major from the Salvation Army all visited their stand. They collected £147.00, which the Club will make up to £200 for the Salvation Army.

SI Nottingham has a longstanding link with SI Freetown, Sierra Leone. Members were keen to help with the aftermath of the Ebola crisis and have been raising money to pay for the schooling of children orphaned by the disease. Once a year at their International Evening they celebrate the achievements of members worldwide and this year they welcomed Doreen Deigh Programme Action Officer and Natalie Cole President of Freetown Programme Action Officer and SI Nottingham has a longstanding link with SI Freetown, Sierra Leone. Members were keen to help with the aftermath of the Ebola crisis and have been raising money to pay for the schooling of children orphaned by the disease. Once a year at their International Evening they celebrate the achievements of members worldwide and this year they welcomed Doreen Deigh Programme Action Officer and Natalie Cole President of Freetown SI Nottingham has a longstanding link with SI Freetown, Sierra Leone. Members were keen to help with the aftermath of the Ebola crisis and have been raising money to pay for the schooling of children orphaned by the disease. Once a year at their International Evening they celebrate the achievements of members worldwide and this year they welcomed Doreen Deigh Programme Action Officer and Natalie Cole President of Freetown.

SI Plymouth celebrated International Literacy Day on 10th September, by giving away hundreds of books. They have been collecting books throughout the year (for many years now) and find the public very responsive to the need for reading. There were many children who visited to pick up a free book.

SI Pontypridd President Lynne is pictured promoting Soroptimist International on g.t.f.m.a local radio station.

SI St. Albans marks International Literacy Day every year selling second hand books on St Albans market. It raised all day but that couldn’t stop Members from putting a smile on their faces (Lynda Shill and Sarah Lichman are pictured). The event raised £160 which at 50p per book is a lot of reading! The money will provide funds for the St Albans & Hertsmere Women’s Refuge.

SI St. Albans members dressed in pink as October was breast cancer awareness month. Pauline Giles (second right) a breast cancer survivor spoke about her charity Bosom Buddies. She has now visited 26,000 schoolgirls on Cornwall explaining how to examine their breasts etc. The latex breasts have very small lumps within them so that the girls can monitor their technique.

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SI Sheffield started the year with a fascinating talk at their supper meeting from local chiropractor Sonia Hardcastle who told them all about how to keep their spines and joints in good health. There was a visible straightening of all the backs in the room as she emphasised the importance of posture. Club members also learned about the surprisingly large range of different conditions which chiropractors can treat, with some members of the profession even offering therapy to pets!

SI Skipton in Craven members organised “An Evening with Dr. Helen Pankhurst” which took place before a packed (mostly female) audience at St. Andrew’s Church, Skipton, on 19th September. Dr. Helen, great grand-daughter of Emmeline Pankhurst, invited questions on three topics as a starter: the Suffragettes; the work of Care international; how much things have changed for women over the last hundred years.

SI Slough, Windsor and Maidenhead enjoyed an interesting and challenging talk by The Right Honourable Fiona MacTaggart MP on Human Trafficking and Prostitution. She emphasised that Prostitution is the exploitation of women, mostly when they have no other means – a violation against women. Ms MacTaggart is the Founder and Secretary of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Prostitution and Co-Chair with Baroness Butler Sloss on Human Trafficking/Modern Day Slavery. She praised Theresa May for the way she continues to raise public awareness of the problems caused by these evils.

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Seven Past Regional Presidents of Southern England Region meet each year for a ‘Has Beens’ lunch, sharing great memories, putting the Soroptimist world to rights as only ’has beens’ can! They have an amazing 200 years of Soroptimist experience between them.

St. Vincent & the Grenadines (SISVG) celebrate International Day of Literacy every year and aim to make their mark. The President and Communications Officer of the SISVG Shannon Samuel has expressed the Club’s belief in Literacy for all.

“It is our goal to fill as many Primary School libraries with as many books as we can enabling each child the equal opportunity to read and to learn, building a much more solid foundation for our population to advance with the skills needed to thrive as a nation.

“Targeting our Primary education improves the quality of students entering Secondary school ensuring that our children are prepared for the challenges ahead and in so doing, we make our footprint on the 4th Sustainable Development Goal of Quality Education.

“Let us all do our part in making a better St. Vincent & the Grenadines. This year celebrates 50 years of this celebratory date initiated by UNESCO under the theme “Reading the Past, Writing the Future.”

The St. Vincent & the Grenadines Primary School Recipients of this years SISVG book drive were the Belmont and Stubbs Primary Schools, receiving over 400 books and four book shelves.

SI Stafford supported Jeremy Lefroy, MP for Stafford, who organised Stafford in the World Day in The Market Square. The event celebrated the variety of links Stafford has with the rest of the world (business, charity, organisations) and SI Stafford’s stand highlighted many of the things we are involved with and the work Soroptimists do. The day was a huge success and their stall attracted a lot of interest and a great many people signed The Purple Teardrop Petition.

SI Swindon celebrated International Literacy Day in September by (once again) collecting books and presenting them to Drove Primary School in Swindon. This school is very short on funds and had no library so struggled to support the children with a variety of books or for them to read at home. Their efforts have now lead to them to needing to install bookcases!

Obligers

Helen Adamson 1938-2017 Past Federation President

Helen Adamson was a very active, committed Soroptimist, who was particularly interested in Programme Action work. She held many posts, including Club President of Glasgow West 1981–1982, Scotland South Regional President 1985–1986 and the President of SI Great Britain & Ireland Federation 1995 – 1996.

As Federation President she was directly involved with the SIAM project. When the management committee of the Scottish Women’s Convention was being established, Helen represented the Soroptimists on the steering group, and in 2006 she became a director when it became a charity.

Helen was a true friend to countless people around the world. She travelled to many countries on Soroptimist business, for example, the USA, Europe, Australia, Turkey, West Indies, and Africa, which included Cameroon where she opened their Club.

Helen’s Soroptimist life is summed up by her friend and neighbour, Eileen O’Neil, “Helen truly exemplified the core values of the Soroptimists in everything she did, through her work she was an advocate of human rights for all, she promoted local and global peace and international goodwill. Her attention to detail and relentless work ethic supported the ethos of advancing women’s potential. She encouraged integrity and democratic decision making, listening to others, respecting opinion and researching subjects to ensure she could clearly articulate to common goals, respecting diversity and building friendships organically along the way.”

Gwen Garner, President, SI Glasgow City

Oliver Hayes, SI Abergavenny, died in December 2016. Twice President, a Member for 45 years.

Vivian Buckley-Palmer, SI Malta, died in December 2016, aged 72, a Member since 2012 she was Club Secretary.

Valerie Jones, SI Barry, died on 28th December, 2016 aged 88. In 1968, a Founder and Honorary Member and President in 1972/3.

Gillian Smith, SI Harrogate, died on 10th December aged 86. 54 years a Soroptimist and an Honorary Life Member, President 1971-72 and Division Union Rep. Laura O’Sullivan, SI Limerick died on 4th November, aged 91. A Founder committed member for 53 years, twice Club President and held various offices.

Eva Schumacher-Reid, SI Darlington, died on 11th November, aged 52. A member since 1999, Club President 2005-2006 and Treasurer.

Joyce Moore OBE, SI Burnley and formerly SI Accrington, died on 12th January aged 84. Joyce was a Soroptimist for 13 years and served as President and Treasurer. Eleanor Draper MBE, SI Stafford, died on December 30th 2016 aged 94. A Soroptimist for 36 years and Honorary Member.

Dorothy Williams, SI Bingley, died on 24th October 2016, aged 69, a member for six years. Dorothy was very supportive of Club activities.

June Rosemary Herbert, SI Loughborough, died on 4th January 2017 aged 87. A loyal member for 38 years during which time she held the following posts Club President, Treasurer and Region Representative.

Eva Laburn, SI Dundee, died on 21st December 2016 aged 95. Eva joined SI Dundee on 6th December 1950, a Member for 66 years and Club President 1961-63. Gillian Ribis, SI Southport, died on 2nd February 2017 aged 72. Gill was an active Soroptimist for 26 years, Club President 2009/10 and Club Membership Officer.

TO SUBMIT AN OBITUARY

Please send obituaries to soroptimist@written-image.com. Make sure that you put OBITUARY in the subject box. It should be written following the above format, including ONLY the Member’s name, Club(s), age, time as a Soroptimist and offices held. Please do not send full descriptive obituaries. There is no fee. Longer obituaries may be submitted for the website. Please send to hq@sigbi.org.

If Clubs would like to make a donation to the Memorial Fund in memory of their Members who have passed away, then please send it to SIGBI HQ, cheques made payable to SIGBI Ltd. The Memorial Fund enables Members to attend Conference who would otherwise be unable to experience this event.

FEBRUARY 2016 21
We were so pleased to see Patricia Gatherum and Barbara Dixon at our annual gathering – thank you so much for coming down! It was a fantastic evening and we were able to showcase the incredible work that is going on in Meru.

Meeting with both Patricia and Barbara the following day to discuss the programme in more detail was really beneficial and we’re excited about the direction that the project is heading in.

So far SIGBI has raised an incredible £43,704 for the project and we’ve been so pleased to see so many creative ideas, from an ABBA tribute night to a garden show and some SIGBI members taking part in The Great Big Supper Club campaign in October. With this money, we can make a real difference to the lives of women and children.

What’s happening?

A great deal is happening in Meru at the moment and the planning stages of the project are in full swing! The agricultural project has started and baseline data collection is underway.

Margaret, the CIFORD Director, held a Government Officer's Consultative meeting at the end of 2016 which was attended by Agriculture, Health, Education and Water Ministry Representatives along with Chiefs, Assistant Chiefs and a representative from the County Government of Meru.

Discussions were held on how CIFORD and the local and national government can work collaboratively with communities to achieve the best outcomes. Issues that need to be addressed within each community were highlighted and included family planning, water, food and female circumcision. The next stage of the project will be to visit individual women’s groups and begin preparing them for the long-term training course ahead.

Surveys are being conducted at the moment in Lanyiru, Maburu and lacathuriu in Tigania East sub-county by Margaret along with two interns, Nancy and Mercy. The data from these surveys will help us to better understand the women and children we will be working with over the next 12 months.

The survey questions focus on multiple aspects of these women’s lives including their education, health, family, homestead, agricultural skills and safety. As an example, we’re finding out about the women’s farms, the size of their land, what crops they currently produce and whether they are able to feed their families from those crops.

We’re also going to be finding out about their families nutrition and the food that they give to their children. By capturing this information, we can truly understand the impact that the programme has on the lives of these women, as well as particular areas of need for new programmes or partners.

Keeping you informed

We are going to be able to share a vast amount of data with you collected from these surveys and will be able to let you know more about the women that you are helping.

By working closely with Margaret and building a good understanding of the people we support, we are able to design more effective interventions. We can use SIGBI support to ensure that the interventions we introduce are needed, valued and are focussed on long term impact.

We hope you are as excited as we are about the year ahead and the positive impact we can have on the lives of women in Meru.

From all the team at Child.org and on behalf of Margaret and the women involved in the project, thank you so much for your fundraising efforts!
SI Bridgend held a coffee morning at the home of Club secretary Marjorie Page, raising £248 for the Meru Women’s Garden Project in Nepal. Members and guests enjoyed a magnificent array of cakes and pastries and were joined by two young gentleman pupils visiting Wales from Estonia and Spain. They are studying English and will be taking home some good memories of the Soroptimist movement both in Wales and throughout the World.

SI Cannock ran a market stall in Cannock Town Centre to raise awareness of and funds for the Meru Women’s Garden Project. They sold their own garden produce, plants and craft items they had made – chutneys and preserves, pickled onions, cakes and biscuits which all sold like ‘hot cakes’. Leaflets about Meru were distributed showing how we are helping the women to learn similar skills to become self sufficient. Soroptimist Kate Young organised the event and was thrilled with the success and the £191.00 raised.

SI Chelmsford took part in the All Saints Church Writtle Christmas Tree Festival which attracted 50 trees from local organisations decorating a tree to reflect what they do. SI Chelmsford decorated their tree to reflect the support to the Meru Women’s Garden Project from Soroptimists. A tree full of all things gardening drew lots of attention from the 1400 visitors at the event.

SI Cirencester raised £350 to support the Meru Women’s Garden Project 2016-19 by holding a Barbecue. The weather was kind and the sun shone!

SI Dewsbury fundraised for the Meru Women’s Garden Project by “doing what we do best – eating, drinking and having fun,” at: a spicy curry night; a cheeky French evening; a saucy Italian Job, a naughty but nice coffee morning and an intimate lunch with friends. The events raised over £600.

SI Falkirk has already donated £4,675 to the Meru Project and support is ongoing with mini hampers of Meru products - Papaya jam, tea, tomato and chilli sauce gifted as a ‘thank you’ to guest speakers at Club meetings. President Alison Rodgers and Past President Rosemary McIntyre presented hampers to speakers Sofia Akbar and Muna Ausat, their topic was “Burka or Burkini” – Living as a Muslim Woman Today.

SI Grange-over-Sands raised £560 for the Meru Project and support is ongoing with mini hampers of Meru products - Papaya jam, tea, tomato and chilli sauce gifted as a ‘thank you’ to guest speakers at Club meetings. President Alison Rodgers and Past President Rosemary McIntyre presented hampers to speakers Sofia Akbar and Muna Ausat, their topic was “Burka or Burkini” – Living as a Muslim Woman Today.

SI Great Yarmouth Past President Yvonne Ward presided over the battle of wits at their annual Summer Quiz. The evening was rounded off with a super buffet and raised £400 to be shared by Neat Feet Happy Hands and the Meru Women’s Garden Project.

SI Hertford linked its annual Frugal Supper with the Big Supper Club for the Meru Women’s Garden Project. Toad-in-the-hole and vegetables, followed by not-so frugal desserts were enjoyed by members, friends and members of SI Bedford, raising £176.

SI Nottingham held a very successful garden party in aid of the Meru Women’s Garden Project. 50 people enjoyed the afternoon sun, raising £540 for the project.

SI Richmond & Dales wanted to contribute to the Meru Garden Project. It was decided that an Art & Craft exhibition would be an excellent way of showcasing members’ skills, as well as raising awareness and funds for this worthwhile cause. Over 60 exhibitors have presented a variety of work, and the exhibition has been in place throughout August, with many visitors calling in.

Over £250 has been raised for the Meru project, and a further £150 of donations to the Club’s projects in Harare, Zimbabwe.
SI Harrogate & District members were aiming to raise their profile with a stall at the Autumn Flower Show – instead they were offered the option of creating a community garden!

This was a challenge with just two weeks to get the application in and, if successful, just 10 weeks to create the garden.

The Project Team – Val Hills, Sandra Jowett, Sylvia Purser, Pat Shore, Sue Slocombe and Judith Webb, set about designing the garden.

President Pat persuaded her brother to produce a visual risk assessment, the plan of the garden was prepared and Sylvia and Val wrote the specification.

Surprisingly our plans were accepted and we then worked frantically to convert the plan into a Kenyan garden.

Sandra, the designer for the group, put together a wonderful sectional wooden ground frame and artistically painted a backboard surmounted by the Meru Shield. Baskets were sourced and our gardeners, Judith and Sue, grew herbs and vegetables, in pots.

Putting the garden together proved challenging and we certainly needed the expertise and muscle power of a couple of Soroptimists John and Ken. Matting was donated for the grass within the frame and corrugated iron sourced from a scrap merchant in Ripon for the backdrop. A ton of red sand followed and was spread like a desert, and a ton of gravel spaded into place to create rocky out crops. Pallets formed a market stall at the front of the garden.

We sourced a mannequin from M&S to become our Kenyan lady, Mani. What a lady she became; surviving wind, gales, an electrical storm to become the heart of the garden.

A removal van delivered five apple trees and home-grown tomatoes, peppers and sweet potatoes started to arrive. A water butt and garden tools took their place plus a little bowl for loose change to be donated towards our project.

After a couple of days of hard graft, we had the garden we wanted and we were ready for judging.

Friday morning arrived as we hastily tried to erect the gazebo with wind and rain lashing down. The Flower Show opened with excitement and anticipation. The judges said ‘Remind us who you are? Ah yes, the Soroptimists. You have a silver medal.’ The publicity that the garden generated was fantastic; we were mentioned on BBC news, local radio and local press. Visitors from across the Federation supported us – we send a big thank you to Barbara Dixon, Programme Director, Patricia Gatherum, Federation Ambassador for Meru, Margaret Clarke, APD Advocacy, Liz Lyle, President SI Yorkshire and many other Soroptimists from across the region who also viewed our novel garden. We had several visitors from Kenya who decreed that our garden was wonderful and authentic.

ACHIEVEMENTS

We certainly raised our profile, attracted media attention, won a Silver Award and had over £600 in loose change for the Meru Project plus £120 prize money.

We were well on our way to being able to support three projects in Meru by the end of this year. Then the Autumn Flower Show Committee decided to match fund our efforts by their charitable donation, meaning we had some £1,500 or five gardens.

The project team remain elated from their success, energised and enthused and have become the project Ambassadors for SI Yorkshire - endeavouring to create and maintain enthusiasm across the region for the Meru project.

Award winning garden for Meru Women’s Garden Project