

UKPAC Chairman Report

November 2020

I have managed to keep busy during the summer since we last met, and I can see from the reports that you have too. It is wonderful how innovative and determined to keep going everyone is, in spite of everything and to think of new ways of delivering our aims and objectives.

We are all trying to remain positive and find the good things coming out of the terrible situation. Clubs have been finding ways of keeping as many of their members as possible involved and increasing phone calls and trying to introduce those not so IT literate to the wonders of on-line meetings. However, I am sure we are all missing the fellowship - which we can all do in style!

We are pushing back against discrimination and that includes ageism. We are the evidence that is obviously needed that being 65+ does not confer disability and permanent brain fog of itself and we are not all a burden to our families and society and have a wealth of experience and expertise in professions and business, not to mention as care givers. The Programme Focus Reports are a celebration of our work and it is clear that all members, of whatever age, are busy and contributing to make a difference to the lives of women and girls in some way, however small, and this should make us proud of our organisation.

I have attended many on-line meetings and tried to raise the profile of Soroptimism within the UK. I have also received correspondence from members for not doing enough and I think we need to discuss this.

We are trying to work with partners and I spend a lot of time keeping updated on the UK legislation going through Parliament and also trying to engage with UN Women. We are members of the National Association of Women (NAWO) and a subgroup of this organisation is UKCSWA – the UK Civil Society Women's Alliance. I sit on the core group of this organisation which has been holding regular meetings with the Government Equality Office. Unfortunately, the C-19 pandemic and Brexit means that a lot of personnel from the GEO have been moved to other positions and this has weakened the communication link, but not severed it completely.

I have attended the Centenary Action Group which is campaigning about online abuse of women, particularly in politics and public life and is planning campaigns to address barriers to this work for disabled women, making politics more family friendly and promoting equal power and more diversity of the women's cohort in politics. We need a representative from this group to attend their meetings – let me know if you are interested.

The Fawcett society is running free training on the above issues,
<https://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/free-online-equal-power-workshops-for-women>
Glitch is an organisation working to end on-line abuse.

I have also attended a meeting of 6'O' – the group of leading women's organisations in the UK. These are SIGBI, Business and Professional Women's Organisation of UK (BPWUK), the National Federation of Townswomen's Guild (TG), The British Federation of Women Graduates (BFWG), the National Council of Women of Great Britain (NCWGB) and the National Federation of Women's Institutes (NFWI). Most of these organisations have been persuaded to support the amendments to the Domestic Abuse Bill for which we have been advocates.

I have also endorsed an advocacy letter for member states of the UN calling for ratification of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) on Convention 190 and endorsed the UN2020 UN75 People's Declaration and Plan for Global Action

I have added our name to petitions and written to the Prime Minister, other Ministers and government departments on your behalf. The causes include – to ratify the Istanbul Convention, increase provision for women suffering domestic abuse in the pandemic ;child marriage; immigration and refugee status and the indefinite detention of EU and Swiss nationals in detention centres; signing petition re rough sex as a defence in sexual assault cases; the ongoing petition to add amendments to the domestic abuse bill going through parliament at the moment re making coercive control a statutory defence in cases where women commit offences for fear of domestic abuse and making non-fatal strangulation a separate offence.

Keeping up to date I would like to remind you of the 16 Days of Activism from November 25 to December 10 and the excellent Toolkit that has been put together and is available via the SIGBI briefing and on the website. As part of this Nicole Jacobs , UK Designate Domestic Abuse Commissioner , is making a video address for the Southern Region on December 3 from 4-5.30pm. If you would like to attend please email: lizbatten@gmail.com to request the link.

Liz Dominey