



**Educate**

**Empower**



**Enable**

**Women inspiring action,  
*transforming lives***

# Welcome

This booklet is about Soroptimist International (SI) the largest International Women's service organisation, which is right here on your doorstep and is doing amazing things locally, nationally and internationally.

This booklet gives a flavour of what being a Soroptimist is about, the sort of project and community work we get involved in and some of the impact we see it has in the way the lives of women and girls are changed.

The word 'Soroptimist' is derived from the Latin 'soror' meaning sister and 'optima' the 'best of'; so we think of this as working to get the 'best for women'. We are committed to making a difference to the lives of women and girls.

Soroptimist International has around 80,000 members in 3,000 clubs across 132 countries worldwide.

In the Northern England region there are 14 clubs which covers North and West Cumbria and the NE, so from Morpeth to Middlesbrough to West Cumbria

## So what do we do?

At the heart of each and everyone of our clubs and our region is the project work we do to educate, enable and empower women and girls to achieve their full potential. This booklet gives a flavour of the fantastic and amazing projects that our clubs are doing. You can see more about this work and the impact it is having on the lives of women and girls through the club websites and facebook pages.

## Why do we do it?

Our members tell us that they enjoy the satisfaction of a job well done, making a difference to the lives of women and their families and the enjoyment of being a part of a team working together, but more importantly what keeps us involved is that we have fun with like-minded people!



## So what makes Soroptimist International ‘international’?

One of the really exciting things which makes our organisation different and effective on the world stage is that SI has had consultative status with the United Nations (UN) since 1984.

Every year, Soroptimists meet with representatives from UN countries to consult, discuss, understand and plan together the world’s response to the new sustainable development goals. Our project work is aligned to these goals and focuses on improving the lives of women and girls through:

- **Access to learning opportunities**
- **Economic Empowerment and employment**
- **Ending of violence and participation in conflict resolution**
- **Ensuring food security and access to health care**
- **Environmental sustainability**

In September 2015 the UN adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, a plan of action for global change. Goal 5 is to ‘Achieve Gender equality and Empower all women and girls’; deep legal and legislative changes are needed to ensure women’s rights around the world. A record 143 countries guaranteed equality between men and women in their constitutions, but 52 have not taken this step. There is much yet to do.

This booklet contains a snapshot of the projects our clubs in Northern England are driving forward. 30 projects which impact on women and girls locally, nationally and globally.

Our members are from a range of backgrounds with a range of skills, some work full time, have children, are retired, are full time carers, professional business women of every diversity and culture; people just like you!

You can contact all our clubs via our regional website:

**SI Northern England** <http://sigbi.org/northern-england>

But each club can be contacted separately as below:

- **Carlisle** [www.soroptimistcarlisle.com](http://www.soroptimistcarlisle.com)
- **Cockermouth and District** [www.ckermouthsoroptimists.co.uk](http://www.ckermouthsoroptimists.co.uk)
- **Darlington and District** [www.sigbi.org/darlington](http://www.sigbi.org/darlington)
- **Durham** [www.sigbi.org/durham](http://www.sigbi.org/durham)
- **Middlesbrough** [www.sigbi.org/middlesbrough](http://www.sigbi.org/middlesbrough)
- **Morpeth** [www.morpeth-soroptimists.org.uk](http://www.morpeth-soroptimists.org.uk)
- **Newcastle Upon Tyne** [www.sigbi.org/newcastle-upon-tyne](http://www.sigbi.org/newcastle-upon-tyne)
- **Penrith and District** [www.sigbi.org/penrith-and-district](http://www.sigbi.org/penrith-and-district)
- **South Shields and District** [www.sigbi.org/south-shields](http://www.sigbi.org/south-shields)
- **Stockton on Tees** [www.sigbi.org/stockton-on-tees](http://www.sigbi.org/stockton-on-tees)
- **Sunderland** [www.sigbi.org/sunderland](http://www.sigbi.org/sunderland)
- **Tynedale** [www.sigbi.org/tynedale](http://www.sigbi.org/tynedale)
- **Tynemouth and Whitley Bay** [www.soropatthecoast.org.uk](http://www.soropatthecoast.org.uk)
- **Whitehaven and District** [www.sigbi.org/whitehaven](http://www.sigbi.org/whitehaven)

# EDUCATION

**SI Durham** is working with a primary school within the Aarohi Project in the mid Himalayas and have raised money to employ a local teacher for one year. They aim to do the same this year and with any additional money, support a child's education for a year. One club member spent some time at the school and with former teachers in SI Durham, is working on ways forward to support the teaching and learning. Through meetings with our UK and Aarohi based links and by themed fundraising events, club members have raised their own awareness of Indian life and culture.



**SI Morpeth** members ran a stall in the Sanderson Arcade in Morpeth to raise the profile of Soroptimists, attract new members and to raise funds for Barnabas Safe and Sound. Barnabas is a local charity which supports vulnerable young people aged 16 to 25 in the Morpeth area, educating them in life skills, helping them to find employment or training and, if homeless, to find accommodation, aiming to enable them to live independently. Our stall raised funds by a raffle, and by selling "pre-loved" jewellery.



**SI Penrith and District** have had a Friendship Link with **SI Dhaka** since they were chartered in the early 1980's, and with financial support from SI Penrith a school opened in 1982. The Literacy Centre is attended by the poorer children in the area and there are now 54 students, in 3 classes. Textbooks, exercise books, essential educational materials, uniforms and refreshments are given to the students. The school employs 2 teachers and members of SI Dhaka visit on a regular basis to evaluate the performance of the students.



### SI Penrith and District

Penrith Soroptimists involved a group of 8, Year 9 students, all girls from a local school, taking part in a research project on relationship education held over 2 days on a residential basis. They were informed that their views about the experience would be helpful for work with other students in their own/other schools in the future.

The Objectives included:

Raising awareness of the potential dangers inherent in social media use and helping the girls to recognise their own, and others, vulnerabilities online.

### SI Stockton on Tees

The Meserani Project in Tanzania has been supported by members of Soroptimist International of Stockton-on-Tees for five years. The main aim of the Project is to educate Africa's children. Stockton members sponsor girls through 4 years of Secondary Education.

In addition they have recently raised enough to put a roof on the Girl's Dormitory at Kipok School when the building was halted due to lack of funds.

Further donations purchased beds for the dormitory as previously the girls had been sleeping two or three to a bed. The club is continuing their support for this and is planning a visit to Tanzania in 2016.

[www.meseraniproject.co.uk](http://www.meseraniproject.co.uk).



### SI Tynedale

Tynedale Soroptimists regularly assemble a team to record the Tynedale Talking Newspaper. This weekly sound recording session by local service organisations produces USB sticks for the blind and visually impaired. Drawn from articles in the local newspaper, the recordings enable 71 listeners to hear the local news, views and 'What's On' in the district for that week and keep in touch with the community.

Tynedale Soroptimists always enjoy the recording sessions, as there is often something to laugh about in the local news reports or when someone fluffs their lines!



# ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE

## SI Darlington and District

Launched by Darlington's Mayor in 2013 and supported by Jenny Chapman MP, our **'Loves Me, Loves Me Not' Campaign** aims to raise awareness of the signs of a potentially abusive relationship. SI Darlington members have distributed thousands of posters and bookmarks to schools, colleges, medical centres, shops etc within Darlington and beyond.

Four editions have been produced so far: the original for adults and secondary school pupils, followed by primary school, Polish and, most recently, Bengali versions. Family Help (Darlington's Women's Refuge) has reproduced our poster on its latest leaflet.



## SI Sunderland

SI Sunderland are working with the **Peer Support Group** who have survived domestic abuse, and have formed a strong self-help group. They have supported each other in escaping abusive relationships and in rebuilding their lives. They campaigned for Clare's Law and have now written their stories to help those still suffering abuse. 'Our Journey' was launched in July to acclaim from Refuges, Durham and Northumbria Police, Sunderland Council and the Judiciary.



The journals have been well received and are in daily use. The Group continue to raise domestic abuse awareness and are now planning to put 'Our Journey' online.



SI Sunderland have debated with **Sunderland Youth Parliament (SYP)** on trafficking. The SYP produced an action plan which included support for Purple Teardrop Campaign through lobbying and delivery of 'loves me / loves me not' bookmarks to all secondary schools. Posters and leaflets were also distributed. They also put Anti-Trafficking stickers in taxis.

## SI Durham

SI Durham's **'Welcome Bags'** is an on-going project which this year has extended to include all three women's refuges in County Durham. Throughout the year they collect and deliver bedding; towels; clothing; toys and games and household items to the refuges, but each Christmas members and their supporters make up bags of toiletries which contain the essentials and also a gift such as a bottle of perfume, nail polish or something as a small treat for the recipient.

Members also make child-friendly bags with a small toy or some sweets. This year 117 bags were collected for delivery.



**"This year 117  
Welcome Bags were  
collected for delivery"**



## SI Middlesbrough

Soroptimists in Middlesbrough make up toilet bags for Sexually Exploited Children On the Street (SECOS). This project works to enable young people in the Tees Valley to exit and recover from sexual exploitation. These toilet bags contain essential toiletries and in addition to this the club provides furniture and essential items to set up safe houses.

Middlesbrough also support Barnardos SECOS child sexual exploitation services across Tees Valley, Darlington and Durham by providing support for young people who may be at risk of homelessness or have to move quickly to a place of safety. Middlesbrough are also involved with European Participation to improve engagement with youth to combat sexual violence. Training days taking place at Middlesbrough provide the opportunity to train staff and partners in order to understand and engage with young people on how to combat sexual violence and design digital media products to support and influence their peers.

It is anticipated that partnership working will lead to a contingent of local young people to showcase their work and support other young people globally.



## SI Tynemouth and Whitley Bay

### Diva Walk

Violence against women is a Human Rights violation and a global pandemic. North Tyneside's stunning coastline sets the scene for a special event linked to UN International Day for the elimination of Violence Against Women and girls. The Diva Walk has taken place every November since 2010.

Members set off from Tynemouth Priory and walk towards the light of St. Mary's Lighthouse to symbolise the enlightenment of recognising and rejecting this form of oppression. The walk attracts many organisations from across Northern England. Club members walk with others to bear witness to the efforts of Soroptimist sisters globally who fight the evil of violence against women.



### Harbour

Our club supports the work of the local Harbour refuge. Every Christmas we make a special effort. Christmas brings a peak in the number of women and children seeking help. Women coming into a refuge are at a very low point in their lives. Children may carry with them the effects of witnessing violence and abuse of their mothers.

We collect toiletries, make-up and bath products, which we make up into beautiful gift bags decorated with ribbon tinsel and bows. We also donated toys, books and chocolate, along with the requested warm hats, gloves, scarves and socks. This service is helping the victims, women and children.



# ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

## SI Cockermouth and District

SI Cockermouth assists the Purple Community Fund (PCF), a small grassroots charity which provides education, skills training, healthcare and a feeding programme for families who live and work on the dumpsites and cemeteries in Manila.

The families make ring pulls into handbags and jewellery, economically empowering them and enabling the families to send their children to the PCF school. Since 2013, Cockermonth club has sent over 200,000 ring pulls, helping the families raise enough to keep 11 children at school for a year.

Girl guides help them to collect ring pulls for their 'Volunteering with Soroptimist' badge, and learn about how life is different for others.



**“Since 2013, Cockermonth Club has sent over 200,000 ring pulls, helping the families raise enough to keep 11 children at school for a year”**

## SI Tynedale

Soroptimist International Tynedale raises funds and collects medical dressings, clothes, knitting needles and wool to support Joshua Orphan and Community Care, Malawi. Their contact, local retired nurse Jean Pollard, spends six months each year volunteering at health clinics, treating children with wounds and burns from cooking fires.

Many of these children are AIDS orphans. She also educates families about hygiene, birth control, maternity care and changing of wound dressings and is training a local nurse to run future clinics.

Jean's knitting circles are empowering women to support families by enabling them to sell their goods, resulting in more children attending school.





## SI Newcastle Upon Tyne

“Project Choice” is a 1 year course which gives young people with Learning Disabilities, difficulties or autism the opportunity to gain work based skills in preparation for employment.

There is a fully supported internship programme and the team provides NHS work experience to people aged 16 to 25.

The project is funded by City Hospitals Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust and is run at Gateshead College.

Members of SI Newcastle upon Tyne provide mock job interviews to all students on the programme 3 times each year. The interviews measure the progress made in acquiring social and communication skills.



## SI Middlesbrough

SI Middlesbrough promotes Fairtrade Foundation which aims to improve the lives of some of the poorest farmers by pressuring suppliers to give them a price for their goods closer to that which we pay in the shops.

Tempting Fairtrade goods are sold to support them. The Club is part of Middlesbrough Council's Fair Trade Committee.



## SI Sunderland

SI Sunderland provided a Fairtrade display for the Fairtrade campaign on Bananas giving away Fairtrade Bananas and showing a video on Fairtrade to the public during Fairtrade fortnight.

Foncho a Colombian Banana farmer says; “Fairtrade provides me, my family, my business and my community with protection from falling prices. Whatever the market is like, I have the peace of mind and reassurance of a guaranteed minimum price for my Fairtrade Bananas.”



# FOOD SECURITY

## SI Carlisle

SI Carlisle have been involved in Mary's Meals project for the past three years, raising money to buy school bags and fill them with school equipment for children in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. They have also raised money to provide food for the schoolchildren. 25% of all primary schools in Malawi have been reached with the school feeding programme.

Members held a lunch with a speaker from Mary's Meals and presented her with a cheque for £477.50 along with several filled bags. Members are continuing to support the Charity with the aim of helping to build a new school.



**Members of SI Carlisle recently presented a speaker from Mary's Meals with a cheque for £477.50**

### SI Stockton on Tees

Stockton Soroptimists support the Mary Thompson Fund, a local charity helping destitute asylum seekers whose state support has ceased.

Funds are raised mostly from the individual donations of Teesside people and all monies are used entirely in providing support in the form of £5 cash and a bag of food per week.

There are 6 Trustees, one of whom is a member of SI Stockton-on-Tees. Stockton Club members regularly donate non-perishable foodstuffs and toiletries.



### Food Banks

Our clubs actively support their local Foodbanks, donating food and volunteering time. The North Lakes Foodbank, based in Cockermouth regularly feeds over 500 people per month.

Cockermouth Soroptimists helped with a new scheme, 'Lunch Bags 4 Kids' over the summer holidays, packing over 75 lunch bags helping to provide a mid day meal during the school holidays for children who receive free school lunches during term time.



# HEALTHCARE

## SI Whitehaven and District

Following fundraising, for the 9th year, Whitehaven Soroptimists, with Whitehaven Lions, Whitehaven Castle Rotary, Whitehaven Rotary Club and Age UK volunteers cook a Christmas lunch for 35 elderly, and people with disabilities, who would otherwise have been alone on Christmas Day.

Age UK mini-buses collect the guests. They are met at a warm venue, a welcome drink is offered, then a traditional Turkey Lunch and Christmas Pudding is served by the volunteers. Santa visits, bearing "Goodie Bags", before the guests are returned home by mini-bus.

## Malawi - one of the world's poorest countries.

Following a very informative slideshow and talk by Dr. Claire, at our September, 2015 meeting, Whitehaven Soroptimists wish to support the Paediatric Department, at Queen Elizabeth Hospital, in Blantyre, Malawi.

Claire informed us of the many basic items needed during the two separate periods of her voluntary service.

Club members cooked and served pancakes both sweet and savoury on Shrove Tuesday, to raise funds to help the babies and children, who unfortunately have to attend or be admitted to the hospital. Monies raised will provide much needed resources.



## SI Carlisle

Hospice at Home Carlisle and North Lakeland is an ongoing project which Carlisle Soroptimists have supported over the year.

A charity lunch was successfully held for 120 guests, a local choir, stalls and an Auction of Promises, raising in excess of £1700 which will go to support the work done by medical staff with both patients and their families.

The fundraising event also provided a good opportunity to showcase the work done by Soroptimists in the community.



**"In excess of £1700 has been raised to support the work done by Hospice at Home Carlisle"**

### SI Cockermouth and District

Cockermouth Soroptimists 'Dementia Awareness' campaign has focussed on enabling their local community to become Dementia Friendly. 17 members became Dementia Friends and some volunteer on the Alzheimer's research programme. With help from girl guides, a 'Forget me Not' information stall was held at a town centre event.



Members supported a drop-in centre and turned the town of Cockermouth 'blue' for Dementia Awareness week in May. They raised funds and awareness of Dementia issues by competing in a fun Tiger Boat race.

Working with their MP, concerns about lack of resourcing for carers, which may result in elder abuse, have now been raised directly with the Secretary of State for Health.

### SI South Shields and District

South Shield Soroptimists have a close link with their local Salvation Army, working with them to appeal for Christmas gifts for teenagers.

Instead of a Charter celebration, the money was put towards gifts of toiletries for teenage boys and girls. Using Boots "Three for the price of Two" Christmas promotion plus the Advantage points members recouped, funds went further, and 24 gift boxes were donated.



Over the year we donate seasonal treats to the food bank for local children, Easter Eggs, Christmas selection boxes, and to the Salvation Army Christmas Presents for teenagers.



# ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY/ WATER SANITATION

## SI Darlington and District

An initiative to provide toilets to the world's poorest communities has left fundraisers flushed with success. Members of Darlington and District Soroptimist club backed their president's choice of adopted charity, Toilet Twinning, which works to improve bathroom provisions globally. Soroptimists have enabled the creation of 31 new toilets in Nepal and Uganda.

Many of the toilets have been twinned with individuals and organisations that supported fundraising efforts and Darlington Borough Council has joined the campaign and agreed to have a twinned toilet.

Darlington and District Soroptimist club president, Ms Thomson, said: "We believe Darlington Borough Council may well be the first council in the country to do this and we're thrilled. This project will make such a huge difference to the communities they work in."

[www.toilettwinning.org](http://www.toilettwinning.org)



**"Soroptimists have enabled the creation of 31 new toilets in Nepal and Uganda"**

## SI Morpeth

The Morpeth club is committed to funding the school fees of Dianah Apio in Uganda for 10 years. We have raised the funds by holding a "soup and bun" lunch and a raffle at a member's home, which raised £285, and by collecting recyclable goods and selling them to Skycycle, which raised £114.

The events were enjoyable and the recycling will benefit the environment as well as helping us to de-clutter our homes. The funds will enable Dianah to continue her education which will open opportunities for her in the future.



**"So far over £400 has been raised to fund the school fees of Dianah Apio in Uganda."**



Kausar Hussain volunteer for Wateraid coordinating a promotion to tackle the Wateraid crisis from all angles.

Working with local partners in Northern England to raise awareness of a good hygiene campaign to deliver clean water and toilets to make change happen for everyone everywhere.

# DISASTER MITIGATION & RELIEF

## SI Cockermouth and District

Recently flooding has caused terrible devastation in Cumbria. SI Cockermouth have pulled together to support those affected and will continue to do so in the weeks and months that follow. 7,000 homes have been damaged by the floods in Appleby, Carlisle, Cockermouth, Kendal and outlying villages.

Roads have been washed away, bridges closed and farming land lost. Soroptimists are supporting Fablab in their 'spirit of cumbria star' project. All profits from the sale of these beautiful stars go to the Cumbria Community Foundation flood fund.



**"Soroptimists are supporting Fablab with their 'Spirit of Cumbria' star project."**



## SI Newcastle Upon Tyne

In 2014 SI Newcastle upon Tyne signed a 5 year pledge with SI Kathmandu to sponsor the education of a girl in Nepal by sending £200 a year. 'Kabita' lives with her parents and 11 siblings, she would not have had this opportunity without our funding.

Since our support started the earthquakes in Nepal have destroyed this family's home. They are now living in temporary accommodation. Her education continues but the family needs additional support

A 'bric-a-brac' stall raised £303 to send to SI Kathmandu for Kabita's family.



**"A bric-a-brac stall raised £303."**

# CONFLICT RESOLUTION/ PEACE PROMOTION

## Time to Act

The Global Summit in 2014, led by William Hague and Angelina Jolie, was called to address the commitment to end the use of sexual violence in war. The clubs in our region responded by joining the campaign to raise awareness of the Summit.



## Working in Partnership

The 14 clubs in the Northern England region work in partnership, supporting each other's projects and also working collaboratively to develop projects together.

Here are two examples (right):





## UN Stop the Traffik Gift Box

Seven of the Northern England clubs worked collaboratively to bring the UN Gift Box to Newcastle library.

This huge piece of street art makes the point that being trafficked is not a gift at all.

The work of the seven clubs in bringing this project to the Northern region enabled many hundreds of people to understand more about how modern day slavery comes about.



## Orange Walk for 'STOP' Violence Against Women

Twelve clubs from our region walked a section of the 'Coast to Coast' walk wearing orange, the colour adopted by the campaign to 'STOP' Violence Against Women.

Orange ribbons were handed out, publicity was gained for the campaign and over £2,600 was donated to Barnardos for their work with women and children affected by violence and sexual abuse.



**The 14 clubs in our region have raised over £100,000 and changed the lives of over 4,000 women and girls.\***

**THAT'S AMAZING!!**

\* Figures are extracted from Soroptimist International Great Britain and Ireland database for the period 2012-2015.

**Women inspiring action,  
transforming lives**

## 14 Clubs SI Northern England Region:

- Carlisle
- Cockermouth and District
- Darlington and District
- Durham
- Middlesbrough
- Morpeth
- Newcastle Upon Tyne
- Penrith and District
- South Shields and District
- Stockton on Tees
- Sunderland
- Tynedale
- Tynemouth and Whitley Bay
- Whitehaven and District



**Soroptimist International:**  
Around 80,000 members in 132 countries

**Soroptimist International Great Britain and Ireland (SIGBI):**  
Around 8,000 members in 29 countries  
334 Clubs

**Soroptimist International Northern England :**  
320 Members, 14 Clubs

**Join Us**  
and help us to “Make That Difference”

**[www.sigbi.org](http://www.sigbi.org)**  
**[www.sigbi.org/northern-england](http://www.sigbi.org/northern-england)**