



Educate

Enable

Empower

A global voice for women

Soroptimist International: <https://www.soroptimistinternational.org/>

Who are we?

If you are asked: "What's a Soroptimist?" here's a one sentence explanation:

"We are a world-wide organisation for women, in management and the professions, who are working through service projects to advance human rights and the status of women."



Women inspiring action,
transforming lives

Soroptimist International of Great Britain and Ireland

One of 4
federations of the
world wide
organisation

Soroptimist International Great Britain and Ireland (SIGBI) has 8000 members in 350 clubs in 28 countries including Great Britain, Ireland and countries in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Malta, who work at a local, national and international level to educate, empower and enable opportunities for women and girls.

Vision

Women and girls will achieve their individual and collective potential, realise aspirations and have an equal voice in creating strong, peaceful communities worldwide.

Mission

Soroptimists transform the lives and status of women and girls through education, empowerment and enabling opportunities.

Principles

The principles of Soroptimism are to strive for:

- the advancement of the status of women
- high ethical standards
- human rights for all
- equality, development and peace; and
- the advancement of international understanding, goodwill and peace

United Kingdom Programme Action Committee

This committee meets four times a year and is made up of representatives from each region in the UK. The member representing MAR will subsequently report back to a meeting of the Club Programme Action Officers (PAO) so they are aware of current initiatives and projects. This helps the Club PAO to organise this work at club level. The UKPAC hold a bi-annual study day on a topical theme for members to attend.

SIGBI Federation Information

Each club member is also a member of the Federation and is encouraged to attend The Federation Conference, which is usually held at the end of October in various venues within our Federation countries. The Federation President presides and conference usually has keynote speakers on various subjects. The Federation Annual General Meeting also takes place at Conference where each club has one vote. It includes a ceremony for the changeover of both Federation Officers and the Regional Presidents.

Federation Management Board (FMB)

The FMB meets once a year at Federation Conference time. The meeting is chaired by the Federation President and is made up of the Federation Officers, the Committee Chairs and elected Councillors. The purpose of the council is to set Federation policy. This meeting is reported in the Soroptimist News.

Federation Programme Action Committee

This committee meets once a year at Federation Conference. There is one representative from each country within the Federation. A report on this meeting appears in the Soroptimist News.

SIGBI<https://sigbi.org>

Midland Arden Region (MAR)

One of 23 regions in the UK and National Association in other countries (31 in total) which together form SIGBI

MAR has 11 clubs represented by the Regional President, Regional Officers Committee and Immediate Past President.

Regional meetings are held at different venues through the year. Dates for these are published at the start of each Regional Year and clubs are sent full details prior to the events.

The common thread in the clubs is:

- a willingness to make a difference
- to follow similar values and objectives
- to have fun and make friends along the way.

Each CLUB member is a member of the MAR and is encouraged to attend regional meetings. Regional meetings are a source of information for members and often an opportunity for friendship and discussion.

Each club elects two regional representatives who, together with the Officers of the Region, make up the Regional Council where each club has one vote. The regional offices are elected at the Regional Annual General Meeting, and take up their offices after the Federation General Meeting in October.

When the Regional Council meets, the subjects for discussion are based on:

- Programme Action work
- membership
- development
- and other items

which requires communication between clubs. Each club representative on the Regional Council will give a report at a club meeting to ensure members are kept up to date.

The three Regional Council meetings are arranged to coincide with International UN dates:

- 10th December Human Rights Day
- 8th March International Women's Day
- 21st September International Day of Peace
- 3rd October Soroptimist International Friendship Day.

A day conference with speakers may be held and all members in the Region are welcome to attend. A change of Insignia Ceremony for outgoing and incoming Club Presidents takes place to acknowledge the contribution each club has made to service work during the President's year of office. The occasion is open to all members and their guests.

**The Stratford-upon-Avon
and District Club**www.sigbi.org/stratford-upon-avon**Club Information**

The year starts each April and finishes with an Annual General Meeting (AGM) the following April.

Each Club is managed by an EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE made up of members who are elected annually at the AGM and consists of:

- Programme Action Officer
- Treasurer
- Secretary
- A specified number of Co-opted Members

In addition the:

- Press Officer
- Social Committee Chair
- Membership Secretary

may be included at the discretion of the club

The Executive Committee meets on the last Thursday of the month.

Subscriptions

There is an annual subscription payable on 1st April each year. The amount is calculated by the Club Treasurer and a budget presented to members for their approval. Subscriptions cover the costs of:

- running the club
- a contribution to the running costs of the organisation at International, Federation and Regional levels
- the Soroptimist magazine.

The Meaning of 'Soroptimism'

The name was taken from the Latin word 'Soror' meaning 'sister' and 'optima' meaning 'best'. Soroptimism is best interpreted **as 'the best for women'**.



The Badge and Emblem

Members are requested to wear their personalised badge, which has her name and club (and maybe her category), at any Soroptimist meeting.

Incorporated into the badge, and also the regalia of many clubs, is the official emblem. The emblem is worn by Soroptimists throughout the world and was designed by Anita Houts Thompson (designer and engraver) in 1921. The design represents womanhood with her arms uplifted in a gesture of freedom and acceptance of the responsibilities of the best and highest good. The oak leaves and the acorns represent the strength of our organisation and the leaves of the laurel typify achievement.

Extending from the leaves of the oak to the leaves of the laurel is that important 'International' signifying that we have embraced many counties and many languages always carrying the same message of service.



The Dynamic 'S'

The dynamic 'S' logo which appears on our badges today, came about following a survey of members and consultation with groups outside the organisation. It is designed with the intent of representing an image of what we do as being about the future.

Fabrik Brands, a company based in London, is responsible for the development of the stylised design based on the female form, and intended to capture the vibrant, dynamic nature of the Soroptimist International Vision and Mission.

The 'dynamic S' is the logo of SIGBI and may be used by Clubs, Regions, National Associations and Networks. The 'lady' emblem is retained by the federation for official use as well as clubs having the autonomy to retain the 'lady' emblem if they wish.

History of Soroptimism

The first Soroptimist Club was formed in 1921 in Oakland, California and was quickly followed by other clubs in North America.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the Atlantic, women in Great Britain were setting up clubs with similar aims and purposes called 'Venture Clubs'.

In 1924 the first Soroptimist clubs in Europe were chartered, in Greater London and Paris. The idea, which germinated almost simultaneously in America, Great Britain and on mainland Europe, was the movement for 'classified' executive business and professional women to associate together to render service. Even as the first Soroptimist Club came into being, the ideals and objectives of such a group were blossoming in many areas around the world.

In 1928 there were enough clubs in these two continents to form two Federations – The Americas and Europe. A link between them was also established by the creation of the Soroptimist International Association.

In 1930 the Venture Clubs were amalgamated into Soroptimism. Such was the growth in membership in the early 1930s that in 1934 a third Federation – Great Britain and Ireland was formed.

Fifty years on from the formation of those first Federations, the number of countries with Soroptimist Clubs had grown to 55, and there were clubs on every continent. Clubs were of very different cultural and economic backgrounds and in 1978 a 4th Federation – South West Pacific was established.

In the future we may see the emergence of other Federations as more clubs are established throughout the developing world.

Membership

Members are welcomed for their individual qualities and in every club there are members who work in a wide range of occupations, full time, part time or in a voluntary capacity.

All members strive to be aware of the PROGRAMME FOCUS, which is the core of Soroptimist International. Programme Focus is an outline of several goals for all clubs to use as a basis for their work for human rights, which is called PROGRAMME ACTION. The programme areas¹ are:

- Conflict resolution/peace promotion
- Disaster mitigation and relief
- Economic empowerment
- Education

¹ As at May 2018

- Elimination of violence
- Environmental sustainability/water and sanitation
- Food security
- Healthcare.

Every member is encouraged to become involved. Projects will progress through **AWARENESS**, perhaps using members knowledge, having speakers or gathering research to **ADVOCACY**, using our influence through lobbying – locally, nationally and internationally and **ACTION**, which may be direct help or by fund raising to enable others to achieve the goals.

Clubs take responsibility for reporting their programme work to Federation Office. The information is then passed to our representatives for their use at the United Nations.

It is as a result of the Programme Action work, undertaken by clubs, we are able to call ourselves:

AN INTERNATIONAL SERVICE ORGANISATION FOR WOMEN

Soroptimist International Information

Each club member is also a member of Soroptimist International. There are approximately 93000 members worldwide. The head office is in Cambridge, England. Members are encouraged to attend the International Convention, which is held every four years, with each Federation taking it in turn to host the event.

The International President is chosen from Past Federation Presidents with each Federation taking it in turn to make the nomination. The period of office is two years and the Soroptimist International President chairs the International Board. International events are reported in the quarterly International Soroptimist Magazine.

Soroptimist International and the United Nations

Soroptimist International has Class 1 status (General Consultative status) at the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and a voice at United Nations Centres in Geneva, New York, Paris and Vienna.

As a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) Soroptimist International also has official relations with the World Health Organisation (WHO) and accreditation with the High Commissioner of Refugees (UNHCR). Soroptimist International is also represented on any NGO committees, including the Women's National Commission and the Human Rights Commission. These links give members both the privilege and the responsibility of making their voices heard in the international decision making process. Members can add their thinking to the thoughts of many others in the constant search for solutions to world problems.

Soroptimist International Projects

Quadrennial Project

Every four years Soroptimist International adopts a project for all clubs to support. The current project running from 2017-2019 is Women, water and leadership, which is aimed at ensuring women and girls have the capacity, education and experience to manage water resources, and gain careers in water-related professions. The following gives themes of earlier projects:

- 2003-07 in collaboration with Women for Women International, providing tools and skills to rebuild lives after surviving wars and internal conflict
- 2003-1999 In conjunction with the International Committee of the Red Cross rehabilitation of land mine victims to enable them to regain dignity and lead normal lives
- 1995-99 in collaboration with the Population and Community Development Association Thailand, developed and implemented AIDS education programmes, generating projects in village that offered alternative income to dissuade young people from entering the commercial sex industry
- 1991-95 in collaboration with Sightsavers set up child health clinics in Bangladesh emphasising blindness prevention

The Soroptimist Residential Club: Soroptimists world-wide, families and friends are assured of a warm welcome at the Residential Club situated at 63 Bayswater Road, London, a fine Victorian terrace house overlooking Kensington Gardens and Hyde Park. The rates are reasonable and women feel comfortable and safe when staying there: <http://www.number63.co.uk/>. Currently discussions are taking place on the future of the Residential Club.

Friendship Links: Clubs maintain friendship links with other clubs, which can either be in the UK or in other countries. Members take on the role of corresponding and give details of club events, programme action work and social occasions. This is one way in which fellowship is maintained and clubs can help each other, through these links. The correspondents' give reports at club meetings so members know what is happening in other clubs around the world.

Details of clubs within our Federation are in the Federation Directory, each club secretary having a copy. The Federation Link Co-ordinator, whose name, address and telephone number, is in the directory, will provide details of clubs in other Federations. If you are travelling abroad and would like to make contact with other Soroptimists, they will provide details of their meetings. Meeting Soroptimists from other countries will add a new dimension to your travel experiences.

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