• May is Membership Month!
• SIGBI Board 2017-19: Directors’ applications
• Welcome SIGBI’s new Club, SI Lira, Uganda

Women inspiring action, transforming lives
Welcome to Soroptimist News from the Editor

Here we are, almost halfway through the year and just five months away from the SIGBI Conference in Cardiff! Have you booked your place yet? This event is stacking up to be really exciting with a stunning programme of speakers and great entertainment, so don’t miss out, book now!

In May we also celebrate Membership Month and I’m looking forward to hearing about your initiatives to enrol more members, strengthening your own Club and building SIGBI; already such a fabulous organisation, into a bigger, bolder Federation. Let us know how you are interpreting President Ann’s theme of Step up, Lead the Way!

Certainly the SIGBI group attending CSW 61, The Commission on the Status of Women, in New York had plenty to say at the event – Advocacy is one of our Programme Objectives for this issue – Margaret Clark, APD Advocacy, reports on page six.

Our other programme objective for this issue is Economic Empowerment, APD Rayner Rees presents an excellent overview of your work in her report on page four.

We are also making great strides with the Meru Women’s Garden Project. Patricia Gatherum, Project Liaison, reports on our back cover about your fundraising – £56,000 to date and counting.

Next month brings the SIGBI Leadership and Development Day, another inspiring event that is a ‘must’ for Clubs who want to prosper. Registration closes on 26th May so if you haven’t already signed up – do so now.

Finally, thank you for noting my request about contributions, much improvement made! Just focus on taking those photos and make your magazine really sing!

www.facebook.com/SoroptimistSIGBI  www.twitter.com/SIGBI1

Soroptimist News May 2017

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The Programme Objectives for this issue are Featured Objective 1: “Environmental Sustainability” (Naina Shah, APD Environment) Featured Objective 2: “Food, Security and Health” (Rita Beaumont, APD Food, Security and Health).

Please send your contributions and news to: Soroptimist@written-image.com.

Please ensure that your submissions are similar in length to the items in this issue - that is, concise.

Please ensure that photos are high resolution and sent as JPEG files, not embedded in the text file. We are unable to use low resolution or low quality photos.

The Soroptimist News Schedule for 2017-18 is in the Members’ area of the SIGBI website.
Dear Soroptimist Sisters

At the start of the new Club year, I congratulate outgoing Officers for stepping up, leading the way in their Club. Their service and leadership is much appreciated by the Federation. I send good wishes to all those taking up or continuing in office, I hope that you will enjoy the challenge and gain from the experience as well as having the full support of your Club in all your planned activities.

Can you believe that there are less than 200 days until the Cardiff conference! I’m halfway through my year as President – how time flies. Please take the time to read the conference article in the magazine and register for the Early Bird by 30th June 2017.

My highlight in March was attending my second Commission on the Status of Women. How privileged I felt to sit in the United Nations General Assembly Hall and listen to Antonio Guterres, UN Secretary General, who spoke of women’s empowerment as a key priority. That morning, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN Women, spoke about “Constructive Impatience for Change” highlighting the need for us to move more quickly if we are to achieve gender equality by 2030.

This year’s theme was Women’s Economic Empowerment in the Changing World of Employment. Once again there was a sizeable contingent from Soroptimist International spanning all four Federations. Members attended events, but were also actively engaged in the discussions about the content of the outcome document.

Soroptimist International held an event where each Federation spoke of their project work relating to economic empowerment. I thank Nisha Ghosh, Assistant Programme Director, Violence and Conflict Resolution, for delivering our presentation on projects for the production of sanitary towels for women and girls in India and Africa, that improved menstruation hygiene but also gave employment to women.

Before I travelled to New York, I joined SI San Fernando in Trinidad and Tobago (pictured, right) via Skype to welcome nine new Members to the Club. Well done SI San Fernando. I hope that these young women enjoy and are inspired by their Soroptimist Membership.

On my return, I was very pleased to attend SI Kenilworth’s dinner, this is where my Soroptimist journey started 23 years ago. It brought home one reason why I love being a Soroptimist – friendship and sisterhood. It was lovely to catch up with old friends and meet new ones.

The next day I attended the 15th Midland Arden Public Speaking Competition in Birmingham, a great example of an education project helping young women and men lead the way in terms of their ability to speak out on issues affecting them, while learning a lifelong skill. The winner was a young man, Thomas Woodland, who spoke so eloquently about “Has ‘Women’s Rights’ gone too far?” which demonstrated how important it is to engage men about achieving gender equality by 2030. He did speak in favour of gender equality.

At the beginning of April, I spent a lovely weekend with the St Albans Club celebrating its 60th birthday. The weekend included a walk led by Hilary Ratcliffe and her husband David around the St Paul’s area of London followed by a superb dinner on Saturday night. It finished with a walk around St Albans including the Roman Theatre in Verulamium followed by lunch. The Club started its year with the goal of completing 60 activities, easily surpassing that number by the time of their dinner. What a simple idea to demonstrate the impact that the Club has on women and girls as well as the fun and friendship they receive through their Soroptimist Membership. A good time was had by all and my knowledge of the Roman history of the UK was significantly improved.

Looking forward, I hope your plans to celebrate Membership Month are in hand and bring you success in highlighting your project work and bringing new Members. I look forward to reading and hearing your events over the next couple of months.

In friendship

Ann

Ann Hodgson, President,
Soroptimist International Great Britain and Ireland
“The empowerment of the world's women is a global imperative,” said Ban Ki-moon, the former Secretary-General of the United Nations, “Yet despite important progress in promoting gender equality, there remains an urgent need to address structural barriers to women’s empowerment and full inclusion in economic activity.

He also said, “If the world is to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, we need a quantum leap in women's economic empowerment.” This leap must include higher incomes, better access to and control over resources, and greater security, including protection from violence.

UN Women advocated for a standalone goal to achieve gender equality and SDG 5 does just this as it aims to “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.”

This singularly focused goal is crucial to creating a ripple effect for the integration of gender equality throughout the other goals.

Women’s G7 Forum in Rome
At the Women’s G7 Forum in Rome on 7th and 8th April 2017 Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, UN Under Secretary General and Executive Director of UN Women (pictured above) made the following statement.

“Starting from girls, making women's lives count. The drive to build gender equality is a direct way to evolve economic justice, achieve sustainable development, promote peaceful, just and inclusive societies, enhance sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and productivity, end poverty in all its forms everywhere, and ensure the wellbeing of all.”

Her statement includes many salient points, which as Soroptimists we need to consider and I would encourage you to read her blog.

While researching all recent information in preparation for this article it is evident that economic empowerment cannot be successfully achieved without there first being gender equality.

There are so many challenges across parts of our Federation - gender bias, childhood marriage, limited access to education, the cultural definition of appropriate gender roles and the belief in the inherent superiority of males.

It is evident that the impact of poverty affects women (who often have limited access to cash and credit) more than men. We read almost daily about crimes against women which include domestic violence, honour killings and the trafficking of women and girls.

In many of our countries there appears to be a lack of awareness about government schemes and how to lobby for improvement.

How We Make a Difference
Searching the database there are many Club projects which have addressed many of the issues that need to be dealt with to help women and girls achieve economic empowerment. These are a few of them …

UK Minister for Women speaks out
In the UK Justine Greening MP, Secretary of State for Education and Minister for Women and Equalities said, “Investing in girls and women isn’t just about basic human rights; it’s about fully unlocking the potential of half the world’s population”.

The UK is already at the forefront of this effort. As Soroptimists we support and campaign in the fight against FGM and child marriage and many of our Clubs raise funds to both build and resource schools across our federation which helps to get girls into schools and women into jobs.

Justine Greening also said, “Strong economies need the contribution of everyone, including women.” Reaching full equality and empowerment for women and girls remains a crucial requirement to achieving full and sustainable development.

SI Oxford and District collaborated with Action Aid to build a childcare centre in Sudap village of Nepal so that mothers can leave their preschool children in a safe environment whilst they are able to earn their own living thus becoming economically empowered.

Mothers in the village are benefiting as they can leave their children and undertake training and income generating work. The women who care for the children are also provided with a source of income.

SI Leigh and District were winners of the SIGBI Best Practice Award for Economic Empowerment 2016. Their project was to help unemployed women into work, with workshops that addressed low self esteem and personal presentation and to provide the clothes and confidence to present well at interview, empower them with increased confidence, better self worth, hope and independence. What better help could women give to other women within the Programme Objective?

Programme Objective:
Economic Empowerment
Rayner Rees,
Assistant Programme Director
Economic Empowerment reports

Economic empowerment

4 MAY 2017
**SI Pune Metro East** collaborated with the Indian Business School, which provides excellent management education. The project focus was the Elimination of Violence and it included the issue of gender discrimination, gender equality, and the empowering all women and girls. (Goal 5 SDG).

There was a talk and presentation on Modern Day Slavery, which raised awareness of this problem in India and the world. One student said, “Gender Equality is more than a goal itself. It is a precondition for meeting the challenge of reducing poverty promoting sustainable development.”

**SI Bombay Chembur** launched its flagship project, Adult Literacy Drive, in July 2016 to increase access to formal and non-formal learning opportunities for under-privileged women, mothers and girls for empowering them to be independent literate adults.

The beneficiaries of the Adult Literacy Programme are illiterate and semi-literate women and girls in the poorer sections of society. To tackle the issue of domestic violence and poverty with the poor women due to dependent status, SI Bombay Chembur has been creating these opportunities for education for these women to enable and empower them.

A need assessment survey was conducted and based on the feedback received, the course was designed covering Conversational English, Basic Literacy, Numeracy and Skill Development Programmes like beautician skills etc. The classes were conducted by SIBC Members twice a week for two hours a day for a period of seven months per year (August to March) concluding with a Certificate Distribution Ceremony on March 8th 2017 in observance of International Women’s Day. Their all-round development was enhanced by exposure to social awareness plays, festival celebrations boosted their confidence as they presented a skit on Christmas and they enjoyed a picnic to an adventure farm.

The beneficiaries have become literate, empowered and enabled to do basic things making them independent. This program has helped women gain confidence, built their self-esteem and has also helped them earn a livelihood.

**SI Bombay North** collaborated with NGO Navjeet and focused on the Elimination of Violence. The project was chosen to Celebrate International Women’s Day and focused on the economic and gender divide.

After an enlightening and empowering talk, women from many different backgrounds were able to share experiences and be empowered to bring about change. One beneficiary of the project said, “We now feel we too can boldly come on stage and make our presence felt and our voices heard. We too can get justice and live a decent life.”

**SI Bristol** supported Mary’s Meals by raising funds to provide a daily meal for schoolchildren in Malawi. The project used local produce cooked and served in school kitchens. One beneficiary said, “My name is Konah. I live with my family on the edge of the jungle in Liberia. My mother is a single parent and I have five brothers and sisters. I have had to help work on the farm rather than go to school because we are very poor.”

**SI Creiff** long time Member, Phyllis Lawson, recently died and a collection to benefit Soroptimist charities was made at her funeral, raising £500. Phyllis was a dancer as a young woman, and had a tremendous interest in the performing arts; Denis Lawson is her son and Ewan McGregor is her grandson. As a result, it was decided that the money should be used to benefit girls or young women in the performing arts. At a Club meeting the money was given to Lauren Oakes from Horsecross, Perth where it will be used to help fund three young women studying singing, dancing and theatre. The Club was delighted that Phyllis’s daughter, Carol McGregor was able to come along on the evening and make the presentation.

**SI Lurgan** wanted to develop understanding of the issues of men’s violence against women through the White Ribbon movement. They wanted to change attitudes and behaviours that lead to and perpetuate men’s violence against women, by engaging boys and men to lead social change and to achieve gender equality. Club Members made 500 white ribbons, which were distributed at a local football ground. All the men accepted them.

**SI Pendleside** had a presentation raising awareness of Fair Trade presented by Kathryn Corkish from The Mustard Seed of Garstang, on their trip to Ghana and the significance of Fair Trade to the economy of the country. A donation was made to Traidcraft Exchange.

**SI Austell** Soroptimists strutted their stuff in M&Co Bodmin to raise £750 for Mid Cornwall Women Refuges. Soroptimists, Soroptimisters, friends and children modelled the new fashions. The model shown is Soroptimist, Ann Truscott.

**More empowerment!**

Many Clubs have been holding events to support the Meru Garden Project, which is all about empowering women through targeting the right to say no to FGM and providing tools and seeds to develop smallholdings.

 Clubs buy Fairtrade goods and we need to continue with this as The Fairtrade Foundation recognises that “Gender inequality is often seen as a women’s issue. Wrong! Gender is not about women – it’s about power balances between men and women, and relationships which are free from prejudice.” Fairtrade strongly supports the theme of the 2016 International Women’s Day: ‘Planet 50-50 by 2030: Step It Up for Gender Equality’.

Finally, we need to be aware of how in the UK 1950s women have been prejudiced by state pension age changes. Thousands of women born on or after 6th April 1951, are hit particularly hard. Significant changes to pension age have been imposed with a lack of appropriate notification, much faster than promised, so thousands are suffering financial hardship and little time to re-plan for retirement. 1950s women have been singled out for unfair and unequal treatment because of the way the increases to state pension age have been brought in.

As Soroptimists, we can support this by writing to our MPs and lobbying for a fairer deal for 1950s women.

Do not delay! Start writing today!
Being at the meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women can be a very bewildering experience as several first time attendees will attest. There are so many activities, within the UN itself and outwith in other places in New York, it is extraordinarily difficult to make sense of what is happening and the follow the meetings of the Commission itself.

CSW attracts the greatest number of Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) of all the regular meetings of the United Nations. Thousands of delegates are registered for attendance at the events of the CSWNGO New York Forum and hundreds of UN Member State (Government) delegates attend the events within the UN itself.

It is important to try to do some preparation to help weave your way through this maze of activity, therefore. This year SI offered an opportunity to help to get to know some of the information about how CSW works in advance.

The SI Advocacy Committee and the SI Leadership Development Committee worked together to provide some training before the meeting of CSW61 to assist any Soroptimists going or thinking of going in the future.

Anusha Santhirasthipham, President Elect SI SWP and an SI Director, led webinar sessions which covered information on the UN and role of CSW in the work of the UN. She also was able to explain how Soroptimists contribute to the activities of CSW and what delegates could expect when they arrive in New York.

Anusha outlined the way in which the Government activities and events are held in the main UN buildings, while the NGO events held in parallel with CSW meetings take place ‘across the road’ - at the Church Centre. There is a high demand by NGOs to hold events so some are scheduled in other parts of New York, such as the Salvation Army Centre, and the Armenian Centre.

Approximately 70 Soroptimists from across the Federations attended the 2 webinar sessions held over a weekend, although not everyone was a delegate for CSW. Some attendees were hoping to gain information which would help them to plan for attendance in future years.

All participants agreed that they had learnt a great deal and felt more prepared for the way in which they could contribute. A further webinar was held by SI Partner ‘Women for Water Partnership’ to which SI contributed.

As the webinar training sessions were so successful SI will be looking at how this type of training can support other areas of international work and will be considering further training for CSW in the future.

Advocacy Training at CSW

During the two weeks of CSW61 advocacy training was held every day provided by the NGO Committee on the Status of Women/New York, with SI’s own UN representative Bette Levy playing a major role in the organisation.

On the first day this was carried out in regional groups to help delegates to prepare for the Regional Caucus meetings and to enable delegates from the same region to meet each other and begin to co-operate. The remainder of the time the advocacy training sessions were held every lunch time. They are sponsored by the Governments of Switzerland and Germany, supported by Australia so at no cost to delegates.

The training covers everything you need to know about CSW including:

- Women’s Rights at the UN
- Key International Agreements
- The Language of CSW
- The Intergovernmental Process
- How NGOs can Influence the Process

Advocacy Training at CSW is invaluable for helping to understand the work of the UN and the advocacy work has transferable knowledge and skills which enable participants to work more effectively in their own organisations and countries.

The supporting handbook to the training (A Guide for NGOs and Women’s Human Rights Activists at the UN and CSW 2017) is available online at https://www.ngocsw.org/archive/news-you-can-use/advocacy-training-negotiations-womens-human-rights

Handbooks for previous years are also still available and highly recommended. If you wish to know more about the CSW then do take the time to look at these publications.

And more from CSW!

The 80+ Soroptimists were very active and highly visible once more at CSW, with their colourful Soroptimist scarves proudly worn thanks to SI Maidstone and SI Accra. Their project to support weavers in Ghana fitted well with the CSW theme of empowerment of women in the work place.

Soroptimist websites carried blogs during the 2 weeks and you can catch up on the SI website at http://www.soroptimistinternational.org/

Soroptimist International published a Global Voice newsletter which also carried coverage of the events at CSW61, including the very popular parallel event which showcased the work of Soroptimists around the world. If you are not a subscriber then sign up now on the SI website.

If you wish to know more please do not hesitate to contact Pat Black International Director Advocacy sorophq@gmail.com
Margaret Clark, Assistant Programme Director, Advocacy, reports

In March, Alisha, Jodie, Leah and Demi, from the Barnardo's Participation Group, attended the 61st CSW held in New York, supported by SIGBI and accompanied by Wendy Shepherd, Pam Smith and Tracy Whitehead. This visit was enabled by Soroptimist International and facilitated by Margaret Clark APD Advocacy and Wendy Shepherd, SI Middlesbrough.

It was felt that the voices of the young people at ‘grass roots’ in Northern England should be heard. They had a story to tell and courage to speak out. The Participation Group volunteers are passionate, capable and dedicated. Over the past five years they have been involved in the creation of an app to help others affected by Child Sexual Exploitation called ‘Wud U’, a film and workshops to deliver to other young people called ‘It’s not your fault’, speaking at conferences on CSE, delivering training to professionals including Cleveland Police and being involved in research.

As part of a European-wide project which aims to improve youth participation and end sexual violence, the group was offered six places at CSW as they were experienced enough to represent other young people in the UK and because of their passion to ensure young people have a voice. Supported by SIGBI, The Cohen Trust and Barnardo’s, the group fundraised with quiz nights, a raffle and a sponsored dip on Boxing Day dip at Saltburn by Sea.

"I began to doubt why I was chosen to go, I didn’t believe I had anything worthwhile to say.” JF

"I was quite anxious as I anticipated it would have been out of my comfort zone.” DT

"I couldn’t quite believe it and didn’t think I could do it! After all, I have never been anywhere without my Mum before, especially not on holiday. I had never been on a plane either.” AW

"I was nervous but excited to find out what was coming for us as a group. We have worked extremely hard to get where we are now.” LK

The trip wasn’t without its hiccups. The flight to New York was delayed due to bad weather resulting in us losing a day at the conference and whilst out there Storm Stella hit. It was a white-out and not only did the UN decide to close for fear of safety but New York came to a standstill. The second day lost was a blessing as it allowed for the opportunity to group together, reflect on their learning so far and plan for the rest of the week.

"If not you, then who? If not now, then when?” Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director UN Women & Under-Secretary-General, UN

The first two days in New York were at the Youth Forum. The aim is to provide a platform for young people to give their opinions on topics affecting them at CSW61. This was a great introduction into CSW but the group felt it did not truly represent the youth voice.

"The panels were made up of adults aged 25+ who spoke on subjects which, although interesting and insightful did not, in my opinion, touch on issues young women face on a daily day to day basis in today’s society and world of work but on subjects which were relevant say 5+ years ago.” JF

"I'd add a youth panel including young people from different backgrounds and cultures.” LK

"Although it seemed very youth orientated, the youth forum was youth-less. The majority were adults and when they did try to include us, the activities seemed very childish things such as the ‘Mexican wave’ and ‘mannequin challenge’ which to me was quite offensive as it felt like my ability and maturity were undermined.” DT

Feedback was given from our party along with WAGGGS (World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts) to NGOs to encourage change in next year’s event. The rest of the time was spent at events and presentations and two Members of the group had an opportunity to speak.

"My fears grew larger when I was asked to speak at two events about my experience. I wasn’t sure I was capable of it and I felt that I would end up doing something wrong.” AW

Despite initial fears, both Members presented well and the impact of being able to share their opinions and experiences at such an event and be heard was empowering to the whole group.

Key themes were discussed in the overarching theme of economic empowerment of women/girls. These included issues affecting indigenous women and the Nordic model on prostitution. Although the girls were interested in all topics they each took away a particular learning.

"I enjoyed one particular side event I went to. It changed my perception on people. It was about creators of comic books. The speaker talked about a man who she saw upset who said her comics had helped him to keep going and not to end his life. I used to think ‘What is the point of comics?’ but this changed my views. When I’m down, I listen to music, whereas other people read comics. I respect them for that.” LK

"One panelist spoke about how her grandfather used to tell her a story each night; the stories used to feature one strong, female character who set out to overcome physical and cultural challenges and empower others to do better within society; what stood out the most was that the young girl was the star of each story.

“She spoke of how her grandfather’s stories have empowered her to fight for gender equality as they taught her that if you fight for what you believe in, you will succeed.” JF

"I was especially inspired by Shirley Randall, the head of international women’s cricket, as she furthered my knowledge on gender stereotypes and equality within sport. She has given me the confidence to go to my school and pass on information to encourage mixed sport.” DT

Each Member of the group left not only inspired by those they met, but with renewed vigour to influence change. Each has ideas of how they will bring change and begin work to use the knowledge they gained whilst in New York.

“When I get back to the UK I will share the information and experiences of the young women I have had the privilege of speaking to whilst at the UN, in the hope of making a brighter future for others.” AW

“It has left me feeling empowered to continue and develop the work I do in my local community and beyond; I now have a wealth of knowledge as to how women’s rights are not being implemented across the world and an idea as to what I can do in the upcoming months to help support change for women!” JF

The learning that took place and the impact it has had on all those attending is astounding. The next few months will be spent sharing knowledge and experiences with those unable to attend and composing a plan of how the group can move forward. One famous quote which was shared at an event at which our group spoke was:

“There is a special place in hell for women who do not help other women.” Madeleine Albright

However, this does not really demonstrate the full feeling of our group as this has been a positive, inspiring and freeing experience for all. It is more fitting we end this report with a quote which was given in a presentation from one of the group that encapsulates the positive feelings of the whole group.

“We will not be part of the problem; we will be part of the solution.” AW

All forms of violence against women and girls are major impediments to women’s economic empowerment and socio economic development. A push to enforce laws and policies in all areas is urged. The Commission at CSW61 adopted the first ever resolution on Preventing Workplace Sexual Harassment.
Step Up, Lead the Way
SIGBI’s 83rd Federation Conference
Wales Millennium Centre, Cardiff
26th – 28th October #SoroptimistCardiff2017
www.sigbi.org/cardiff2017

Join us for this unique once-a-year event as over 1000 women from across the world come together to share experiences, to be inspired and celebrate what being a Soroptimist really means.

Have you registered yet for SIGBI’s exciting Conference in Cardiff?

This year come to the iconic Wales Millennium Centre which aims to: “Bring the best of the world to Wales and showcase the best of Wales to the world.”

Part of the inscription along the front of the centre says “ffwrnais awen” – “Furnace of Inspiration” – so come to Conference and ‘be inspired’.

Conference Chair Helen Murdoch writes:

“I’m so excited! I love coming to Conference! For me, it’s an annual injection of WOW and a reminder of what being a Soroptimist is all about. I’m excited too to welcome you to Cardiff 2017. We have a vibrant location and an amazing venue, a fantastic programme of powerful speakers, lively and inspiring project presentations, a packed exhibition and toe-tapping entertainment – now all we need is YOU!

“Join me in Cardiff, share the excitement and celebrate being a Soroptimist.”

Opening Ceremony
Members attending Conference for the first time are always amazed at the fabulous arrival of the Soroptimist flags – it is a dazzling, truly awesome experience as we celebrate the joy of being together, greeting the flags from each of the countries of our Federation, Soroptimist International and The United Nations and recognise that we are a global organisation.

Fantastic entertainment
An enjoyable part of Conference is the entertainment! This year we have a fantastic programme for you beginning on Thursday evening with a real treat.

Aaron Pryce-Lewis, a young baritone from Pembrokeshire is currently studying at the Royal Colleges of Music in Manchester and London.

Aaron is Remembered for being the last soloist to perform in a massed Male Voice Choir concert in the Royal Albert Hall.

This will be followed by the Bristol Military Wives Choir, which is one of a network of over 75 choirs in the UK, Germany, Cyprus and further afield.

Just like Soroptimists, Members of the Military Wives Choirs build unbreakable bonds and also break down barriers. By coming together to sing, each choir creates a valuable support network for women in the military community. They say, “Choir Members help one another through the tough times, celebrate the good times and sing through it all together.”

The entertainment doesn’t stop once the Conference starts.

On Saturday night, following the Change of Insignia it is time to relax, let your hair down!

This year we’ll be enjoying the sound of Phil Dando’s Big Band which will be playing a range of great music from swing to classic pop – Glen Miller to Tom Jones.

What a fabulous finale to our Conference!
Keynote: Michael Kaufman

Michael Kaufman is a speaker, writer and social animator, whose innovative approaches to engaging men and boys in promoting gender equality, ending violence against women and transforming men’s lives has taken him around the world over the past three decades. Michael is the co-founder of the White Ribbon Campaign, the largest effort in the world of men working to end violence against women.

He has worked extensively with the United Nations and with governments, non-governmental organisations, corporations, trade unions and universities. Michael is known for his powerful and entertaining talks. Drawing on his roots in both storytelling and research, he weaves together humour, stories and clear analysis for a presentation that is educational, positive and inspiring.

Mandy Hickson

Mandy Hickson was one of the first female pilots on her frontline Tornado GR4 squadron, flying multi-million-pound fast jets for the Royal Air Force. Working in a constantly challenging, yet exhilarating environment, Mandy offers a unique insight into this elite world through anecdotes about her time on the front line. She demonstrates the importance of remaining calm under pressure and leading from the front to get the best from herself and her team. With frankness and humour, she talks about the strategies she employed to succeed in her high-flying, high-risk role.

Mandy has boundless energy and an overriding passion for the end goal and truly believes that, with hard work and self-belief, anyone can achieve their ambitions. Join us as Mandy draws on her experiences and inspires us to Dream It, Believe It, Do It.

Kevin Hyland OBE

Kevin Hyland OBE is the UK’s first independent anti-slavery commissioner. Kevin works to spearhead the UK’s response to modern slavery. His aims are to see an increase in the number of victims of modern slavery identified and referred for appropriate support and, in tandem, to see an increase in the numbers of prosecutions and convictions of traffickers and slave masters.

Conference Programme

Keynote Speakers will speak to Conference - Michael Kaufman on Friday morning with the General Meeting in the afternoon. On Saturday, Mandy Hickson will begin the day, with Katherine Grainger speaking in the final session on Saturday afternoon. Rebecca Vince from PLAN International will also speak at the Conference. There will be so much more - so keep an eye on the Conference website for latest updates.

Celebrating and showcasing Project Work

The Federation Programme Team is planning a varied and interesting Programme to enthuse and support our work. We are really thrilled that we will see Club work in action on both days of conference, and wonder at the work that has been achieved and the impact made for women and girls. It is so motiving for us all to see exciting projects; it reignites our enthusiasm for project work and fires us up to take ideas back to our Clubs. The Programme Team has chosen speakers to reflect and inform our work as Soroptimists.

The Best Practice Awards for Club projects are a special feature of Conference. With so many wonderful projects to choose from, how difficult it must be for the Programme Team to choose a winner – you can feel the anticipation in the auditorium - And the winner is… followed by shouts of joy from the Clubs involved!

Wide Ranging and Significant Exhibition

The Wales Millennium Centre offers the opportunity for an extensive exhibition, which includes Charities, Commercial Stalls, Partners and Club Projects, with longer opening times. After Conference sessions are over for the day why not stay for a while, have a coffee or glass of wine, chat to friends old and new and browse the stalls – here you can shop for items from around the world – helping Club projects at the same time, and you can find out more about the charities we support.

Would your Club like a stand at Conference? – Visit ‘Exhibition Stands’ on the Conference website to find out more. This year there will be a competition for the “Best Dressed Stand” your Club could win!

Friendship Links

As always, Conference is a great time for Clubs to meet up with their Friendship Links. This year with more space available we are able to dedicate a special ‘Friendship Lounge’ for Members to exchange news about joint projects and Club activities. Get in touch with your link Clubs soon and arrange a time to meet.

Step Up, Lead the Way

Our keynote speakers have been selected to stimulate and inspire us through their stories and experiences and ignite our enthusiasm to make change happen. Book your place now for a fantastic Conference!

REGISTRATION NOW OPEN

Early Bird until 30 June 2017

Guest Registration Opens
1 July 2017

Registration Closes
30 September 2017

LUNCH AT WALES MILLENNIUM CENTRE (WMC)

Please order your packed lunches when you register. There are also eateries in close to the WMC.

Join us in Cardiff 2017!

We’re looking forward to seeing you!

Ann Hodgson
President, SIGBI

Helen Murdoch,
Chair of Conference.

MAY 2017 9
SIGBI Directors’ Applications

Nominations for Federation posts have been received as follows. Please note the full nomination forms may be found on the Members’ Only Section of the SIGBI website under Nomination Forms for Federation Posts.

SIGBI Director of Programme 2017-19
Name: Barbara Dixon
Club: SI Anglesey
Joined in: 1992

Statement:
As an existing Director on the Board I would like to see the work I have started through to a satisfactory conclusion.

I strongly believe that changes can only devolve from the Management Board with the consent and co-operation of the Members. Only by transparency and consultation can we deliver what the Members want. My passion remains Programme Action and I strongly believe it to be not only to be our raison d’etre but a great tool for attracting and retaining Members. Taken in conjunction with Vision 2021, I would welcome the opportunity of moving our organisation forward to become the leading organisation for women with Programme Action at the forefront.

Over the last 18 months I have progressed work that was started before I took on the role, and I would welcome the opportunity of implementing many of the ideas sent to me during the Programme Action review.

I have been fortunate to have a dedicated team of Assistant Programme Directors who have supported me immeasurably during my term of office and together we have developed many ideas which I would love to see implemented.

I have had the opportunity to make many new contacts, allowing us to progress our work on women's issues and with my previous experience of working with victims of trafficking and paedoophile ring survivors as well as being on the domestic abuse forum, I have a deep understanding of the issues we face. In educating, empowering and enabling women and girls to reach their full potential.

SIGBI Director of Programme 2017-19
Name: Margaret Clark
Club: SI Middlesbrough
Joined in: 1994

Statement:
I would like to become a Director of Soroptimist International Great Britain and Ireland (SIGBI) Ltd to utilise my skills to achieve our Vision, Mission, Goals and Objectives. Soroptimist values and mission align with my own personal values advocating for human rights and gender equality through education and empowerment. My commitment to these values has been constant over 20 years.

Programme being the heart of Soroptimists, the accomplishments of our teams from local to global are recognised, reported and recorded for national and international use. SIGBI’s ECOSOC status and recognition at United Nations, CSW and government entities enhance the profile of our work. As a participant of these processes I encourage the development and transfer of knowledge to all to support the achievement of the Global Goals and 2030 Agenda. The Sustainable Goals should be incorporated into all our programme work with accountability via database enhancements, leaving no one behind.

With experience of my career and Soroptimist progression to Assistant Programme Director Advocacy, I feel this post is a logical extension and would very much like to undertake the role as Director, nurturing efficient policies and procedures to support growth; regular communication with the Federation Programme Action Committee and Programme Team; measuring progress in each area and ensure that gender equality, education and partnerships are a priority. I welcome the opportunity and the challenge.

Assistant Programme Director Food Security and Healthcare 2017-19
Name: Rita Beaumont
Club: SI Bedford
Joined in: 1996

Statement:
I have completed two years as Assistant Programme Director; I have found developing the role both enjoyable and challenging. Programme Action is pivotal to everything Soroptimists undertake. My professional and managerial experience has given me a range of skills, knowledge and networking contacts that have aided conversations with professional and voluntary organisations.

The provision of a comprehensive health service is vital to the life of all communities; that service must embrace a range of related factors. The structure of the Programme Team facilitates an interactive approach to support a multifaceted approach to programme issues.

As part of my MBA I undertook a study in comparative healthcare systems; this provided me with a greater understanding of issues faced across the Federation especially when making contact with my designated contact countries.

Good analytical skills enable me to interrogate the data provided by Clubs and produce meaningful reports. This has helped me produce issues of PAM and write for Soroptimist News. I am also involved in collecting and collating data ready to support an application in 2018 to have our work recognised by the World Health Organisation. Campaigning for “strong appropriate health care systems” supporting the special needs of Women and Children is an important part of this role. I have developed enhanced networking skills and learnt to recognise the range of opportunities available to help positive outcomes.

Director of Organisational Development 2017-19
Name: Isobel Smith
Club: SI Solihull and District
Joined in: 1989

Statement:
I believe in the mission, purpose and values of Soroptimist International and the strategic goals and objectives of Soroptimist International Great Britain and Ireland. I understand the legal responsibilities of a Director in a Limited Company. I have experienced: two years as Director of Organisational Development (OD), two years as a Director Without Portfolio and four years as a Silent Observer. I recognise that the organisation’s success is dependent on its people. The Strategy sets out how it intends to manage, develop and engage all its Members to optimise their contribution so that SIGBI can prosper as a leading, resilient NGO. I have talents and skills that can help the organisation to develop and execute its strategy and flourish in a climate where Membership-based organisations face declining Membership.

OD looks at the content and the changing environment the organisation is operating in, supporting and directing its expansion and extension. My background is in Organisational Learning and Development and Change Management and my qualities include leadership, teamwork, high ethical standards, inter-personal skills, a willingness to ask difficult questions, communication skills.

Since becoming Director of OD I have run three Leadership and Development Days and I am a Member of the Growth Plan Committee. I seconded the reduction in fees for 25 year old Members and under, and piloted Campus Clubs and School Clubs.
Guest Report by Friendship Link Co-ordinator, Zareen Babu

I thank those of you who have sent in Friendship Link Registrations. They are a great insight for us and I ask all Clubs to please set up MORE joint projects with their Friendship Links and do MORE reporting for this page so it can be a source of ideas and encouragement to others.

Si Dundee and Si South Kolkata

I am excited about reporting by Ruma Sen of Si South Kolkata on their work to mark International Women’s Day with an open meeting on the theme “Be Bold for Change: Educate Empower Enable.”

Dianne Stout of Si Dundee gave the guidelines of the programme (IWD), participated as a speaker, coordinated with ‘Apne Aap’ and the Club also shared the expenses of the total programme. Diane’s presentation was an interview with Lata Bajoria and Keya of Apne Aap, an organisation working to empower women and girls to resist and end sex trafficking was remarkable.

Eminent speakers, presentations and a shadow dance, all spoke of children and trafficking including UN statistics. This is the kind of interaction we would love to see between Clubs, organising programmes and funding, helping their friendship link gather resources for an educational awareness programme on this special day.

Joint projects

Si Bangor’s joint project with Si Cork raised money to provide Sanitary Protection so that girls in Kenya could attend school every day. These pads can be washed and reused and were supplied in a bag with a bar of soap. The charity was rebranded and is now, “Brighter Communities Worldwide”. It is also expanding the “Girls for Girls” programme into schools in Uganda. Previously you may have seen it shown as “Friends of Londiani” which focused on schools in Kenya.

Si Stourbridge joined with their Link Si Wrexham to take up the challenge to collect most 20 pence pieces to match the miles from England to Nairobi, sending the proceeds to SIGBI’s Meru Women’s Garden Project.

Si Llandudno’s joint project was with Si Chembur’s Don Bosco Sakaham project. Members knitted and sold “Easter Chicks” to raise funds. Members also arranged an Indian Buffet and raffle where an Indian couple visiting a Member donated money for the project.

Si Harrogate is active with ten Link Clubs, their latest project is to work with Si Pretoria, South Africa, to support the building of a new library at an after-school drop in centre for the most vulnerable children living in a Township.

Si Barnstaple and Si Bulawayo are supplying sanitary protection to enable girls to continue in education for their Knickers for Knowledge project. This long term project aims to purchase a machine to produce sanitary towels in Zimbabwe.

Si Bolton gives financial support to five girls via Si Kathmandu.

Si Calcutta’s joint project ‘Hold my Hand’ is with Si Olympic Rain Forest, USA. This is their flagship project where free tutorials are conducted in English and Mathematics for underprivileged girls studying in Class V and VI. Bengali is also taught from Classes V to X. Si Calcutta’s Friendship Link Coordinator Soma Dasgupta says, “Friendship Link under Soroptimism means a condition of mutual trust and support between two allied Clubs. In 2009, Si Calcutta embarked on this ambitious project, which is providing informal education in English and Maths to children from the slums. The objective was to improve the academic standard and put an end to early dropout cases. The project has continued over the years and received considerable laudatory notice. And right from the start Si ORF has stood by us, building and sustaining this project. Every year we look forward to receiving their generous donation. And as we stretch every penny from them, we receive their warm compliments.

A letter to Si Bangor from Maria, Brighter Communities Worldwide, formerly Londiani.

Girls for Girls is now on the up and up, with two new communities joining the programme in March and a further ten schools joining as well. We hope that by working with women in the community (and eventually men too!) we can help break the taboo surrounding menstruation in these communities. Its going well so far so we keep our fingers crossed.

We travel to Uganda on Thursday for ten days to begin work in two schools there – both the healthy schools and the girls for girls programme. The team here is very excited about bringing their learnings further afield and sharing new communities. Will let you know how it goes!

So the journey continues!! Thank you for your continuing support and friendship on this journey – it is hugely appreciated. It’s always an encouragement to know that women around the world support us here in Londiani. It means a huge amount.

Please pass my greetings on to all in Bangor Club, thank you again, Asante Sana!

Maria
www.brightercommunities.org.

I look forward to your reports with pictures for the August issue of Soroptimist News. Tell us about the exciting things you have done and innovative ways you have used to stay connected with your links.

Friendship Links and Project Partnering

SIGBI Friendship Link Co-ordinator, Zareen Babu

This responds to a critical need for those affected by HIV/Aids who are at great risk, offering enrichment and care in a safe environment as well as a good meal each day helping to prepare them for a better future.

While Si Pretoria Tshwane Members offer practical support with teaching and life skills, art and recreation, they desperately need equipment and particularly books to help the children learn, they have also asked for children’s book bags, so that the children can take books home to read at home and help family Members learn to read. Si Harrogate is sending an initial donation of £500 to help set up the library and has received tremendous support from Rawcliff Schoolwear in Harrogate, who donated 20 school book bags.

Si Maidstone and Si Accra are supplying Kente sashes to Clubs. Si Accra has the sashes made by local craftsmen in Ghana. Si Maidstone purchases and sells them. Part of the profit is returned to Si Accra for their charitable works, part is used by Si Maidstone for its charitable work.

Si Chester has given loans via the KIVA Loans Scheme to two women in Indonesia. Si Burnbury’s Link, agreed to support women in Indonesia who wanted to install clean water systems and improve their home sanitation.

Si Tamworth has frequent contact with Si Karachi to help support their ongoing Education program – GEMS Project.

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Si Calcutta's project with SI Olympic Rain Forest, USA
May is Membership Month
Step up, Lead the way!

Last year many Clubs took advantage of the Growth Plan pilot, the Development Days, the reduction in Membership levies and the tools to support Membership Month in May to grow their Membership. All at once and getting them immediately involved with their own projects. The Club is now nurturing their development before they start its 2017 Membership drive.

SI Canterbury recruited nine new Members over the past year as a result of their linked approach to Membership and Programme Action. Seven of the new Members are pictured: Dawn Lilford, Ruth Lewis, Jo Cope, Susan Booth, Dawn Ryder, Tricia Emlyn-Williams, Mary Adams, Lyn Quine, Vanessa Lewis, Jo Cope, Susan Booth, Dawn Ryder, Tricia Emlyn-Williams, Mary Adams, Lyn Quine, Vanessa Chadwick. Why did they join? Lynne Blake says, “I’ve always known about Soroptimists as my husband’s aunt is a life-long Member, so I accepted my invitation to the event with background knowledge from her. Thoroughly enjoyed the evening - and (prompted by phone calls) joined up as soon as I was free. The Selby group seem a lively and interesting crowd, some of whom I already knew, I’m hoping to participate as much as possible.” Pauline Virgo added, “My first thoughts were that the group was very warm and friendly. It was very well organised and everyone made sure I understood what was going on. Everything about it was welcoming and I felt it was somewhere I could help make a difference both to the local community and further afield. The speaker on the evening (Sue Biggs) was very inspiring.”

SI Selby recruited ten new Members in 2016 and attributes this success to a well-planned orientation evening introducing what it means to be a Soroptimist. They sent out a professional invitation to prospective Members and meticulously planned the evening. Why did they join? Lynne Blake says, “I’ve always known about Soroptimists as my husband’s aunt is a life-long Member, so I accepted my invitation to the event with background knowledge from her. Thoroughly enjoyed the evening - and (prompted by phone calls) joined up as soon as I was free. The Selby group seem a lively and interesting crowd, some of whom I already knew, I’m hoping to participate as much as possible.” Pauline Virgo added, “My first thoughts were that the group was very warm and friendly. It was very well organised and everyone made sure I understood what was going on. Everything about it was welcoming and I felt it was somewhere I could help make a difference both to the local community and further afield. The speaker on the evening (Sue Biggs) was very inspiring.”

How will your Club approach Membership Month?
What is there to support you in doing so? There are invitation/advert templates and poster formats that you can alter to suit your needs. If you need a new banner there are examples that you can use and order or you may have a local supplier who can design something unique for you, just remember to use the brand guidelines as you do so! Have you looked at any of the following videos on YouTube?
• SI Ilkley, ‘What do Soroptimists do?’
• SI Pune Metro East, India talking about why they are Members
• SI Nottingham Feature Film
If not, do have a look and if you are tempted to create your own video, there is a useful guide with tips to get you started. This can be achieved using a smart phone or tablet. Or get your local college involved in helping you! We are again holding a video competition this year, so waste no time and send your contribution to Lisa Roscoe – lisa@sigbi.org – soon! We aim to show the most effective video at Conference in Cardiff.

SI Dunfermline celebrated Membership Month early this year, with their business partner Better World Books at their Open Day. The busy day created a lot of interest with 310 visitors. New business cards and SIGBI leaflets were available along with a new poster. A display of activities was met with enthusiasm. Visitors enjoyed a tour of the warehouse and refreshments provided by SI Dunfermline. Over 3,000 second hand books were donated for resale, the profits of which go to literacy projects throughout the world.

Create a Wordle
Have you tried using a wordle? SI Tunbridge Wells has, on this promotional postcard! Instructions for creating a Wordle are in the Membership Month Toolkit.

Hold a Flashmob
For those who can sing, dance or recite poetry there is guidance on how to hold your own FLASHMOB. Choose an open space like a town square or train station vestibule for your Flashmob, it needs to be somewhere where there is a lot of footfall so that you get a great audience for your display. Don’t forget to have Members distributing leaflets and talking to the crowd. Be aware that you might need permission from your local authority first. Why not be the first Club in our Federation to try this and then share the recording with us all via social media, what an impact that will have.

Use the Infographic
We have a new infographic for this year’s Membership Month! We have been using it on social media and it is attracting lots of retweets on twitter and hits on Facebook. Please let us know if you...
use it on business cards, invitations, banners or leaflets. There are new headers for use on Facebook and Twitter and a Thunderclap to maximise our presence on social media. We have also started our Facebook advert campaign. These adverts are quick and very cost effective. Has your Club considered a focused campaign to attract women to visit your Club using social media adverts? Many Clubs are now very active on social media, using it effectively to promote their programme work - make sure that your website is also up to date.

Seize publicity opportunities
It is also important to remember that leaflets and business cards are effective in drawing attention, as are articles in newspapers and free journals. Some Clubs have been successful in appearing just like SI Selby, SI San Fernando new Members. Perhaps in 2017 you and tested methods of recruiting ideas are just as successful as tried SIGBI website. New and original ideas are just as successful as tried blog, and a picture helps to add interest, as do comments from Members answering the question “Ask Me Why I’m a Soroptimist”. A photo speaks a thousand words and there are lots of ideas to inspire your Club to take an original high quality snap for the SIGBI website. Picture of the Month competition entries are on the website for inspiration too. Your Club might win the photo competition with your entry so get snapping. We’ll show the best photos at Conference.

It’s never too late to hold a Club event, some Clubs hold theirs in June, July and August. Just let us know what you are doing and we will ensure that your story appears in Membership Matters and on the SIGBI website. New and original ideas are just as successful as tried and tested methods of recruiting new Members. Perhaps in 2017 you will have up to 10 new Members just like SI Selby, SI San Fernando and SI Canterbury!

A year in the life of a Member
Jane McQuaide, Communications Officer, SI Lichfield

Wow! A whole year has passed since I attended my first Soroptimist meeting. My friend was preparing for her induction as a new Member and, having attended several meetings as a guest, thought it would be something I might be interested in too.

After my first meeting, I wanted to find out more. The Membership officer invited me for coffee to talk about the aims and objectives of SI, enabling me to consider if being a Soroptimist was right for me, (and vice versa), which gave me the opportunity to ask questions about any aspect of being a Member of SI.

After two meetings, I made the decision to become a Member. I was so impressed and empowered by my early experience at the meetings, I decided to put pen to paper, sharing my experience with other Members.

I’d never heard the word ‘Soroptimist’ until a friend said she was thinking of joining a local Club. “Sounds great, but what do Soroptimists do?” I asked. “Soroptimist International is a service organisation for women,” my friend explained. “It’s about ‘Educating, Empowering and Enabling’ women and developing as an individual while having fun”.

I’d never considered myself a ‘feminist’, however, I was intrigued, so I went to a meeting – which flew by as I struck up conversations with many of the Members who all made me feel so very welcome. I became a Member in May 2016 and now my social and service calendar is bursting at the seams and I have so many new friends in SI Lichfield and District.

I volunteered to undertake the shared role of Communications Officer, which meant I would attend Executive meetings. The Club had successfully recruited several new Members during 2016, but the Executive committee recognised that it was most important to mentor these new Members to avoid losing them in the future.

In June 2016 and February 2017, the Club held Membership Development strategy meetings aimed at retaining new Members. Each new Member has had an existing Member allocated an individual mentor, to support them through their first year of Membership. It has been exciting to see that individual Members bring a wide and varied range of skills and experience to our Club. They have much to gain and even more to give.

So, fellow Soroptimists we must remember this May, Membership matters!
Charitable Status for SIGBI

At the SIGBI General Meeting in November 2016, Clubs voted in favour of SIGBI applying for charitable status and the creation of a new trading company.

The SIGBI Board instructed Geldards LLP to begin the application process immediately.

At the Board meeting in February 2017 a video conference was held to discuss progress to date.

It was explained that before an application for charitable status can be made, the trading subsidiary (SIGBI Trading Limited) needs to be created to enable the transfer of all trading and non-charitable activities across to this company.

For the charitable application to be successful, SIGBI must prove that its activities are for public benefit and to further the objects in the countries where we work.

To monitor progress a ‘Critical Path’ project management tool is being utilised to identify priority actions, ensuring good governance and compliance with both the Charity Commission and Companies House.

It is essential that due consideration is given to all aspects of charitable and company law to include:

- Financial accountability, including the use of reserves, transfer of working capital, creation of a VAT Group, Gift Aid and group accounting procedures.
- Strong governance, in terms of Articles, Byelaws, Processes, Procedures, Board composition and Trustee training, to illustrate transparency and compliance.
- Creation of a Communications Plan to ensure the Membership is regularly updated on progress.
- Compliance in terms of reporting and financial procedures.
- Meticulous attention to detail is required and this takes time. Regular progress reports will be provided to Members over the coming months. In the meantime if you have any questions, please address them to the Board – email hq@sigbi.org.

Welcome to our new Club: SI Lira, Uganda

Soroptimist International of Great Britain and Ireland welcomed its newly chartered Club; Soroptimist International Lira in a colourful ceremony which took place on 23rd February, 2017, in Lira, Uganda.

The chartering ceremony was officiated by a representative of Soroptimist International, from Zimbabwe; Ms Betty Spiwe Katuyo.

The event was attended by guests from Lira District Local Government, community leaders, NGOs, academic institutions, church, beneficiaries and the media.

The Chartering Officer charged the new Club with the duties of being exemplary and to fight for the cause of women and girls.

She encouraged the Members to remain together as one and to work as a team, saying that being chartered means having an opportunity to join the umbrella body of Soroptimist International Great Britain and Ireland as well as paving way to be linked to funding opportunities when available, although the Club must continue sourcing funds through different fundraising activities.

The speech made by both the Chartering Officer and the President of the new Club, Ms. Betty Spiwe Katuyo and Ms. Margaret Ejang respectively, highlighted the vision and the mission of the Club.

The Chartering ceremony was officiated by the Chartering Officer and the President of the new Club, Ms. Betty Spiwe Katuyo and Ms. Margaret Ejang respectively, highlighted the vision and the mission of the Club.

The Club is committed to a world where women and girls together achieve their individual and collective potential, realise aspirations and have an equal voice in creating strong, peaceful communities worldwide.

The mission is to inspire action and create opportunities to transform the lives of women and girls through a global network of Members and international partnership.

The Club’s Founder Members were decorated with badges provided by the Soroptimist International of Great Britain and Ireland. The excited women danced in celebration for officially being accepted to be part of a huge global initiative fighting for the wellbeing of women and girls.

In her inaugural speech, the President of the new Club thanked Soroptimist International and the Chartering Officer for chartering their new Club. She pledged commitment to ensure that the vision and mission of this global initiative for women and girls are achieved.

She explained how the Club, before chartering has been working with the Regional Referral Hospital to help the malnourished children in the therapeutic feeding unit; with the schools to help adolescent girls by providing sanitary pads and washing. The girls have also been supported with counselling and guidance on being a woman in general and specifically on reproductive health related issues.

She also talked about the skills imparted by the Club Members to its beneficiaries; sewing and knitting skills; adult literacy and crafts (making handbags and jewellery). The skills enable the women and girls to earn a living through the sale of their products. Some of the products were also exhibited.

The school pupils who are beneficiaries of the Club joined the Members in celebrating the Charter event. These girls shared a poem on how Soroptimist has become their saviour, taken away their shame of having no pads at school, and how they are at school learning like any other child from a rich background.

In her inaugural speech, the President of the new Club thanked Soroptimist International and the Chartering Officer for chartering their new Club. She pledged commitment to ensure that the vision and mission of this global initiative for women and girls are achieved.

Invited guests applauded the Club and the initiative to reach out to women and girls. They all pledged to partner in the mobilisation of women to join the Club. The church leadership specifically took the responsibility of letting their congregation know about the Club and encouraging them to join.

14 MAY 2017
SIGBI Leadership and Club Development Day

Have you registered yet?

Isobel Smith, Director of Organisational Development, writes

26th May 2017: that’s the closing date for registrations for this year’s Leadership and Club Development Day. The day has been structured to complement the work it is anticipated that Club Members will be doing, or are about to do with the ‘Growing our Brand’ sessions being run throughout the Regions over the summer. Promoting Soroptimism together with getting our Clubs known and attracting new Members, will be the aim of the ‘Growing our Brand’ sessions. It is to this end that we hope to learn from our keynote speaker Jasvinder Sanghera CBE, founder of Karma Nirvana, who will be sharing with us her tips on how she got her voice known and how she works in partnership with other organisations to achieve the change she wants.

We are also excited about our three workshops:

• Understanding Our Relationship With The United Nations (UN): This workshop will clarify where we fit in within the UN and how important our work is in that context. New Members frequently cite this as one of the reasons they join us.

• Getting Our Voice Heard: Media training for TV and radio is not often available to Club Members but could be useful in the future.

• Make Your Club A Success: We can always learn new ideas and ways to do things, not only to engage new Members but to stimulate and interest longer standing Members also.

Federation President Ann Hodgson will also be speaking on her theme for the year, ‘Step Up and Lead the Way.’

Registrations can be made online or by using the downloadable registration form from the SIGBI website http://sigbi.org/Members/federation/devdays/

For more information on the venue go to http://www.conferenceaston.co.uk

We look forward to seeing you.

Conference Aston
Aston University Campus
Aston Street
Birmingham B4 7ET
10th June 2017
10am to 4pm
Cost £42.50 to include a three course lunch and refreshments (subsidiary by SIGBI)

Lisa Roscoe, SIGBI Communications Officer

Create eye-catching images

Have you ever wondered where those eye-catching images on social media come from? Try using Canva to create your own. Canva makes design simple for everyone. You can create designs for Web or print: blog graphics, presentations, Facebook covers, flyers, posters, invitations and so much more.

It’s free for a basic account and very user friendly. I’ve been using it for some time to create infographics and images for use on social media. There are loads of free templates which you simply change by adding your own images and changing the fonts and colours.

Go to www.canva.com to get started.

Facebook adverts

Have you considered running a Facebook advert to attract local women to your Club? I hope to have a detailed “How To” guide for you in the next few months but don’t let this stop you, have a go.

You run the Facebook advert through your Facebook account, but before you start have a think about what you’d like to achieve, is it direct enquiries or hits to a page on your website.

Think about your target audience, are you looking for a particular age range? You could test different adverts to different age groups using a creative and message for each. You can select the location you are aiming at – country, then be more specific and add county, region or postcodes.

The detailed targeting section is the fun bit, here you can select people who like particular Facebook pages or have certain interests such as women’s rights, gender equality, human rights, women in science and women’s empowerment.

You could select a particular audience depending on your recruitment event, if your event is on human trafficking you could add the interest area of stop human trafficking and other related interest areas.

Set your daily budget and the length of your campaign – you could test small adverts with a daily budget of just a few pounds.

When creating your actual advert, you can add copy and images and review it all before confirming it.

If you need any help with this please contact Lisa Roscoe lisa@sigbi.org.
All item costs are + P&P with your order. Please allow 7-10 days for your order to be processed.

Wellington Road North, Stockport, SK4 1AF. T: 0161 480 7686 F: 0161 477 6152 E: hq@sigbi.org. To pay
Sales Officer, Soroptimist International Great Britain and Ireland (SIGBI) Ltd., 2nd Floor, Beckwith House,
size of the goods. An invoice plus post and packing will be sent with your order. Contact: Joanne Voller,
SIGBI Ltd sends all orders by the most economical postage, cost is dependent on the weight and
website. All items exclusive of postage and packing. Do not send money with your order.

TO ORDER
The full list of retail items is available from Joanne or via the Members’ area of www.sigbi.org/Members
under “SIGBI Shop”. There is an order form for items from SIGBI and from Corporate Insignia on the
website. All items exclusive of postage and packing. Do not send money with your order.

All item costs are + P&P.

White/Silver major badge with pin fastening: £3.75 per badge. White/Silver major badge with strong magnetic clasp: £3.75 per badge. P&P (via Royal Mail) 1-2 badges £1.40; 1-19 badges £3.60. 20+ badges - via DPD: £5.95 PRICES EXCLUDE VAT (UK ONLY)
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New: Name Badges 74 x 36mm

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website. All items exclusive of postage and packing. Do not send money with your order.

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Sales Officer, Soroptimist International Great Britain and Ireland (SIGBI) Ltd., 2nd Floor, Beckwith House,
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by credit card, provide Card Number, Expiry Date and Security Code (3 digit number on reverse of card) with your order. Please allow 7-10 days for your order to be processed. All item costs are + P&P.

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2000 Club

Winners March 2017
Jenny Morley £100 SI Plymouth
Dr Wendi Momen £100 SI Bedford
Kate Wilson £50 SI Stockton-on-Tees
Pauline Diplock £50 SI Bangor NI
Meg Wild £25 SI Plymouth
Hilary Preston £25 SI Plymouth

Winners April 2017
Dorothy Williams £100 SI Jersey
Margaret Edney £100 SI Cirencester
Aileen Rotherham £50 SI Birmingham Cent.
SI Cirencester £50 SI Cirencester
Ingelese Anderskouw £25 SI Plymouth
Jennifer McCrea £25 SI Stirling

Winners May 2017
H. Davies £100 SI Birmingham
Kay Touhig £100 SI Cwmbran
Marilyn Jack £50 SI Hamilton
Elizabeth Wood £50 SI Stockton-on-Tees
Si Tiverton £25 SI Tiverton
Beryl Amy £25 SI Colchester

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/
Celebrate Women's Rights 

**SI Anglesey and SI Bangor** met to ‘Walk on the Bridge’ across the Menai Straits in support of International Women’s Day on 8th March. A sunny, but windy walk proved a success, and following a mention in the local paper, included Members of the public.

**SI Barnstaple** was joined by the town's Mayor to celebrate International Women's Day.

**SI Blackburn** contributed to a week in Blackburn devoted to women to celebrate IWD with a special open meeting at Foxfields Country Hotel with a presentation from the Mayoress of Blackburn, Shaheen Akhtar, supported by Cllr Maureen Bateson who had spearheaded the event.

**SI Brixham** set up a display in Brixham Library to raise awareness of the symptoms of ovarian cancer. They also approached doctors surgeries with informative materials and put similar notices on the doors in ladies' toilets.

**SI Calcutta** welcomed students and their mothers at Sujata Devi Vidyamandir, a school for underprivileged girls. The objective was to create awareness amongst the teenagers about their mothers' problems and to introduce them to underlying women's issues.

**SI Gosport, Fareham and District** held a coffee morning. MP Suella Fernandes and two Club Members, police officer Wendie Douglas and retired museum curator Rosalinda Hardiman, talked of their experiences as women in the workplace. Women’s organisations displayed information about their activities and there was also the Purple Teardrop campaign and Meru Women’s Garden Project.

**SI Gosport** was seen with the Convener of the SNAP project, Rohini Khare and her team, the ‘WAI WARRIORS’ started the manufacture of “Saheli Sanitary Napkins” in February 2017 to distribute 360 packets on International Women’s Day.

**SI Harrogate** showcased women working in the community to make a difference with local groups including Probus, Inner Wheel, Girl Guides, and the WI. SI Harrogate’s Young Women in the Community Award was presented to Amy Honeysett and Ellen Young, celebrating their volunteering work.

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**SI Hertford** supported United Women of Stevenage’s sewing day. Women from different organisations and girls from a local school met to create kits for the organisation Days for Girls, with washable sanitary towels, knickers, flannel and soap, in a discreet bag.
Celebrations

SI Cannock celebrated its 62nd Charter Dinner on 10th February. President Carole Holdcroft welcomed everyone including Soroptimists from other Clubs in the Region. The guest speaker was Gail Stuart, daughter of the late Eric Morecambe. After an excellent meal, Gail gave a humorous and enlightening talk on what life was like growing up in the Morecambe household. She gave several insights into the special relationship that Eric and Ernie had with each other and how this was undoubtedly a major factor in the success of their comedy duo.

SI Cheltenham celebrated its 60th Anniversary with a lunch party at Manor by the Lake. There were 60 guests including the Mayor, Chris Ryder; Regional President Daphne Dowson and a founder Member from 1957, Margaret Heaven. It was wonderful to welcome our friends from around the Region to celebrate with us and also to bring together Cheltenham Soroptimists, past and present, five of whom are new Members who have joined this year. Messages of congratulation from our Region and Friendship Links were very much appreciated and shared, we had a splendid lunch and then Neela Mann, local historian and author, gave a fascinating talk. Mayor, Chris Ryder gave a vote of thanks and Regional President Daphne responded. Like many Clubs we have had challenging times so to reach this milestone anniversary standing proud and growing was a happy day for us.

SI Chelmsford’s Best of Sisters Award recognises local women who make a difference to the lives of women and girls. President Barbara Bramley presented Sarah Bell local co-ordinator for Stop the Traffik with her Highly Commended certificate. President Barbara said, “Stop the Traffik has a vital role in preventing trafficking within local communities and it is through the hard work and dedication of people like Sarah that is making a difference.” Sarah Bell said that she was delighted to receive the award and looks forward to working with SI Chelmsford & District in the future.

SI Colchester celebrated its 38th Charter Day on 11th of February, 2017. The programme included a talk by Dr. Shnaz, Head of the Department of Urdu, University of Calcutta, on the plight of Muslim women in India. This was followed by the release of the Annual Newsletter, cultural performances by Members of SI Calcutta and the children of its Hold My Hand project and fellowship. It was an evening of camaraderie and joyous revelry, in celebration of the long years of service as Soroptimists.

SI Denbigh, Ruthin and District Member Rhiannon Rogers (second from the left) was presented with a Long Service Award Certificate by President Sheila recently. Rhiannon, now in her eighties, is famous for her homemade prize winning chutney and skilful craft work. She is a much loved, hard working and talented Member who has given over 40 years of quietly consistent service to the Club for which we are all very grateful.

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SI Kenilworth celebrated Yvonne Rich’s 90th birthday in March. Yvonne, in the past has served as DU president for Midland Arden, and also has twice been Club President. To mark the occasion President Patricia Weenren and Members presented Yvonne with a card and cake.

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SI Kenilworth Members were delighted to welcome Federation President Ann Hodgson to the Club’s 48th annual dinner. President Ann began her Soroptimist life at the Kenilworth Club 25 years ago. The Club was commended for its work. This year Members have raised £6,045 for 12 charities. The main beneficaries were Friends of Sick Children in Malawi, Ovarian Cancer, Look Good Feel Better, Water Aid, Meru Project, SI Nepal Aid and the Women’s Refuge.

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SI Calgary celebrated its 38th Anniversary of service as Soroptimists. At the Club’s Dinner Meeting Jackie received flowers, cards and a beautiful silver miniature spoon pendant, a most appropriate gift, as she has worked hard with the Club on the Karma Nirvana Spoon Campaign (to eliminate Forced Marriage in the UK). Jackie has been Club President three times and is currently a passionate, Joint Programme Officer.

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SI Dunfermline President Christine Barron highlighted the importance of education and women’s health this year’s talks. President Christine Barron highlighted the importance of education and women’s health this year’s talks.
SI Leigh celebrated its 70th Charter Anniversary with three former Federation Presidents. Guest speaker Warren Smith, Lord Lieutenant of Greater Manchester spoke eloquently of his role as Queen’s representative and of his formative years spent in the Leigh area. Local MP Rt. Hon Andy Burnham proposed the toast to Soroptimist International, Margaret Molyneux Regional President and a Member of SI Leigh & District gave the response to the toast. Cutting the celebration cake, Club President Avis Freeman was joined by Honorary Member Alice Judge who has almost 50 years Membership. Alice says, “To be a Soroptimist provides the opportunity to meet people from many walks of life” Friendship Link Club Members from Haverfordwest attended together with Best Wishes received from Friendship Clubs in Quincy, California and Mons Bonnange, Belgium.

SI Liverpool, the third oldest Club in the UK, celebrated its 90th Birthday in style with the help of Members, friends and Presidents and Club Members from both region and friendship links. Joining the celebrations were the Lord Lieutenant of Merseyside, Dame Lorna Muirhead, the Lord Mayor of Liverpool, and Regional President Margaret Molyneux. Liverpool President Joan Felgate is pictured (2nd left) with (L-R) President May-Brit of SI Oslo, President Christiane of SI Cologne and President Elect Anna Gordon from SI Edinburgh. The enjoyable evening finished with entertainment from a jazz band and dancing.

SI Poona celebrated its 26th annual Charter Night on 9th April 2017, at the PYC Gymkhana. Ms. Lata Krishnan, President of the National Association was the special guest for the occasion. She commended SI Poona for the good work they were doing, and all Members participated in a wonderful interaction with her, sharing their ideas and views. This was followed by an enjoyable dinner with family and friends of Members joining in.

SI Sheffield celebrated its 89th anniversary in style at Halifax Hall with lunch for the Lord Mayor and Consort, Master and Mistress Cutler, SI Yorkshire President and other VIP guests from across the region, as well as a strong turn out from SI Sheffield.

This year’s theme of International Women’s Day – Be Bold – was continued when the guest speaker Penny Haslam spoke about her “Great Grandmother’s Bloomers.” She urged women to be bold, be active and let their voices be heard. Her Great Grandmother had been ridiculed and subjected to tomatoes thrown at her when she stepped out on a bicycle in the 1890s wearing bloomers. Penny shared her media insider’s knowledge from 20 years of working in the broadcast media about why we need to see women in positive, active roles and positions of strength and power.

The Lord Mayor Denise Fox and the Master Cutler Richard Edwards praised the good work of the Soroptimists group in supporting the Charity Whirlow Farm Trust.

SI Port Talbot were proud to present Long Service Awards to four Club Members. Presentation of certificates were made by Club President Judith Morgan at a recent celebratory event. The four Members, between them, total almost 140 years Service to Soroptimist International. Between them they have held many positions within the Club and Region, including Regional President Wales South, Meg Edwards.

SI St Albans had a glittering 60th Diamond Anniversary! The highlight of the weekend of celebrations was the glittering diamond gala dinner. Guests of Honour were Countess Verulam, Lord Lieutenant of Hertfordshire and Ann Hodgson, President, SIGBI. Members were delighted to welcome visitors from all of the Club’s Soroptimist Friendship Link Clubs: Warsaw Poland, Chico USA, Muenster Germany and Osaka Japan.

Guests included Soroptimist dignitaries and Members of Soroptimist Clubs from across the UK including Brixham, Bedford, Cambridge, Cwmbran, Glasgow, Southport, Widnes, Winchester, and from many of the Clubs in the Region: Bedford, Hertford, High Wycombe, Oxford, two of the London Clubs, Slough Windsor and Maidenhead and Thames Valley. The Club was also supported by families and friends of Members. There were 140 people in total at the gala dinner! Our friendship link Soroptimist sisters plus partners and other Members of our Club enjoyed a diamond-themed friendship weekend: Friday evening a talk about diamonds in Redbourn, Saturday a tour of London’s Diamond District, Sunday a guided tour of the Roman Theatre in St Albans and Sunday lunch at the Cricketers in Redbourn before everyone headed home for a well earned rest!
Bridgend Club’s President, Sharon Dixon and Sue Phillips, enrolled Sandra Shelly, Chris on 8th February. President Sue Members at their business meeting welcome a fabulous four new SI Bridgend was delighted to the coastal path walk. refreshments on their return from and Guide Members with welcome by serving the Rainbow, Brownie supports Ulster SI Bangor N.I. was donated by the Club. reading culture. Furniture and encourage them develop a that is conducive to quiet reading give the children an environment a village school called LEA Aura SI Abuja renovated a classroom and provided a Mini Library for a village school called LEA Aura Primary School, Karshi Abuja, to give the children an environment that is conducive to quiet reading and encourage them develop a reading culture. Furniture and books were donated by the Club. SI Buxton met at the Old Hall in Buxton to pack 20 Backpacks for children in Africa, as part of their Mary’s Meals charity work. During the evening, President Chris Campbell is pictured welcoming new Member Jo Holdway. SI Bournemouth held its Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) Challenge for the fifth year attracting even more interest from the engineering world. The challenge is, for girls only, to promote participation and raise aspirations in industries that young women often see as masculine and not for them. Teams from nine schools took part with the objective of creating a solution to a problem which will help people in the poorest parts of the world. Prizes of £250 to each winning school and £50 to each team member were presented by the Mayor of Poole to the Year 8 winners whose project “38’s” was an ingenious water filter strapped to a shoe for people in Malawi where access to clean water is difficult. The Mayor and Mayoress of Bournemouth presented prizes to the Year 9 winners whose project, “S A Stem” produced a reusable, compact stove to provide warm water and cooking facilities for people throughout the third world. All girls who completed the Challenge achieved the British Science Bronze CREST award which recognises achievement in STEM based subjects and were sponsored by local companies Ash Technologies Ltd and Morgan Sindall Construction South. Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Dorset, Professor Gillian Slater, thanked the judges, IPP SIGBI, Margaret Emsley, added that, “two million engineers are needed in the UK in the next five years”. Student of architectural technologies, Lauren Milnthorpe, shared her journey through education advising the girls “never to let anyone say you can’t do something just because you’re a girl!”. IPP Soroptimist International, Ann Garvie said her advice was to “aim high, be passionate, do not worry, crack the glass ceiling, bring gender equality – because no other country has done this yet!” SI Cirencester’s President was delighted to welcome three new Members at a recent Cub meeting - Janette Kirk-Willis and Ann Gibbons were inducted as full Members and Linda Hoffen became a link Member. SI Dursban stands against Abuse of Woman and Children. They brought much needed comfort to Rape and Abuse Victims at the Newlands Crisis Centre in Durban. They delivered bags filled with comfort packs with toiletries and refreshments that restore some dignity to the women and children in their darkest hour of need.
SI Crosby held a STEM Event which welcomed girls from five local schools aged 14 to 16 who attended a half day conference at The Comrades Club, Crosby, Liverpool. Seven inspirational young women speakers outlined their chosen profession. They included an assistant chief aeronautical engineer with Rolls Royce, team leader recruiting for BAE Systems, a civil engineering student, a project engineer at Jaguar Landrover Halewood, two specialist biomedical scientists and a research assistant in eye and vision at the Royal Liverpool University Hospital Trust. The girls were then given the opportunity to question each of the speakers and take part in experiments and assist with demonstrations. It was the first event of its kind organised by SI Crosby and grew from a challenge issued by Past Federation President Margaret Emsley to encourage girls to consider STEM careers.

Reporting on your projects and initiatives

SI Harrogate President Pat Shore and Press and Publicity Officer, Sandra Frier, received a Highly Commended Award, on behalf of the Club, at the Harrogate and District Volunteers Awards Ceremony for 83 years of service to local and international communities.

SI Hereford launched their ‘We care with a chair’ initiative in 1966, highlighting the lack of resting places for older people. The project was relaunched by Club President Rosemary Rigby in 2013/14 as researchers revealed that 20 per cent of over seventies people are put off by the lack of places to sit.

SI Kirkcaldy sponsored the Kirkcaldy–v-Heriot’s game ball. President Elect Heather Stewart, President Kay Wilkie, Kirkcaldy Rugby Club President Derek Harper, Captain Gavin McKenzie and Past President Thelma Simpson.

SI Maidstone makes fabric pockets with a sanitary towel and panty liner inside to raise awareness of women and girls who lack access to sanitary protection and fundraise for Loving Humanity, which works with refugees.

SI Middlesbrough held a Focus on Dementia Meeting. President Uzma Kazmi welcomed speaker Debbie Keenan Dementia Lead Officer at Aapna Services, which has set up new services for people with dementia and their carers. Debbie previously worked with the Alzheimer’s Society.

SI Milford Haven’s Debbie Vines welcomed Ann Gover SI Procedural Consultant from New Zealand, for a short stay, via the SI Open Heart Open Door scheme. SI Milford Haven and SI Gore in New Zealand will now establish a Friendship Link.

SI Poona will now establish a Friendship Link with Haven and SI Gore in New Zealand.

SI Poona joined the Family Planning Association to run a medical camp. A general medical check-up was conducted for 100 children from the Sant Tukaram School at Baner, Pune. Blood tests were also done for determining their blood groups and those with low Hb were given medication and will be monitored.

SI Hertford’s annual prize for Service and Leadership, donated to Presdales, their local girls’ school, was awarded jointly to Maddie Lee and Caja Stacey at the school’s Speech Day. The two worthy recipients had spearheaded a successful recycling project. The picture shows Member Pam Robertson talking to the girls.

SI Hamilton presented their donation to SI King Sabata Dalindyebo, their Friendship Link Club in South Africa. The money is to help with their Bethany Children’s Home Project. In the photo from left are Margaret Movat, SI Hamilton, Ann Hodgson SIGBI President, Margaret Emsley, IPP SIGBI, Gail Charalambous, member of SI Port Elizabeth and FPAC Chair, SA, Dr Laurel Fletcher, member of SI Pretoria Tshwane, Marilyn Jack and Morag Rennie (both SI Hamilton) The photo was taken in the Hilton Hotel, Malta at the SIGBI Conference in November.

SI Lichfield held its annual all-comers Quiz Night to raise funds for Lichfield Talking Newspaper. Angela Reynolds, founder President of SI Lichfield, hosted the event as Quizmaster, 70 people pitted their wits raising £600 and a delicious supper was provided by Queens Fish and Chips.

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SI Medway filled 106 “Boxes of Love” for those desperately in need in Eastern Europe. Filled with practical things like warm clothes and toiletries plus stationery, toys or gifts which bring absolute joy to thousands of men, women and children who would otherwise not receive a Christmas present. They are distributed by Blythwood Trust.

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100 Soroptimists met in Perth for the Annual Scottish Conference, to be greeted by a mountain of pants (2150) and bras (2618) which members had collected. These were presented to Maggie Ness from ‘Smalls for All’. The Conference was opened by Liz Grant, the Provost of Perth and Kinross who welcomed delegates. The keynote speaker was The Rt. Hon. Dame Elish Angiolini OBE QC who spoke about her rise from childhood in one of the poorer districts of Glasgow to becoming Solicitor General and Lord Advocate of Scotland. She is best known outside Scotland as the Chair of the Commission on Women Offenders which reported in April 2012 and she also prepared the way for the incorporation of the European Convention of Human Rights into domestic law. This formed the basis of the work that Soroptimists did in partnership with the Prison Reform Trust on alternatives to custody for female offenders. Alternatives to Custody was the focus of two of the four Projects presented by Clubs. SI Glasgow Central supports ‘Tomorrows Women’ by providing role model Margaret Emsley, will be attending with many other inspirational speakers.

SI St. Vincent and the Grenadines hosted an amazing ceremony for the initiation of Anika Dyer during Membership month last May and in October they welcomed three more new Members with the message: “SISVG is growing in sisterhood, a relationship which requires more energy than parenting and more work than a marriage. Being a Soroptimist sister can not be defined, it’s an experience that must be had and we are honoured to have you all join us in this second-to-none sisterhood of Soroptimist International.”

SI Selby was delighted to steward at the first Children’s Reading Festival in Selby Abbey for three days in March. Members escorted groups of children from primary schools in Selby district to listen to five authors who enthralled the children by presenting their books with illustrations, rhyming and rap, jokes and story telling. Members also ran raffle and tombola stalls, fundraising for future Children’s Reading Festivals. Every child received a Soroptimist Friendship bookmark, to help them establish positive friendships and to recognise unfriendly, bullying behaviour.

SI Staffordshire Moorlands knitted 23 teddies which were given to the Manager of Red watch at Leek Fire and Rescue. The teddies will be on fire tenders to be given to children involved in a fire or a road traffic accident.

SI Stockton on Tees Member, Susan Walker visited the Kipok School in the Meserani region of Tanzania. She met students whose secondary education is sponsored by the Club and presented gifts of stationery. SI Stockton on Tees provides ongoing support to the Meserani Project through sponsorship, fundraising and collecting useful items and clothing for schools in the area.

SI Tiverton created a fabulous array of colours and patterns on cosy bed socks knitted by Club Members and friends. Over 100 pairs have been knitted which have been donated to local care homes for their residents.

SI Weston-super-Mare hosted Wilfrida Kendricks and Sabine Kirner who represent SI at the UN headquarters in Geneva. They had been invited to speak to a meeting of the South West and Channel Islands Region in March. Melanie David of SI Weston hosted them for two nights. The two ladies described to a rapt Regional meeting their role in Geneva
Dr Brenda Jackson JP

1932-2017
SIGBI Federation President 1992-1993

Brenda was born in Sheffield and lived in her Grandfather’s house for all of her life. She became an administrator for the Sheffield Family Planning Clinic in 1966 and also spent 20 years working for the British Red Cross. She was accepted to be a magistrate in 1975 and as a result of her work, charity involvement and the magistrate work she was awarded an honorary doctorate by Sheffield University. Brenda was a member of the Sheffield Health Authority and became Vice Chair in 1990. Dr Jackson has been a Trustee of the Talbot Trusts since 1989 and through her time was a very committed and supportive advocate for the objectives of the Trusts. She was involved in the Yorkshire Cancer Research and capably led this strong and very effective charity for 14 years as Chair.

Brenda became a Soroptimist in 1964 and the President of SI Sheffield in 1975-76. She went on to become President of Yorkshire Region in 1982-83 and Federation President of SIGBI in 1992-93. During this time she travelled extensively to other Association countries with many interesting tales to tell including being offered a cockerel head to eat in Nigeria.

In October 1992 she held her conference in Liverpool with a theme ‘Caring for the future’. There were nearly 2000 women from all over the world.

Brenda continued to enjoy travelling especially on cruises in the later years.

She was delighted to be given Honorary Membership of SI Sheffield and we all have much to be thankful to Brenda for.

She epitomised a Soroptimist Woman and was an inspiration and example to us all. She will be remembered with much fondness by all who met her.

Dorothy (Deri) Rundle, SI Barnstaple, died on 21st December 2016, aged 84. A loyal and dedicated Member for ten years and much loved.

Madeleine Diana Vian (Della), SI St Austell, died on 22nd January 2017 aged 82. Della joined in 1988 and was Club President in 1994/95 and Club Almoner. She was a valued Member who sadly had to retire from Soroptimism in 2013 due to ill health but was visited regularly by Members.

Dr. Dilruba Anguri, former President, SI Dhanмонdi, Bangladesh, died on 4th February 2017. She was a very active Member of the Club.

Vera Bromley, SI Llandudno, died on 11th December 2016 aged 98. A Soroptimist for 52 years, she was Club President 1981-82 and Regional Treasurer 1982-1987.

Annabelle Shirley Foster, a former Member of SI Nottingham, War and SI Malta, died on 8th January.

Vivien Buckley Palmer, SI Malta, recently died.

Glemmy Gun Munro, SI San Fernando, died on February 5th 2017 aged 91. A beloved Member of SI San Fernando for 40 years Glemmy served as President for two years 1979-81.

Sheila McCarty, SI Bolton, died on 18th February aged 92. Sheila was first an Honorary Member as Mayoress, in 1964, she became a full Member, then in 1971 she transferred to SI Jersey and was President there in 1979-80, when the Federation Conference was held in the Island.

Kathleen Colhoun, SI Londonderry, died on 8th February 2017, aged 89. A loyal Member for 48 years, Club President 1993-94 and Treasurer. Laura Gilbert SI Bangor Northern Ireland, died on 6th February 2017 aged 80. A Member for 31 years, Laura was Club President 2000/01, convener of the public speaking competition and press officer.

June C. Buckley, SI Windermere & District, died on 2nd February aged 82 years. An active and committed Soroptimist for 36 years, she held various offices including Club President 96-97 and 06-07.

Betty Briggs, SI Wakefield, died on 19th February, aged 92. Betty was a long serving and loyal Member.

Maureen Affleck, SI South Shields died in January 2017. An active Member of the Club for over 40 years, she served as President in 1977 and 1981. Monica McIntosh-Ellis, SI Barbados, died on 6th February, 2017. Monica was a very active Soroptimist for the past four years and Club Treasurer 2013 to 2016.

Diana Gibson, SI Woking died on 3rd March, aged 69. A Member for nine years, Diana was an active and enabling Member of PAC through her great work in the wider community and very supportive of all Club activities and her sister Members.

Maureen Hull, SI East Grinstead, died on 2nd January 2017 aged 87. A Member since 1978 holding office as Club President, 1985-6, Treasurer for the Club and Region and also involved with the Benevolent Fund.

Kathleen Wilson SI Ilkley, died on 21st February aged 94. A Soroptimist for 39 years, Kathleen had been Club President of both SI Ilkley and SI Bradford.

Myra Reid Toms, SI Hamilton, died on 31st January 2017, aged 67 years. She joined SI Motherwell and Wishaw in 2002, where she was Programme Action Officer, Club President, Friendship Link Correspondent until the Club closed in 2013. She joined SI Hamilton in August 2014 where she became International Convener/Friendship Link Correspondent.

Gloria Smith (Glo), SI Weston-super-Mare, died on 3rd March 2017, aged 73, the 30th anniversary of her joining the Club of which she was an enthusiastic Member.

Kathleen Colhoun, SI Londonderry, died in February 2017. Kathleen was an enthusiastic Member for 47 years, a Fast President and Treasurer.

Audrey Brodie, SI Birmingham Central, died on 28th April 2016, aged 88. A Member for 39 years, she was President in 1986-87.

F rede Cocks, CBE, SI Birmingham Central, died on 23rd June 2016 in her 101st year. A Member since 1957, she later became an Honorary Member. She was the second ever female Lord Mayor of Birmingham in 1977–1978, welcoming the Queen to the city in her Jubilee year.

Janet Oates, long time Member of the former Merthyr Tydfil Club recently died, she was President 1984/85.

Marjorie Griffiths a Soroptimist for over 50 years died in March 2017. President of the former Merthyr Tydfil Club 1969/70 and 1980/81.

Susan Cresswell, SI Tynedale, died on 2nd January 2017 aged 66. A Founder Member, so greatly missed. Club Secretary for many years and also Club President and Regional Representative during several years and always a great support to the Club.

Kathleen Holligan, SI Dunfermline died on 3rd April 2017 aged 88, a committed and active Member for 39 years.

Dr. Mary Rees, Founder Member of SI Fishguard, died in March this year aged 95. Dr. Rees was the second President when the Club was founded.

Pam Harker, SI Kettering, died on March 7th 2017 aged 88. Pam was an active Soroptimist for 40 years and served as Club President in 1984.

Evelyn White, SI Port Talbot, died on 10th November 2016 aged 81. A valued Member for 28 years, she served as Club President, Secretary and Regional Treasurer.

Muriel Jobling MBE, SI Burnley died in March 2017 aged 93, a Member and Honorary Member since 1947, over 70 years.

Dr Pauline Topham, SI Dundee recently died, she was President of the former Merthyr Tydfil Club 1969/70 and 1980/81.

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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 ho@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.
On 15th March, a video conference took place between Marti Grant and Margaret Iikara in Kenya; The Meru Women’s Garden Project Ambassadors who were able to participate, myself and Amanjit Dhillon on behalf of Child.org. I was delighted to be part of this event even if it was just to listen and observe. Barbara Dixon was unable to join us as she was in New York at the CSW meeting but I am sure she will do so in the future.

Marti and Margaret gave a short presentation and then took questions from the ambassadors. Topics covered were, where we are now, how money raised to date has been spent, were they suffering from drought and was there any serious conflict in the project vicinity. All ambassadors have received a transcript of the conference.

It was very exciting to hear everyone communicating. There were a few technical hitches but I am sure we will iron these out as we progress. We plan to hold these conferences on a monthly basis so if you have any questions please give them to your ambassador and she will ask them.

The next one is on April 11th so will have taken place before this goes to print but your Ambassador will have the next date by then so just ask.

If you still do not have an ambassador please appoint one as soon as possible. The project has two years still to run so it is not too late. We hope to get together in Cardiff during conference so it will be a good opportunity to share good practice and fund raising ideas.

Marti’s blog

Here is an excerpt from Marti’s April blog:

“Since the project launch in March 2016, SIGBI has raised a fantastic £56,000. Child.org and CIFORD have been working closely together to develop new processes for CIFORD that will allow them to track their impact over the duration of the project.

One of these processes was to survey a large proportion of the women we are working with, to understand directly from the women where and what their needs are. Child.org has helped Margaret to recruit new interns, Eunice and Nancy, giving guidance and training on interview skills and data collection. CIFORD has interviewed over 100 women and has learnt a huge amount. We now know that 56 per cent of the women are living in households that earn under £50 a month. With an average of 8.5 people living in each household, that is a lot of mouths to feed with very little. We also know that 76 per cent of the women attribute their household income directly to agriculture. We know we can improve on this.

We are now able to tailor our training programme to specific needs. CIFORD is providing safe rain collection and storage facilities to the groups and plan to improve this in the future. They plan to survey the women again after a year to see whether the changes introduced have had a lasting impact.

Four groups are to be enrolled onto CIFORD’s yearlong course. Meru Women’s Garden Project has engaged with the first intake of four groups of committed and dedicated women.

There are 198 participants, 194 women and four men.

This means that we are working with over three times the women we had planned to work with on Intake 1, thanks to the fantastic fundraising efforts of SIGBI.

This year we will also run two Alternative Rites of Passage sessions for 80 girls and one for 60 boys in December.”

Marti ended her blog with, “What a year we have had”.

This shows that the money you are raising is being put to good use. I know it seemed slow to start but I liken it to building a house. The foundations seem to take ages but once it appears above ground things happen much more quickly. Our project is on firm foundations. Remember that 15th July is our Day of Action for Meru so please let your ambassadors know what you are planning. Amanjit at Child.org will be pleased to help with resources so do not hesitate to contact her.

I am happy to visit Clubs and Regions to keep you updated but I am aware of the financial implications of this.

Congratulations on your achievements so far, we are well on track to meet – and maybe exceed – our target for Meru.

SI Neath attended the Ripon Home and Garden Event at Ripon Cathedral on 8th April, to raise awareness of the Meru Women’s Garden Project and sell some of the delicious Meru Herbs, Jams and Sauces. It was a busy day – many people visited the stand to find out about the project and to buy the jams, most which sold out. Thanks to the creative skills of Club Members, an amazing miniature model of the Club’s Harrogate Autumn Flower Show Silver Award winning Community Garden – “Meru Garden Life” was on display for the first time. We certainly made people more aware of who we are and what we do, as well as raise awareness of the Meru Women’s Garden Project.

SI Harrogate attended the Ripon Home and Garden Event at Ripon Cathedral on 8th April, to raise awareness of the Meru Women’s Garden Project and sell some of the delicious Meru Herbs, Jams and Sauces. It was a busy day – many people visited the stand to find out about the project and to buy the jams, most which sold out. Thanks to the creative skills of Club Members, an amazing miniature model of the Club’s Harrogate Autumn Flower Show Silver Award winning Community Garden – “Meru Garden Life” was on display for the first time. We certainly made people more aware of who we are and what we do, as well as raise awareness of the Meru Women’s Garden Project.

SI Neath took the opportunity to raise awareness of Soroptimism and mark the 150th Anniversary of St David’s Church Neath. Instead of a flower display for the festival SI Neath decided to represent the Meru Women’s Garden Project as their display. They built a garden in the church as shown in the picture and, as a result of this public display, SI Neath have been invited to give a presentation on the Meru Garden Project to the Welsh Government at the Senedd – Cardiff Bay where Assembly Members, Wales for Africa, SI Wales South Regional officers, together with SI Neath Members will be present.