

SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL SCOTLAND NORTH REGION

SPOTLIGHT ON NEWS 26

NOVEMBER

...when the weather is a mix of cold and bright, neither damp or dry.

November is also about being cheerful and colourful. Covid19 is still ruling what we do, but I hope you are all keeping safe and well and, above all, thinking about our Soroptimist values.



First, a good news story about **SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL:**

Even though the business events sector has been hit hard by the pandemic, The Incredible Impacts Programme is recognizing and celebrating associations who have proved dedication in creating legacies that reach far beyond the conference and convention walls.

This Programme now in its fourth year has selected three winning associations as leading examples of excellence within the global meetings industry; hosting events which excelled in areas such as sustainability, accessibility and ecology. Soroptimist International was one of the winners receiving a \$7,500 grant towards future projects.

The ICCA (International Congress and Conventions Association) CEO, Senthil Gopinath said “The ICCA is proud to have partnered with Best Cities Globe Alliance for the fourth year in a row to highlight the ‘beyond tourism’ value of international association meetings. The three winners have demonstrated their efforts and how they raised awareness of, and, positively influenced their communities through education on critical issues such as safe sanitation, sustainability and recent advances in microbial ecology. We’re delighted to award them grants to support their endeavours as they continue important work on their legacy programmes.”

.....

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: 16 DAYS in 16 WAYS

The 25th November marks the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and continues for the 16 Days of Activism until the 10th December which is Human Rights Day. The 2020 global theme is:

Orange the World:

Fund: Prioritize funding for essential services.

Prevent: Declare a national zero tolerance policy.

Respond: Ensure minimum essential services are maintained and adopted where non-existent.

Collect: Collect data for improvement of services and programmes.

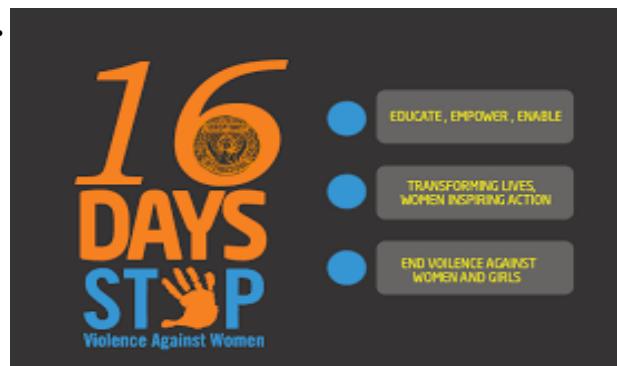
During these 16 days we should raise awareness about gender based violence, challenge discriminatory attitudes and call for improved laws to end Violence Against Women for good.

This year as the world retreated inside homes due to lockdown introduced to curb the virus Covid19, reports showed an alarming increase in the already existing pandemic of Violence Against Women. The Covid19 pandemic has exacerbated key risk factors, such as food shortages, unemployment, economic insecurity, school closures, massive migration flows and the threat of civil unrest. In May 2020, it was reported that two women are killed by their partner every week in England and Wales, and, the UK police receive a call every minute about domestic violence with 89% about a women being abused by a man.

**TAKE ACTION,
YOU HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY....**

16 DAYS in 16 WAYS

DAY 1: Orange your social media.



Day 2: Get Creative. Craft something – a card, a fabric or knitted item, a painting in the main colour of Orange. Send me a photo..please. If you get it ready in time show it to us at our next Regional Meeting which is on the 21st November. Art can inspire change and can spark conversations.

DAY 3: Raise awareness of support services available to survivors or those at risk of violence both locally and nationally...and spread the word.

DAY 4: Fund raise for your local Rape Crisis Centre or, Women's Shelter.

DAY 5: Collect clothing, toiletries or other items to donate to local women shelters, food banks etc.

DAY 6: Orange the world by speaking up against cyber violence. Orange something in your locality!

DAY 7: Host a panel event at your next Club Zoom Meeting to raise awareness.

DAY 8: Take a moment or two to remember those who have lost their lives due to violence.

DAY 9: Wear something orange for each day of the 16 days – be it a brooch, a scarf, a jumper or anything else.....and be prepared to tell others why?

DAY 10: Ask a speaker from the VAW Partnership or Rape Crisis to a zoom club meeting.

DAY 11: Educate yourself about the causes and consequences of Violence Against Women and Girls.

DAY 12: Mobilize men and boys. Men need to take steps in ending toxic masculinity.

DAY 13: Know your Rights. All women and girls and their families should be informed of their Human Rights.

DAY 14: It is getting near to Christmas. Buy from women entrepreneurs because empowering women economically keeps women from being entirely dependent on their partners. It also helps survivors to rebuild their lives.

DAY 15: Ensure women and girls in your community know where to access help and services. Post orange signs with hotline information in grocery stores and pharmacies (if possible).

DAY 16: No matter what issues you care about, chances are you are not alone. There is power in numbers and having people by your side can make your activism even more impactful.

Support each other and by standing together we are stronger.

.....

BOOK WEEK SCOTLAND - Monday 16th to Sunday 22nd November

An annual celebration of books and reading for everyone. Read more things that inspire you whether fiction or non-fiction. Strengthen your knowledge, connect and inspire yourself. The more you read, the better you are informed to make things happen.
The theme this year is
'Writing the Future, Today'.



Two Books you might find interesting:

1. Factfulness: Ten Reasons we're wrong about the world – Why things are Better than you think by Hans Rosling.

"A hopeful book about the potential for human progress"

"An immensely cheering book in these anxious times."

"It may seem difficult at times to see things in a positive light – a challenge to try and see the world through different lens"

2. Becoming by Michelle Obama.

A memoir where she talks about her roots and how she found her voice. She speaks of female empowerment fervently, and encourages us women to fight relentlessly for equal rights.

CROSS PARTY GROUP – COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

I attended a Zoom Webinar meeting on Age Verification for Pornography websites and to find out why this had not been implemented. It is a subject we should be talking about, especially when many of us have children and grandchildren.

It is not in the Scottish parliament's devolved remit, it is down to the UK Government to act. Most of the following is extracted from a June briefing to Parliamentarians.

The first speaker, Kat Banyard who is a Director of UK Feminista and the Feminista Organisation are the secretariat at Westminster for the CPG on Children's Access to Pornography. Currently, it is legal for children to access websites and it is illegal to sell video games to under 18's! Although you can get these videos on websites. We should remember that today for many young men their first sexual experiences seem to be from hardcore pornography.

In 2017, the UK government passed a law for age controls - 'The Digital Economy Act' which would require websites to verify viewers ages as has happened with the gambling and alcohol websites. This was backed by children's charities, parents and MP's.

Sarabjit Singh QC talked to us about the legal position regarding this legislation. This Digital Act is for the whole of the UK and online pornography is just a part (Section 14(1)). When a law is passed it then has to be 'commenced' by the government. **Section 14(1) has not been 'commenced'.** The government want to put age verification into a new white paper but this might not come to Parliament until 2024 in the outlined legislation called 'Online Harms'. This law, it is thought, would put a duty of care on the websites but it is not clear if age verification will be mandatory.

The facts are that today websites are running for profit and allowing children to view. 5% of children visit by accident with deeply harmful consequences. In 2015, in ONE MONTH, 1.4 million visited porno websites from their desktop computers...and this does not account for mobile phones. Research commissioned by NSPCC and the Children's Commissioner found that 65% of 15 – 16 year olds report having seen online

pornography. These websites are at first free, then take a payment later or raise fees from advertising.

Porn is responsible for untold harm to children and society. It fuels attitudes of violence to women.

On 27th April 2017 the Digital Economy Act received Royal Assent. Part 3 of the Act enables the Secretary of State to prohibit pornography websites from making their content available to anyone under the age of 18. It also set out a regulatory and enforcement framework that would have applied to any commercial pornographic website accessed by a UK user.

On 16th October 2019, it was announced that **Part 3 concerning age verification would not be commencing. **Instead:** The new 'Online Harms' white paper consultation (Feb 2020) proposed legislation 'will only apply to companies that provide services or use functionality on their websites which facilitate the sharing of user generated content or user interactions'. (Meaning this legislation would not apply to all commercial pornography websites). Furthermore, the white paper does not propose mandatory age verification, but will expect companies to use a number of methods to protect children.**

Yet, Part 3 of the Digital Economy Act 2017 was required precisely because pornography websites were **FAILING expectations to prevent children from accessing their content and compulsory age verification specifically with an associated enforcement regime found necessary to deliver child protection.**

I would urge you to write not only to your MP, but to your MSP and the Children's Commissioner. No-one has given a good reason for postponing age verification. We have to increase pressure to get MP's to pass a new bill and, we need people to be aware of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Question why this legislation has been delayed?

BECAUSE: Right now the Government is allowing children to have unfettered access to hardcore, violent pornography websites, despite having a Parliament-approved tool to prevent this.

CHILD PREVENTION CANNOT WAIT

The Government must implement age verification checks for pornography websites **N O W.**

.....

CROSS PARTY GROUP for HEALTH AND INEQUALTIES

This meeting took place on the 13th October and Maureen Sturrock attended. A new Report from Public Health Scotland which was published in September has set out how taking a human rights based approach to planning the response to, and recovery from, the Covid19 pandemic can

support the most marginalised and excluded in our communities and help prevent further increases in inequality in Scotland. It outlines the Public Health Scotland Strategy for 2020 – 23 and is titled ‘A Scotland where everybody thrives’. The speakers (both from Public Health Scotland) were Claire Sweeney, The Director of Place and Well-being, and Katrina Reid, Health Improvement Manager of Health and Housing.

Maureen found this a very interesting presentation which made her proud to see the efforts and plans being made in Scotland to encourage cooperation between government and other groups and communities to promote health and well being in general among the most marginalised in society. Although there was inevitable a big focus on Covid, the strategy covers various areas. The only specific mention of women related to domestic violence, commercial sex and early trauma was brief. Of course, many of the issues are not gender specific e.g. poverty, mental illness, addictions, homelessness, often severe and multiple disadvantages (trauma, violence and stigma) which leads to exclusion from many areas of society. The Marmot review has clearly illustrated how the most excluded suffer the most in terms of physical and mental health and longevity.

A more detailed synopsis of the strategy can be found at:

<https://www.publichealthscotland.scot/downloads/public-health-scotland-strategic-plan-2020-23/>

Action to tackle the spread of Covid19 in Scotland is essential if we are to protect lives. It is important that when we do this, we do what we can to understand and minimise any unintended impacts on health, particularly for the people who are most marginalised and excluded. Taking a human rights based approach to planning the response to, recovery from, and services for the Covid19 pandemic can help us do that. Public Health Scotland has published a report setting out how that might be done. It is hoped that this will help prevent further increases in inequality in our communities.

Health inequalities are not new, but the Covid19 pandemic has further highlighted that many people in our communities experience disproportionately worse health and wellbeing due to poverty, inequality and disadvantage. During the pandemic, this has shown itself in the increased incidence of Covid19 and the negative impacts of the control measures for people who are marginalised, excluded and who experience, often multiple, disadvantages.

These impacts include increased mental health problems, economic hardship, increased exclusion from mainstream services, a lack of access to sources of support and information, and, difficulty acting on the health advice due to their circumstances. Housing, income and employment, poor health and/or caring responsibilities are examples of areas of their lives that

may be affected. These non-viral impacts may be continuous and long term as the pandemic impacts on the social and economic recovery and future delivery of public services.

A number of human rights can be affected by the measures put in place to control the spread of the Covid19 virus, including the rights to the highest attainable standard of health, a right to housing, work and education, food, safety and security. Human rights based working; including better participation through lived experience, the AAAQ Framework and PANEL principles, provide a basis to plan and deliver policies and services that support people working across all areas of public health in their duties to promote equality and reduce inequalities.

'Public Health Scotland is committed to embedding an equality and human rights approach across the work we do and collaborating with our partners to do the same. We are working to reduce inequalities and the occurrence of multiple deprivation, marginalisation and exclusion, and to ensure that people who do experience these are able to access the services and support that they need.'

Public Health Scotland's Four Areas of Focus are:

**Covid-19. Mental Wellbeing.
Community and Place. Poverty and Children.**

.....

AND FINALLY,

It is National Tree Week is 28th November to 6th December 2020.

It was originally called 'Plant a Tree in '73' and started in 1973 in response to Dutch Elm Disease – a tree disease that stops them from taking up water properly. The original campaign went so well that The Tree Council group was then formed encouraging the population to plant trees. The Tree planting season starts when it gets cold – ie November and lasts up until March. As our Soroptimist Centenary year has now arrived, I hope you and your Club will plant trees. Crieff and Perth have started, Aberdeen and Dundee are talking about it. I would like to feature photos and stories in a future Spotlight, so please let me know what is happening.

At a future Club meeting you can also ponder:

**If you were a Tree....which Tree would you be?
(Answers Please to me)**

**Janice Wilson
Programme Action Chair, Scotland North.**

(7 pages)

