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1921

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**A Century of Supporting and Providing  
Women With A Global Voice.**  
We thank Soroptimist International on their  
100th Anniversary for their continuous  
efforts of improving the lives of so many  
along their journey.





Paula-Mae Weekes, President of Trinidad and Tobago

## Message from Paula-Mae Weekes, President of the Republic of T&T, on the Centenary of Soroptimist International

I am pleased to congratulate Soroptimist International (SI) as it celebrates 100 years of enhancing and enriching the lives of women and girls everywhere. Formed at a time when women were discouraged from joining service organisations, SI sought from inception to challenge the existing norms and limitations that hindered them from achieving their true potential. A century on, its tireless advocacy has transformed lives in over 120 countries through education, empowerment and enabling opportunities.

Although the Trinidad and Tobago chapter of SI is only 62 years old, its representatives have proven to be worthy ambassadors of the wider Soroptimist ethos and mission, championing the economic empowerment of women and boosting the physical and material wellbeing of countless members of the national community.

The work of SITT has taken on renewed significance in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis. Its outreach, acts of kindness and compassion have provided hope and inspiration to many families which have been hard hit by the exigencies

of the pandemic. I was heartened to read of the efforts of the San Fernando club to provide free lunches to frontline workers at the Augustus Long Hospital at the height of the pandemic.

Last year's COVID Kindness Challenge was another laudable undertaking which enabled young women to contribute to the upliftment of others in their community in meaningful and tangible ways.

These efforts, among manifold others, have made all the difference in enabling many in our nation to weather the COVID-19 storm.

I encourage you to continue to let your light so shine in the midst of your communities so that more people can benefit from your unstinting activism and advocacy.

A centenary is a momentous milestone and testament to the hard work, commitment and perseverance of SI members worldwide and the enduring significance of Soroptimist principles and values.

As SITT joins with sister clubs to mark the 100th anniversary of Soroptimist International, I offer my appreciation and well wishes for many more years of service and support.

## Celebrating 100 years of Soroptimism

**Sandra Dieffenthaler**  
President  
Soroptimist International, National  
Association of Trinidad & Tobago

At a time when volunteering is in decline across the globe, it is significant to be celebrating 100 years of Soroptimism. That the organisation has thrived over this many years suggests that Soroptimists worldwide are meeting an important need in our mission to transform the lives of women and girls through education, empowerment and enabling opportunities.

We recognise that global crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change and gender-based violence disproportionately affect women and girls and, through our local projects we work to mitigate some of the negative consequences. As one of the world's largest women's organisations our focus is on women and girls and our voice at the UN, through our UN representatives means that collectively our projects have a greater global impact.

Here in Trinidad and Tobago, over the past 62 years Soroptimist clubs have worked tirelessly to identify and address the needs in our

communities. Our projects are aligned with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and grouped under five Ps - People, Prosperity, Planet, Peace and Partnerships. We recognise that through partnering with other organisations with similar goals, we can make a bigger impact. We also recognise that without the support of the corporate community and well-wishers we cannot achieve our objectives.

As Soroptimist International moves into its second century of service we look forward to expanding our reach through the formation of new clubs. At present we are directing the formation of a Soroptimist club in Couva and we invite interested women to join them as they become part of this international organisation.

It is a privilege to be a volunteer and to experience the joy that comes with being of service to others and transforming lives. We all have skills and talents to share and Soroptimism affords us the opportunity to use them to make a difference.

We thank the many individuals and organisations who have supported us over the years and we look forward to your continued support in the future.



Sandra Dieffenthaler, President, Soroptimist International,  
National Association of Trinidad and Tobago



## The Power to Empower



"I raise up my voice—not so that I can shout, but so that those without a voice can be heard... We cannot all succeed when half of us are held back." – **Malala Yousafzai**

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**SIGBI Federation Membership Director Chevonne Agana-Duncan**

It is my great honour and pleasure to serve as Director of Membership of SIGBI and to represent Trinidad and Tobago which is but a tiny drop in the Federation bucket. I stand full of pride when I look at the great work being done by our clubs in Trinidad. Despite the pandemic, all clubs managed to do amazing projects and even to recruit new members, focusing on a younger demographic. We continue to grow and strengthen as a National Association and I am certain that we are well poised to take Soroptimism positively into the future.

# Why become a Soroptimist?

It may be that you want to give back to society, or because of your particular interest in empowering women and girls, or you have the time, talent and resources to make a difference to your community; but Soroptimism offers so much more.

### A ready-made network of support

Unlike professional organisations, a Soroptimist club brings together women from a wide range of different traditional and non-traditional professions and occupations, and from different backgrounds, but all with the common desire to give back to society. Upon joining a Soroptimist club you immediately gain a network of women to whom you can turn for advice on every facet of life be it medicine, law, finance, beauty, children etcetera. The organisation has it all.

### Personal growth

You bring your skill set to a club and through opportunities to serve in different capacities you develop new skills. As a totally democratic organisation there are opportunities to serve at any level, club, national or international and in many different capacities. There are opportunities to step out of your comfort zone in a safe space. Personal growth is a natural outcome.

### A voice at the UN

Soroptimism offers an opportunity to serve your community in a structured way that makes an impact not only locally but also globally. Our consultative status with the United Nations means that every little project carried out on the ground on this little island adds to the 'voice' that Soroptimists have at the UN when these projects are reported on our online database. We tell the UN what is



Trinidad delegates Sandra Dieffenthaler and Hazel Hassanali (front row in yellow) on a SIGBI study tour of a project in Meru, Kenya

happening on the ground with respect to women and girls and this has a positive impact on decision making at that level.

### Travelling the world

When you become a Soroptimist, you become an international woman with links in every corner of the world. There are opportunities to travel and to really experience countries, not as a tourist, but through the eyes of those who live there. Visiting with clubs, enjoying home hospitality, seeing projects, and being exposed to the challenges of the people who live in a country are experiences that the average traveller does not have. Study tours,

conferences and conventions and the associated travel are all opportunities to expand your network and gain new experiences.

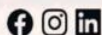
### Fun and Friendship

If you ever needed the support of a group of women who have your back, some of whom become life-long friends; who laugh with you and celebrate your achievements; who lift you up when you are down and who encourage you to be your best self, then a Soroptimist Club is the place for you. To be real, we are not without our disagreements but there is nothing that mutual respect, a little mediation and a good 'lime' do not resolve.



..wishes Soroptimist International continued success as they celebrate 100 years of remarkable service to women and girls around the world.

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**SI Trinidad and Tobago National Association Exec 2021-2022:** Back row from left: President Elect Christine Cole, Programme Action Committee Chairperson Susan Umraw-Roopnarinesingh, Communications and Website Officer Julie Gouveia Ferguson, Federation Consultative Councillor Marissa Bubb • Front row from left: Honorary Secretary Hazel Hassanali, Immediate Past President Chevonne Agana-Duncan, President Sandra Dieffenthaler, Honorary Treasurer Rachelle Toolsie.



**SI CHAGUANAS EXEC 2021-2022:** Top from left: President Christine Cole, Immediate Past President Shobhana Ramsundar, President Elect and Secretary Jenelle Joseph • Middle Row: Vice President Bernadine Warrick-Wilson, Treasurer Ingrid Anne Hosein, Programme Action Officer Claire Watson • Last row: Programme Action Officer Laura Rambaran-Seepersad, Membership Officer Aletia Alleyne-Benn, Floor member Shirley Christian-Maharaj

## Executives of our Clubs



*SI Anaparima Club Executive 2021-2022*  
**SI ANAPARIMA EXEC 2021-2022:** Top row from left: President Candace Maharaj, President Elect Ahnalia Ramdass, Vice President Driselle Ramjohn, Immediate Past President Susan Umraw-Roopnarinesingh, Secretary Meera Gopaul, Secretary Stephanie Chhita, Treasurer Rachelle Toolsie • Bottom row from left: Programme Action Officer Priya Sookraj, Communications Officer Kylee Maharaj, Membership Officer Celene Chatoor-Mohammed, Website Administrator Lorraine Acosta, Organisational Development Officer Shellanna Sewdass, Executive floor member Vanita Jagai, Executive floor member Malini Bachan



**SI ESPERANCE EXEC 2021-2022:** Top row from left: President Denyse Ewe, President Elect Gemma Casimir Redman, Vice President Rabbia Khan, Immediate Past President Cheryl Boodoosingh, Programme Action Officer Tara Pollonais • Middle row: Minuting Secretary Beverly Ann Seupaul, Correspondence Secretary Arnella Laloo, Treasurer Debra London, Communications Officer Marilyn Lalla, Organizational Development Officer Rowena Wattlely • Third row from left: Membership Officer Jayanti Lutchmedial, Fundraising Chairperson Arianne Dhanukdharriesingh, Floor member Shalini Gopeesingh, Floor member Charmaine Lutchmansingh, Floor member Candyce Labban



**SI NEWTOWN EXEC 2021-2022:** Top row from left: President Saskia Carmichael-Sam, President Elect Corina Marhue De Hernandez • Middle row: Treasurer Isshad John, Programme Action Officer Anika Gellineau, Secretary Kandice Spencer, Secretary Janelle Blackman • Third row: Membership Officer Candace Nanton, Membership Officer Sandra Black-Boxhill, Communications Officer Kristal Jack-Seepaulsingh, Communications Officer Julie Gouveia Ferguson



**SI SAN FERNANDO EXEC 2021-2022:** Top: President Terry Amirali-Rambharat, President Elect Dr Renata Lalla • Middle row from left: Immediate Past President Bebe Ajodha, Vice President Leigh Anne Koylass-Shand, Programme Action Officer Stephanie Quan Soon, Treasurer Lisa Tewarie-Sankar • Bottom row: Membership Officer Jana Koylass, Communications Officer Camille Parris, Executive floor members Patricia Manhin and Sandra Dieffenthaler.

# National Association Presidents

## The Soroptimist Pledge

I pledge allegiance to  
Soroptimism  
And to the ideals for which it  
stands  
The Sincerity of Friendship  
The Joy of Achievement  
The Dignity of Service  
The Integrity of Profession  
The Love of Country  
I will put forth my great effort  
To promote, uphold and  
defend these ideals  
For a larger fellowship  
In home, in society, in  
business  
Four Country and for God.

In 1973, with just two clubs in existence, the Soroptimist National Association of Trinidad & Tobago was formed with the first President being Lorna Rigsby of the Port-of-Spain club. Thereafter the Presidency was rotated among the various clubs.

1973-1975 - Lorna Rigsby, SI POS  
1975-1976 - Joan Chin Aleong, SI S/Fernando  
1976-1978 - Winifred Bowen, SI POS  
1978-1979 - Liliias Wight, SI San Fernando  
1979-1980 - Norma Demas, SIPOS  
1980-1981 - Marion Dass, SI San Fernando  
1981-1983 - Merle Gopaul, SI POS  
1983-1984 - Berenice Dolly MOM OBE, SI POS  
1984-1986 - Monica Barnes, SI St Augustine  
1986-1988 - Ursula de Castro, SI San Fernando  
1988-1990 - Julia Rose, SI POS  
1990-1992 - Jeannette Morris, SI St Augustine  
1992-1994 - Helene Marceau-Crooks, SI San Fernando  
1994-1996 - Hannah Demming, SI POS  
1996-1998 - Dorinda Sampath, SI St Augustine  
1998-2000 - Roma Joseph-Thomson, SI San Fernando  
2000-2002 - Joan Braithwaite, SI Scarborough  
2002-2004 - Norma Innis, SI POS  
2004-2006 - Martha Frederick-Franklin, SI St Augustine

2006-2008 - Sandra Dieffenthaler, SI San Fernando  
2008-2010 - Agnes Webbe, SI Scarborough  
2010-2012 - Glenda Charles-Harris, SI POS  
2012-2014 - Jeannette Morris, SI St Augustine  
2014-2016 - Cheryl Boodoosingh, SI San Fernando  
2016-2018 - Marilyn Crichlow, SI Chaguanas  
2018-2020 - Chevonne Agana, SI Newtown  
2020-present - Sandra Dieffenthaler, SI San Fernando

### SERVING INTERNATIONALLY

At various times Soroptimists of Trinidad and Tobago have served as directors on the Board of the Federation of Great Britain and Ireland to which our clubs belong.

Three members have served as Membership Director as follows:  
• Helene Marceau-Crooks (2001-2004)  
• Sandra Dieffenthaler (2004-2007)  
• Chevonne Agana (2020 to present)



SI PORT OF SPAIN EXEC 2021-2022: Communications Officer Carolyn James, from left, Secretary Donna Jackman Wilson, Programme Action Chairperson Patricia Adams, Treasurer Girlie Sulaman.

## Let's LOOK together

LOOK Opticians recognizes the tremendous volunteer work of Soroptimist International Clubs in aid of women's and girls' development around the world. We congratulate them on their **100 year Anniversary and their National Association's 62 years of existence in Trinidad and Tobago.**



### Women and Eye Health

Women are at a greater risk for some eye diseases or visual impairment than men. These may include dry eyes, cataracts, glaucoma, age-related macular degeneration (ARMD) and even autoimmune diseases.

Women (and men) over the age of 60 or persons with a family history of the conditions mentioned above should have their eyes checked once a year as they are at a higher risk of developing eye diseases.

It is recommended that children under the age of 16 have annual eye examinations, whilst persons above this age should have the health of their eyes checked by an optometrist every 2 years.

LOOK Opticians continues to tend to women's and girl's eye health related issues with the highest clinical standard. We urge you to come in and have one of our trained and experienced optometrists look after your eyes.

By Kareem Marcelle  
BSc. Optometry (Hons)

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# Plant trees for a brilliant future



Soroptimist International Anaparima Club members Rachele Toolsie (l) and Shellanna Sewdass (r) plant one of five poui trees at Naparima Girls' High School in April.



SI Esperance: Food bearing trees were distributed to Esperance Soroptimists for planting on the Soroptimist Day of Action, July 17 to assist in combating climate change and to reduce hunger.



SI Port-of-Spain plants a sapidilla tree on the premises of SIPOS at Nepalul Street, St James.



SI Chaguanas taking care of our planet.



SI San Fernando's president, Terry Rambharat, second from right, Sabita HARRIKISSOON, centre, and Sandra Dieffenthaler, second from left, present 50 fruit trees to members of the Rio Claro Tech club.



SI Newtown's Grow-Box Gardening Project at St Jude's Home for Girls.





Members share a good laugh in the ambience of La Vega Estate.



Collecting their prize, left to right, Tamara Jones, Seromanie Debideen-Rampersad, Susan Umraw-Roopnarinesingh, Celene Chatoor, Vanita Jagai, Laura Rambaran Seepersad.

## Sorooptimists have fun

**B**uilt on the three pillars of service, fun and friendship, Sorooptimist clubs also take timeout from project work to relax and to get to know each other. Every year in October, all clubs come together to enjoy a Friendship Day, with a different club taking charge of catering and organising games and fun activities, under a chosen theme.

The last physical event took place at La Vega Estate in Gran Couva and was hosted by SI Anaparima. With the theme "Old Time Days" clubs were challenged to bring along as many items from the past as they could find. It was a learning experience for many of the younger members and a journey down memory lane for the more senior ones.

With old-time delicacies and fun games from the past, members reminisced about a different era of coal pots and scrubbing boards, hop scotch and tops.



Old-time items on display at SITT's 2019 Friendship Day hosted by SI Anaparima at La Vega Estate, Gran Couva.



SI Chaguanas member, left, Aletia Alleyne reads a story to members at La Vega.



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Congratulations to Sorooptimist International on your 100th Anniversary. The Management & Staff of Life Lab wish you another century of success!



## CHILDREN'S FOUNDATION

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### Creating a Community of Hope & Happiness

By S&S Persad Supermarket & Co. Ltd

Project Hope is a charitable initiative for underprivileged children hosted by S&S Persad Supermarket & Co. geared towards providing necessities in the form of hope boxes for children ages 1 to 12 years old in the district of Nariva/Mayaro.

Project Hope Children's Foundation is non-profitable organization started by Marketing Manager Riad Rampat with the intention of giving back to the community of Rio Claro and Mayaro. With the current economic conditions brought on by COVID 19, many families are finding it difficult to make ends meet. "Our goal is to bring hope in the midst of a pandemic to children in need who are experiencing challenges and lack of necessities due to the global distress." *Director Sunita Persad*

In celebrating 31 years of business of S&S Persad Supermarket and 100 years of Soroptimist International, there was no better way in launching this initiative with the continued effort to changing lives through charity and community.

#### 2021 GOALS FOR PROJECT HOPE

SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMS FOR TERTIARY STUDENTS IN THE NARIVA DISTRICT

IMPLEMENTING FOOD SECURITY PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS FOR CHILDREN

PROMOTE 'LOYAL TO LOCAL' THROUGH ONLINE INITIATIVES



#### BE A PART OF PROJECT HOPE

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Members of The Proposed Soroptimist International Club of Couva package and deliver hampers to the Principal of Couva West Secondary School for distribution to needy students.

# Looking forward

## Soroptimist Club for Couva

In the midst of the pandemic and all its restrictions, a dynamic group of professional women from the Couva area have come together to form a new Soroptimist club—The Proposed Soroptimist International Club of Couva. In a first for the National Association, this club is being developed virtually through online meetings, training sessions and planning of projects and fundraisers.

The membership represents a range of professions, skills, talents and interests which augurs well for the future of the club.

Within a few short months they have planned and executed a Mother's Day breakfast box fundraiser and at present they are focused on providing pandemic relief to students of two secondary schools in Couva.


The National Association welcomes these women to the fold as they work towards their charter.

The National Association also plans to restart clubs in Tobago and East Trinidad and is considering setting up E-clubs.



*Congratulations and best wishes  
on the  
Centenary of Soroptimist International!*

*Have your Cake  
... and eat it too!*



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## BRIEF HISTORY OF SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL

- 1921** First Soroptimist Club founded in Oakland, California.
- 1924** Chartering of first Soroptimist Club in the UK, SI Greater London.
- 1928** Foundation of American and European Federations. Soroptimist International Association created to provide link between the Federations.
- 1934** Soroptimist International Europe and Soroptimist International Great Britain & Ireland (SIGBI) form separate Federations.
- 1937** First Soroptimist Club in Sydney, Australia.
- 1948** Soroptimist International Association awarded Consultative status with UNESCO.
- 1950** SI awarded category C Consultative status with ECOSOC. (Economic & Social Council, United Nations.)
- 1952** Foundation of International governing body of Soroptimist International.
- 1978** Inauguration of SI South West Pacific Federation.
- 1984** SI granted Category 1 General Consultative status with ECOSOC.
- 2010** SIGBI becomes a Company Limited by Guarantee (Incorporated Company).
- 2013** SIGBI granted Category 2 Special Consultative status with ECOSOC.
- 2017** SIGBI Trading Limited was formed.
- 2018** SIGBI granted Charitable Status.
- 2020** Inauguration of SI Africa.

SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL IS THE UMBRELLA ORGANISATION AND IS COMPRISED OF FIVE FEDERATIONS:

- SI AFRICA (SIAF)
- SI AMERICAS (SIA)
- SI EUROPE (SIE)
- SI GREAT BRITAIN & IRELAND (SIGBI)
- SI SOUTH WEST PACIFIC (SISWP)

# OUR VISION AND MISSION

### Our Vision

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

### Our Mission

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

## HISTORY OF SOROPTIMISM IN TRINIDAD & TOBAGO AND THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING CARIBBEAN

On April 12, 1958, the petition to form a Soroptimist Club in Port-of-Spain was granted by the Federation of Great Britain and Ireland. The inaugural meeting was held on June 16, 1958 at the Hotel Normandie, St Ann's. However, the actual coming into existence of the Club was the formal presentation of the Charter on January 16, 1959 to the Founder President, Audrey Layne Jeffers

OBE by Dr Dorothy Griffiths, a Past President of the Federation of Great Britain and Ireland. The year 1962 saw the inauguration of the San Fernando Club and also that of the Kingston Club in Jamaica and a club in Barbados. Later Clubs would be formed in Grenada and Montego Bay. When the Clubs of Mandeville and Mid-Eastern Jamaica were chartered, the Caribbean Area

Council (CAC) was established. As Soroptimism spread through the Caribbean, Clubs were also established in Antigua, Anguilla, St Vincent and Turks and Caicos Islands. Here in Trinidad and Tobago, Clubs were also set up in St Augustine (1985), Scarborough Tobago (1996), Chaguanas (2009), Newtown (2010). In 2018 the Anaparima and Esperance Clubs were chartered.

## SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL AT THE UNITED NATIONS

Soroptimist International received General Consultative Status with the UN in 1984. Of the 5,081 organisations in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) only 134 hold general consultative status. Eleven of the 134 organisations focus on women and girls, so we have a very

important role. There are now Soroptimist Representatives at all the United Nations Offices in the world: New York - Geneva - Vienna - Rome - Paris - Nairobi - Bangkok. New York, the United Nations headquarters and home to the General Assembly, is also the headquarters of UN Women, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women created in 2010.

In 1946 the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) was established as a functional commission of ECOSOC and has been the main international platform for governments to discuss women's empowerment. Each year the commission comes together for a two-week session at the UN headquarters in New York.

During the two weeks Members State representatives from 193 countries, representing all geographical regions of the world, negotiate an outcome document which may be adopted by the 45 members of the commission and which gives guidance to the UN Agencies and recommendations to all UN member States on how to push the women's rights agenda forward.

Our status with ECOSOC allows us 80 Soroptimist accredited delegates.

CSW Parallel events are also held and this year our Federation held a parallel event on March 19. Among the lineup of speakers was Corina Hernandez of SI Newtown who spoke on combatting Trafficking/Slavery in the Caribbean. SI Esperance also presented their virtual project "Digirlsz (Trinidad & Tobago) 2020" in collaboration with Microsoft US and Microsoft UK in which 28 girls from rural schools were made aware of non-traditional routes into STEM careers.

Soroptimist International of San Fernando also had its pandemic project assisting Venezuelan migrants included in SI's report to the UN's HLPF (High Level Political Forum) report for sustainable development.





SI San Fernando members, from left, Patricia Manhin, Marion Dass and Phyllis Gonsalves with members of the Mayaro Regional Corporation at Kernahan Village during the distribution of hampers to flood victims.

# Inspiring Action, Transforming Lives



SI San Fernando members from left, Leigh Anne Koylass-Shand, Nicole Sanayhie and Jana Koylass offload lunches for the Club's Mother's Day lunch distribution to needy families.



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Congratulations to SI on their Centenary!  
Thank you for your service to the world and T&T.



SI Chaguanas hosts cancer screening mobile unit in the community.



ABOVE: SITT Treasurer, Rachele Toolise, and Programme Action Chairperson, Susan Umraw-Roopnarinesingh, check groceries for St Vincent's Volcano Relief shipment.



LEFT: SI Newtown members gather at the Joy of Giving Kitchen to cook roughly 200 meals for the homeless.

## Cherished Memories



Dinner banquet at Trinidad Country Club on the 10th Anniversary of Soroptimist International, Port-of-Spain 1969. From left, Marion Stallard (Soroptimist International President) Sir Solomon Hchoy, Winnifred Bowen, Lady Hchoy.



# Who are Soroptimists?

The name Soroptimist was coined from the Latin "soror" meaning sister, and "optima" meaning best. Soroptimist is perhaps best interpreted as "the best for women."

From the founding of the first Soroptimist Club in Oakland, California, in 1921, through to the present day where nearly 3,000 Clubs are flourishing throughout the world, Soroptimists have continued to strive to achieve "the best for women."

Clubs achieve this by working on projects that educate, empower and enable women and girls to achieve their highest potential and that are aligned with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

To achieve our goals we raise funds from individuals and corporate entities and have developed relationships and achieved success based on the demonstration of:

1. Organisational purpose
2. Leadership
3. Integrity
4. Diversity
5. Openness
6. Accountability

We observe and apply the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and, in particular, the Convention to End all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform for Action plus the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). In so doing we:

1. Treat all with dignity and respect
2. Are non-sectarian
3. Have no political affiliation
4. Work with all who share our objectives

Advocating for human rights and gender equality lies at the heart of Soroptimist International's advocacy.

It has been established that climate change, migration, displacement of communities due to conflict, water shortages, human trafficking, modern day slavery etcetera, disproportionately affect women and girls.

Soroptimists throughout the world tackle all of these

problems, gathering data as they do so and reporting their findings to the UN in our annual reports.

For the past 62 years in Trinidad and Tobago, Soroptimist clubs have transformed the lives of thousands of women and girls of all ages and backgrounds through a plethora of projects aimed at educating, empowering and providing enabling opportunities that they would not have otherwise had.

Our clubs have tackled issues from empowering inmates of the Golden Grove Women's prison to raising awareness among schoolgirls, of human trafficking and the dangers of social media.

We have raised awareness, advocated, and acted on issues affecting vulnerable women and girls and have partnered with several organisations to deliver meaningful projects.



## Soroptimist International Centenary

Centenary celebrations are worthy milestones but none are more worthy of celebrating than that which records an unselfish contribution to those requiring special attention in their time of need. Artemis offers congratulations to Soroptimist International on your centenary for contributing in no small measure to improving the lives of women and girls in our communities. Your continued commitment to transforming lives will redound to the benefit of Trinidad & Tobago. Best wishes as you continue the great work of your founder Audrey Layne Jeffers.

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A large delegation of SITT Members attended the SIGBI Conference in Malta in 2016.



SITT delegates pose for a picture in front the flags at SIGBI Conference in Cardiff.

## Conferences

Every year over 1,000 Soroptimists from 18 countries including Great Britain, Ireland, Malta and countries in Asia and the Caribbean gather in the UK over three days for the annual Federation Conference. It is an event that provides a platform for sharing ideas, forging links with other clubs and hearing inspiring presentations from world-class speakers.

At the General Meeting held during conference, spirited debates determine the future of the Federation with all clubs having an opportunity to contribute through their club representatives.

The selection of projects receiving Best Practice Awards is a much-anticipated event and there is much to be learned from the approach different clubs take in tackling the various SDGs on which projects are based.

Of course, there is entertainment, get-togethers and parties as well as an opportunity to meet old friends and make new ones.

The location of the annual conference in a different part of the UK every year also provides an opportunity for attendees to visit interesting places in a new city and engage in



Denyse Ewe with former SIGBI President Sue Williams show our National Flag at the SI Convention in Kuala Lumpur.

retail therapy. Every eight years the SIGBI Federation Conference is held outside the UK and in 2016 several members travelled to Malta to attend. The Soroptimist International Convention brings together Soroptimists from the five Federations and is held every four years.

The last international convention was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.



Our delegates await the start of a session at the Bournemouth Conference Centre.

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**Congratulations to the Soroptimist International for 100 years of Service**

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## Honorary Membership of the National Association of T&T was recently conferred on two pioneers of SI St Augustine

### MONICA BARNES (SC)

Justice Barnes was instrumental in the development and chartering of SI St Augustine and became its charter President in 1986.

Prior to this, as a member of SI Port-of-Spain Justice Barnes served as National Association President. She remained an active member of SI St Augustine where she initiated and led the Golden Grove Women's Prison project. This project continued for over 25 years with members of the Club visiting the prison every week to run programmes with the inmates thereby empowering them to turn their lives around upon their release.

As a sitting judge she could no longer actively engage with the inmates of the prison but this did not dampen her interest in their well-being.

Among the many initiatives she led was the Mother's Day programme. This involved successfully lobbying the Ministry of National Security to allow the children of inmates to visit on Mother's Day.

Following this initiative, the Ministry began a similar programme for Father's Day.



### NESTA PATRICK (MOM)

A trailblazer in the realm of community service, Nesta Patrick's phenomenal contribution to society for six decades has been recognised both nationally, regionally and internationally.

She was the first recipient of the Caricom Triennial award, and an Honorary Doctor of Laws was conferred on her by the University of the West Indies at St Augustine in 2001.

Nesta was introduced to Soroptimism in the UK and later became a founding member of SI St Augustine to which she brought a wealth of knowledge, experience and wisdom.

She avoided many of the top positions in the Club, preferring to serve as Membership Officer in which post she gave continuous guidance to members. Her initiatives were in keeping with her passion as a women's rights activist and her deep commitment to improving the lives of women and children.

When she was no longer able to attend meetings, she maintained her interest in Club activities and continued to give advice and support.

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Winnifred Rose

**Inaugural Dinner**



THE Soroptimist Club of Trinidad held its first big function yesterday evening in the form of a dinner party, given at the Trinidad Country Club. Dr. Dorothy Griffith, founder of the Trinidad branch, presented Miss Audrey Jeffers, president, with the Charter from the Soroptimist Society in England. This society is comprised of business and professional women in Trinidad.

A DINNER PARTY was given at the Trinidad Country Club on Friday evening by the Soroptimist Club, specially to commemorate the presentation of the charter by Dr. Dorothy Griffith to Miss Audrey Jeffers, President of the Trinidad branch. The charter was from the Soroptimist Society in England. Reading left to right are Dr. Griffith, Mr. Ellis-Clarke, Miss Jeffers, Mr. Duff Urquhart and Mrs. Ellis-Clarke.



Lorna Rigsby

# SI Port-of-Spain

## Reflections on the journey of our pioneers

Soroptimist International of Port-of-Spain Club (SIPOS) was chartered on 16th January, 1959. As we celebrate our 62nd Anniversary it is an opportune time to take a walk down memory lane and reflect on the journey of the indomitable pioneering Soroptimists and the phenomenal ground work done for uplifting the status of Women in Trinidad and Tobago throughout the years.

The journey began with founder and first President of the Port-of-Spain Club, Dame Audrey Jeffers OBE, CM a national icon who received the Charter for the club from the Federation of Soroptimist International of Great Britain and Ireland and which became the first Soroptimist club in the English-speaking Caribbean.

During the first decade, Dame Audrey Jeffers led a team of dynamic women who hit the ground running. They included Winnifred Ward, Cynthia Scott-Patrick, Joan Furness-Smith, Stephanie La Forest, Gema Ramkeesoon, Anna Bates and Winnifred Bowen. These were all volunteers at the top of their professions and made contributions to the Constitution Conference at Chaguaramas in 1960 by presenting memoranda on legislation pertaining to the Status of Women; the Status of Children; Divorce; Education; Citizenship; and social welfare.

The club contributed in cash or kind to health institutions, educational institutions including UWI, and environmental programmes. They held programmes in communities highlighting urgent concerns on discrimination, domestic violence, consumer protection, employment, unemployment and all forms of abuse. Aid was extended to other countries in times of natural disasters.

In 1969 a Child Care Protection Campaign 'Every Child Matters' was organised by SIPOS plus nine



Dame Louise Horne

other organisations. Spearheaded by Winnifred Rose, a booklet was prepared, advocating for a Central Children's Authority. This finally came into being as The Children's Authority Act, 2000, 31 years later.

**Leaders of the Seventies**

More powerhouses showed up in the 70's, several of whom received national awards for their outstanding contributions to the community. These women included Elizabeth Quamina, Merle Gopaul, Lorna Rigsby, Evelyn Tracey, Louise Horne, Bernice Dolly, Merle Latchman and Norma Demas.

Under the leadership of Lorna Rigsby, SIPOS was Incorporated by an Act of Parliament in 1972, which gave them the right to own property and transact business in their own name.

Lorna also lobbied SIGBI for special consideration which al-

lowed the formation of the Caribbean Area Council in 1972. This later became SICN (Caribbean Network). In 1973 Lorna was elected the first president of the National Association of Trinidad and Tobago SITT.

That year, SIPOS was consulted on the Draft constitution for establishment of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. The press highlighted contributions of Dame Louise Horne on what needed to be changed.

For the First Celebration of International Women's Day in 1975, SIPOS prepared a four-part statement which was forwarded to the National Commission:-

- Women in Agriculture by Bernice Dolly MOM, OBE
- Women in Government Service by Lorna Rigsby, MOM
- Women in Domestic Service in private households by Dame Louise Horne, MOM
- The Unmarried Mother, her



Dame Audrey Jeffers

Role and Function as Breadwinner by Justice Monica Barnes, SC

**Leaders of the 80's**

Gloria Valere, Rosalie Toby, Debbie Cotter, Ivy Walke, Julia Rose, Barbara Elliot, Kathryn Donaldson-Baptiste, Cynthia Haynes, Marie Eugene Smith

**Leaders of the 90's**

Hanna Demming, Glenda Charles-Harris, Winnie Bowen, Norma Inniss, Yvonne Pilgrim, Veronne Atherley, Dorrell Phillip

**Leaders of 2000-2005:**

Angela Aboud, Ambah Thomas, Yvonne Pilgrim

**The last two decades**

Following in the footsteps of our founder, our legacy includes representation on the Constitution Reform committee that led to improvements to the nation's economic and social development

particularly in health, education, family life, the environment and women's rights in the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago. Partnership in 1996 with the Regional Health Authority on Alzheimer's disease resulted in the formation of the legally constituted Alzheimer's Association of Trinidad and Tobago in 2001.

**More recent projects included:-**

- Audrey Jeffers challenge project for schools
- "COVID Comfort - a little conversation, a listening ear" for residents in institutions
- Four-part series virtual discussion on Self Defence for Women
- SI Centenary tree planting project
- International Women's Day video production
- Intergenerational Women's Leadership Programme

As we celebrate the centenary of Soroptimism, we remember two of our pioneers and former Presidents who were centenarians and whom we lost - Dame Louise Horne who died at the age of 109 in March 2021 and Winnifred Rose at 102 in August 2020.

**The next Generation**

SI Port-of-Spain continues to fulfil its mandate to educate, enable and empower women and girls. The Women's Institute for Alternative Development (WINAD) in collaboration with our club launched the Intergenerational Women's Leadership Programme on Saturday May 1st, 2021 via a virtual platform.

We salute all our pioneers over the decades whose legacy of dedicated service will remain with us and we will continue the journey following in their footsteps.

# SI San Fernando

## 59 years of community service

### The early years

A few months after Trinidad and Tobago gained Independence in 1962, a group of prominent San Fernando women pledged to make a difference to their community and on November 23 at a gala dinner, Soroptimist International of San Fernando was born. With Gladys Montano as the charter President, the Club immediately got to work planning projects while simultaneously engaging in fundraising. Donations were made to several institutions and the Club also set up a Hurricane Relief Fund in the aftermath of Hurricane Flora which hit Tobago in 1963. With several projects completed, the members set their eyes on a major undertaking that would make a difference to the families of the elderly. After a long period of planning and under the astute leadership of former Senator and Member of Parliament Liliias Wight, a Home for the Elderly (Shangri La) was set up at Gopaul Lands in Marabella. The Home celebrated its 50th anniversary last year.

### Awareness, Advocacy, Action

Our members live these watchwords through projects which have included among several others:

- Training preschool teachers.
- Medical outreach programmes in partnership with the Rotary Club of San Fernando South.
- Environmental seminars in partnership with the Pointe a Pierre Wild Fowl Trust.
- 'Impress for Success' seminars aimed at preparing school leavers for the world of work.
- Provision of daily breakfast to needy students at the San Fernando Methodist Primary school prior to the Government's breakfast programme in schools.
- Training for parents and caregivers of autistic children in collaboration with the Autism Society
- Cancer screening for deserving women over 40 years who never had a mammogram.

In response to the many challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic the Club has assisted on many fronts:

- Provided assistance to migrants in partnership with the La Romaine Migrant Support group.
- Distributed hampers to needy families.
- Engaged young people in a 'Covid Kindness' project which saw 20 girls helping hundreds of people through their own little projects after receiving online training in running a project.
- Refurbished and upgraded 17 computers (in keeping with the need to protect the environment

through recycling) for distribution to students. For this project we partnered with another NGO RSC (Restore a Sense of I Can).

- Assisted frontline workers through the provision of dinners for the staff of Augustus Long Hospital over a period of a month.

We are also providing school books to needy students for the new school year.

### Educating, Empowering, Enabling

Over the years our Back Pack project has provided secondary school girls with toiletries and feminine products resulting in more regular attendance at school and increased self-esteem. Our assistance to a wheelchair-bound student over a period of three years enabled her to obtain a degree at UWI. We have highlighted the issue of violence against women and girls through the production of a video which we promoted online. We also engaged a Tae Kwondo instructor over a period of several weeks in a Self Defense training programme for over 100 women. In keeping with the Centenary theme 'Planting Trees for A Brilliant Future' SI San Fernando partnered with RSC in an online programme that educated students on the importance of trees and engaged them in the planting of 128 fruit trees in several locations south Trinidad. This project continues.

### Recognition for our Projects

The high standard of our projects has been recognised both nationally and internationally. Our Conflict Resolution project not only won an international Best Practice Award but was also adopted by the Ministry of Education in 2003. It was presented at a Soroptimist Convention in Sydney Australia as well as in the UK. In 2018 we also won a Best Practice award for our Environmental project 'Beat Plastic Pollution'. Last year we won an award for our 'Coping with Covid' video series in which we engaged psychologist Dr Karen Moore, national cricketer Daren Ganga and media personality Nikki Crosby to advise parents on how to engage their children during lockdown. More recently our project with the migrants has been included in Soroptimist International's report to the UN's High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

### Fun and Friendship

We are proud to be members of SI San Fernando and to be able to serve the community. We are also proud to have two of our founding members, Elsa Ferguson and Dorothy Callender who continue

their membership after 59 years of active service. We are more than just a service club. We are a sisterhood! We support each other, celebrate our achievements and find every opportunity to have a 'lime'. Our annual luncheon and golf tournament are opportunities for fun as well as fundraising and are enjoyed by our supporters.

We thank our many friends, donors and the Corporate Community whose support has enabled us to improve the lives of thousands of women and girls.



59 years of service! Founder members Dorothy Callender and Elsa Ferguson.



Club members Aruna Harbaran and Stephanie Quan Soon with RSC Director Sughan Ramdass, refurbishing used computers for distribution to students.



Husband and wife team, Paul and Bridgette Waite, demonstrate how to protect your head to participants of the Self Defence classes.  
PICTURE LEIGH-ANNE KOYLASS



Cover for COVID—Member delivering sewing machine for mask making.

# SI Chaguanas

## Making a positive difference

Our journey began on Sunday, April 20, 2008, when a group of women from the Chaguanas area were invited to a meeting, hosted by the Soroptimist International National Association of T&T (SITT). The objective of the gathering was to explore the possibility of starting an SI club in the catchment community.

The ideals and visions of Soroptimism were so engaging that our passion was sparked and within a mere 16 months, on August 21, 2009, Soroptimist International of Chaguanas (SIC) was officially birthed and chartered under the stewardship and presidency of Marilyn Crichlow.

SIC now stood in sisterhood and camaraderie as the fifth SI club within T&T.

We were excited to join in arms with our Soroptimist sisters in a commitment to serve and empower women and girls, so we hit the ground running. Our first project was a Literacy Workshop with the students of the Chaguanas North Secondary School.

This project had a significant positive impact as we filled a gap by honing the reading and writing skills of the adolescents we interacted with. We continued this project for three years and targeted the Forms 1 and 2 students.

Over our 12 years of existence, SIC settled and became more acquainted with the national and international spirit of Soroptimism.

We are very proud of our Waking up to a Better Tomorrow project by which we sought to address the ongoing issue of world climate change.

We created and distributed a six-minute video on deforestation. We distributed our video along with plants to over 125 schools across T&T. Our Art Book Donation project promoted the improvement of art skills to

Standard 2 students across T&T. We distributed approximately 1,000 art books.

With our Manners and Ethics project within the Enterprise Chaguanas area, we provided guidance to 50 young children between the ages of five and 11 on the importance of manners, morals, values and ethics in today's society.

Through our Homework Centre project which dovetailed from our Manners and Ethics projects, we worked towards creating a safe space for the youths to spend their after-school time.

One of our bi-annual projects is our Cancer Screening mobile caravan, which we kick-off during breast cancer awareness month.

We have also offered free legal aid clinics and contributed to health fairs through tapping into our internal resources of our membership over the years.

Through our Leh We Talk Sisters project, we have held community conversation with women to air concerns on issues affecting them.

This project was a huge success, which resulted in us embarking on a second phase towards sharing entrepreneur information, and skills-based training towards empowering these women.

SIC has provided relief for families via house repairs, books, clothing, food supplies and counselling services. We have supported a school for differently-abled children. We also supported a family with four members who were afflicted with a hereditary illness.

We have held lectures and workshops with various schools in the Central community on issues of gender based violence, career guidance and various other topics to fifth and sixth formers. We recognised and rewarded girls at the top of the science field from various sec-



SI Chaguanas doing our part to help during the pandemic.



SI Chaguanas 100th Anniversary celebrations with former SIGBI president, bottom left, Sue Williams.

ondary schools to highlight science as a career path for girls.

Most important for us, was the value we added to the lives we touched by giving of our time, energies, and talent.

For those we assisted, it was beyond giving items and cash, but about the care and hope that were given and the relationships built. In executing projects, we keep in mind the Soroptimist goals to empower, educate and enable women and girls.

In addition to the joy that we derive from our service work, another important aspect of

being a Soroptimist for us is the knowledge and support that we get from other Soroptimist clubs, both locally and internationally and the relationships that are built. We support our sister clubs in their activities, and we look forward to getting together with all clubs once a year for fun and fellowship. Our vision is to help create a society where all persons can realise the best quality of life, where women and girls do not experience any form of discrimination and can fulfil their dreams and potential. To this end, we will continue to work to

engage in service projects that will inspire action and transform lives. Moving through this pandemic has certainly raised our awareness of how much more work there is to be done at the individual, community, and societal level.

We invite you to come join us on this journey and share your time, talent, and resources to make our world a better place.

Remember: "We make a living by what we get and we make a life by what we give" –Sir Winston Churchill.

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# SI Newtown expands boundaries

**H**ow can a multi-generational organisation ensure its survival in a rapidly changing world? This was the question posed to local Soroptimists after almost 50 years of their existence.

Members appreciated that there was need to add new blood and diversity to the organisation to ensure its survival into the next several decades. The idea was then born out of a few pioneering Senior Soroptimists to start a new club specifically targeting a younger demographic.

This concept was revolutionary for the wider organisation because traditionally the concept of volunteerism appealed primarily to women who were at the peak of their careers and better able to offer their time and resources to charitable social initiatives.

Soroptimist International Newtown Trinidad (SINT) was chartered on November 6th, 2010 with 24 members from diverse personal and professional backgrounds.

From inception, the Newtown Club transformed both the National Association of Trinidad and Tobago and the wider Soroptimist world by embracing a younger cohort of women, utilising technology and employing new methods in every aspect of club functioning.

SINT displayed its innovation and dynamism in many ways. The club was the first to host a professional mixer to attract new members and the said event also doubled as a fundraising venture.

The club was also one of the first in the country to employ social media applications to build the Soroptimist brand, to recruit potential members and to deliver and showcase its project work.

Founding members appreciated that there was scope for the club to utilise social media and virtual tools to enhance communication with each other and engage the volunteer community. Long before pandemic restrictions, SINT routinely hosted virtual business meetings via Skype and other teleconferencing services to facilitate members whose professional and personal commitments did not allow them to attend physical meetings.

As a result of its remarkable success, the club was invited to present its model at the Soroptimist International of Great Britain and Ireland (SIGBI) Conference in Brighton England in 2011.

SINT later became global pioneers and champions for the use of social media and facilitated local workshops to encourage and assist other clubs with understanding and navigating the digital space.

Within one year of its charter, SINT members were encouraged by more Senior Soroptimists to assume executive positions on the Council of the National Association (NA) and to integrate its more progressive perspectives with the established customs and practices of the local Soroptimist network.

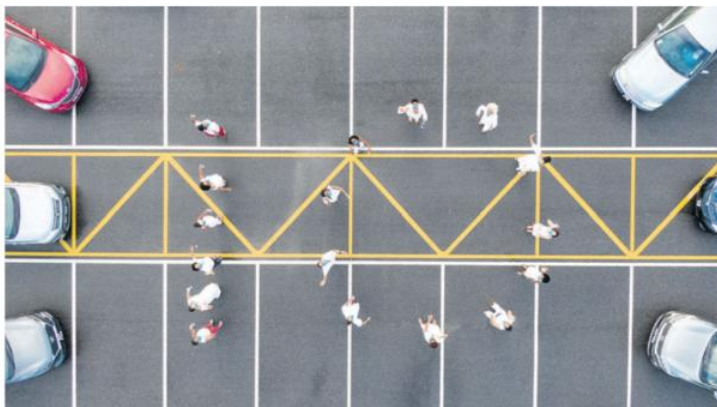
Members accepted the challenge as they appreciated that in order to attract a more diverse demographic to the organisation there was a need for change at all levels. Since 2011, club members have consistently held executive positions on the NA Council with founding member Chevonne



My Sister's Keeper SI-gnature Workshop, Security and Self Defence for female secondary school students aged 15-18.



Library refurbishment initiative at the El Socorro Central Government Primary School.



SI Newtown celebrating their 10th Anniversary in November 2020.

Agana-Duncan being elected as the youngest National Association President, serving from 2018 to 2020.

Chevonne was subsequently elected to the post of Membership Director of SIGBI

in 2020. The lifeblood of Soroptimism worldwide is the programme action (projects) conceptualised and delivered by members. Throughout the years SINT has concentrated on creating opportunities

and activities to positively impact young women and girls.

SINT's projects cater to a multi-generational audience and are all-encompassing in scope. From 2010 to 2013, SINT implemented a Mentorship Programme for the girls in residence at Sophia House located at Corner Bath and Park Streets, Port-of-Spain. SINT members committed to the growth and development of the girls by facilitating monthly interactive face-to-face sessions on topics including self-esteem, self-actualisation, etiquette, puberty and adolescence. The club also exposed the girls to fun experiences and with the assistance of various benefactors were able to provide a full spa day, a rock-climbing adventure and opportunities to attend cultural shows and activities within Port-of-Spain and environs.

SINT was the first to develop a 'SI-gnature' workshop series entitled 'My Sister's Keeper' in 2015. Over the course of two years the workshop series covered several topics including Security and Self Defence, Financial Literacy, Human Trafficking, Alternative Career Paths and Spoken Word and Poetry for female secondary school students aged 15-18.

In an effort to balance impact and ensure sustainability in its projects, SINT also executed a Library Refurbishment initiative at the El Socorro Central Government Primary School in 2017. Members completely overhauled the school's library, painted the walls—including a hand drawn mural, set up a reading corner and donated several hundred new books to the facility. The club has also embarked on a number of environmental initiatives including the production and sale of branded reusable bags, a Clean-up Drive at Matura Beach and a Grow-Box Gardening Project at St Jude's Home for Girls.

Notwithstanding the ongoing pandemic, SINT has been able to pivot to ensure continued delivery of projects virtually and has also managed to maintain the dynamism and vibrancy of the sisterhood and looks forward to many years of continued success in service.

# SI Anaparima

## Dedicated to women and girls

Soroptimist International Anaparima Club (SIAN) was chartered on November 24th 2018 by SIGBI (Soroptimist International of Great Britain and Ireland) Federation President Sue Williams.

Operating out of South Trinidad, the Amerindian word associated with San Fernando/Naparima was aptly chosen by the 20-odd charter members led by founding Club President Susan Roopnarinesingh. Indeed, some of the first projects effected by the club to fulfil its charter requirements took place at Naparima Girls' High School, and on Naparima Hill (more commonly known as San Fernando Hill)!

A fairly new club, with a majority membership of young working women, SIAN has been growing in the ideals of Soroptimism by building friendships and developing partnerships focussed on high-impact projects that benefit women and girls, community and country.

### Education

There are few tools more potent or effective in changing lives and livelihoods than education. When you educate children, you give them the power to change the world. SIAN's 'Back to School Book Drive' is a recurring project that equips deserving girls with books, bookbags and school supplies to start the new school year.

In the same vein, SIAN, in partnership with 'For The Love of Reading TT', launched a free bookshelf at Stefy's Pharmacy in Princes Town to promote literacy. The public is welcome to visit and choose up to two books to take away, no strings attached.

### Pandemic response

COVID-19 has affected the world, and Trinidad and Tobago, for half the time that the club has been in existence! As such, SIAN had the unique opportunity of re-aligning its strategy to remain relevant and fulfil the mission of transforming the lives and status of women and girls through education, empowerment and enabling opportunities.

With schools closed, SIAN sourced new and gently used laptops and tablets for both primary and secondary school students to continue their education online. The annual book drive was also expanded, with reach extending to more than twice the numbers of students as in previous years.

Over 100 "SoroptAssist" hampers fully stocked with food, toiletries and baby supplies were distributed to members of the community, including Venezuelan migrants, who suffered job loss and reduced income over the course of 2020 and in 2021. A free food shelf was also temporarily set-up and ran on donations for a six-month period.

### Women's health

With limited opportunities for real-life interaction, members got creative in their drive to educate on women's health and wellness. A mini-video series was done

addressing Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS) from the perspectives of OBGYN Doctor Yasmin Hosein, dietician Leann Nanan and PCOS Positivity Coach Yashi Carrington. The videos received excellent feedback from women who benefited from the practical and empowering information shared on social media.

### Breaking the mental health stigma

No conversation on health is complete without considering mental health—something that the women of SIAN are truly passionate about! Members personalised its importance by putting out videos and captioned photos sharing tips for taking care of mental health. Children at the SWAHA Home in Penal were presented with journals and coloured pencils, and enjoyed an interactive session with psychologists Roma Latchman and Kera Hosein on the use of journaling and art therapy to understand and manage emotions. Sessions on Stress Management by clinical psychologist Ahhalia Ramdass and Suicide Prevention by psychiatrist Doctor Anel Roberts enabled students of Naparima Girls' High School to receive crucial practical tips on how to help themselves and their peers, as well as to break the stigma around mental health.

### Advocacy

Soroptimist International Anaparima Club added its voice to the cries of outrage at the violence against women and girls prevalent in Trinidad and Tobago. Club President Candace Maharaj addressed the multitudes of persons demanding justice and respect for women and challenged each person to do their part. Members stood in solidarity at candlelight vigils, wearing masks with strong statements against gender-based violence and distributing informational resources on domestic violence.

Prior to this, the "ENOUGH!" project educated high school girls on the various issues and concerns associated with abuse and violence against women and empowered them to act if presented with these issues.

International Women's Day is always commemorated as club members choose to call out gender bias and inequality, celebrate women's achievements and encourage girls in STEM careers.

### The environment belongs to all of us

SIAN joins with the rest of the world in doing its part to mitigate the effects of climate change and preserve the environment, having successfully conducted a beach clean-up, continuing to plant trees, and educating and encouraging students on same.

*Soroptimist International Anaparima Club would like to express a heartfelt thank you to all those who have supported and continue to contribute to our projects. We cannot do it without the kind-hearted individuals and organisations willing to invest their resources and partner with us in changing lives.*



Members of Soroptimist International Anaparima Club.



SIAN club members donating five devices for online education to Santa Maria RC School, collected by teacher Chirisse Ranoo and principal Genevieve Ann Gopaul-Francis. Students at the Moruga school also benefited from books and school supplies in SIAN's 3rd Annual 'Back to School Book Drive' as well as 'SoroptAssist' pandemic relief hampers. From left, Malini Bachan, teacher Chirisse Ranoo, principal Genevieve Ann Gopaul-Francis, Candace Maharaj and Vanita Jagai.



"Be part of the solution, not part of the pollution. Kick the trash out!" SIAN club members after a beach clean-up in Pointe-a-Pierre on World Environment Day 2019. From left, Lorraine Acosta, Renelle Bernard-Brown, Rachelle Toolsie, Susan Roopnarinesingh, Candace Maharaj, Vanita Jagai, Priya Sookraj and Ahhalia Ramdass.



As part of their '16 Days—Not Enough' project, members of Soroptimist International Esperance painted park benches orange and attached slogans advocating for stopping gender-based violence.

# SI Esperance brings hope in difficult times

Soroptimist International Esperance—esperance means hope—is the newest of the six clubs in Trinidad and Tobago. The club has been very active since its inception, so only a few of its many projects can be highlighted.

One of the club's first projects was 'STEM in Flight—Women in Aviation' which was chosen to be featured at the annual meeting of their Federation (SIGBI). Girls in secondary schools were invited to spend a day at the UTT Campus and the Camden Aviation Campus to explore careers in that field. Subsequently, the club partnered with Microsoft for its 'Girls in STEM' project to produce DigiGirlz in 2019. DigiGirlzDayTT 2020 was the first virtual version to be produced in this hemisphere. The project was selected to represent the SIGBI Federation at the NGO CSW65 Parallel Event as a part of the Soroptimist International presentation. As a result, this local project went global as it was viewed by an international audience of thousands. It was indeed a great honour!

The '16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence' (November 16th-December 10th) campaign evolved into the '16 Days—Not Enough' project, as members of SI Esperance were appalled that six women were murdered in Trinidad and Tobago within the first two months of 2020. The campaign included painting park benches orange and attaching relevant slogans, participation in candlelit marches, flyers with useful telephone numbers, a donation to The Halfway House and seven articles in newspapers. On social media, SI Esperance embarked upon organising a series of videos on domestic violence; a five-part series entitled 'Love is Kind—STOP Domestic Violence' by a psychologist; practical advice from a lawyer; and seven by men entitled 'Men Who Stand Up for Women' designed to appeal to other men. The project created awareness of the issue, and empowered women to seek help.

Soroptimist International Espe-



Esperance Soroptimists distributed 600 hampers in June. The project continues.



Computers were presented to enable children to benefit from online education during the closure of schools. From left, president of Soroptimist International Esperance Denyse Ewe, Salisha Mohammed Ali and Guidance Counselor of ASJA Girls' College, Barrackpore; Soroptimist Keisha Baig-Ramsamooj.

rance has been addressing climate change on several fronts. Awareness was created through posts on Facebook and its 'Trash to Treasure' video which was shown in local schools, as well as being shared around the world, attracting 18K views. Its 'Planting Trees—Hope for the Future' responded to the clarion call to plant in celebration of the Soroptimist International Centenary. This, married with the 2021 UN Environmental Day theme of "Eco-

system Restoration," challenged them to plant nearly 200 trees in southwest Trinidad, tackling the issues of community beautification, environmental sustainability and food security, as many of the trees were food producing. #CovidComfort—Growing Food for Hope with its seedling donation aimed to enable vulnerable women to grow their own food, lowering their food cost, encouraging healthier lifestyles through better food choices, and

easing their financial situation by selling the excess produce. Both the planting of the trees and seedlings aid in the greening of the planet.

The #CovidComfort project concerned itself with all aspects of the lives of women and girls. Some education needs were met by donations of three tablets, five Chromebooks and three laptops. The Soroptimist International Esperance social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and website)

highlighted advisable behaviours and provided mental health support during the pandemic. Videos urging people to 'Be Kind to Yourself,' 'Coping Comfort for Mothers' (14K views) and 'Coping Comfort for Students' were prepared with the expertise of psychologists and disseminated widely.

The physical aspect of #Covid-Comfort was 'Hampers of Hope.' Some hampers were distributed in 2020, but it was June in 2021 that the distribution was ramped up due the urgent need for food support. Esperance Soroptimists appealed to friends and received enough donations to distribute 100 hampers in a week. After that, members of the public came forward with contributions of cash or hampers. Families were mainly selected on the recommendation of school Principals who distributed the hampers through their schools, so there was no crowding. Others were distributed by club members. The response was incredible, and some 600 hampers were distributed during the month of June alone.

Soroptimist International Esperance dedicates itself to improving the lives of women and girls through educating, enabling and empowering opportunities. Life during the COVID-19 pandemic has been difficult for everyone. Esperance members have been following the mantra:

**"Don't limit your challenges, challenge your limits!"**

## Message from President Denyse Ewe

"I feel that now more than ever, during the COVID-19 pandemic, we must catalyse opportunities for young women. This was born 'Second Chances,' my President's Project for 2021-23, which will provide scholarships and mentorship in post-secondary education. If we are to close the gender gap, we must provide access to resources for all of our young women. No woman should be left behind in the quest for equality. It is my sincere hope that our 'Second Chances' scholarship recipients are inspired to lead successful careers and in turn, help provide transformative educational opportunities for other women."



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