Soroptimist International
Great Britain & Ireland



SI St Austell and District's Orange Cafe

Annual Report: 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025

Soroptimist International Great Britain and Ireland (SIGBI) Ltd

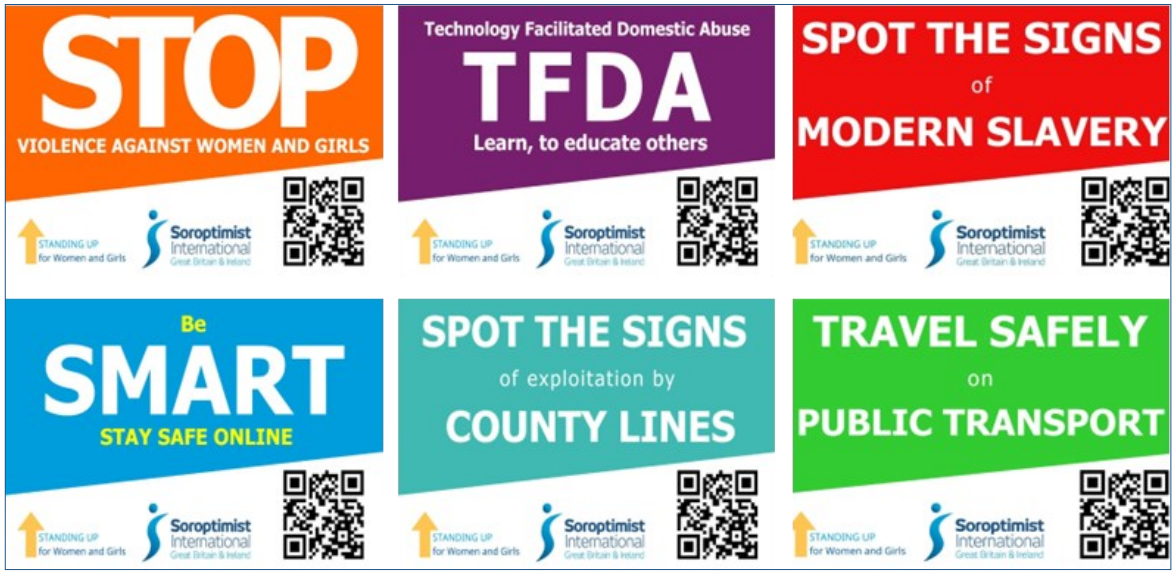
STANDING UP
for Women and Girls

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SIGBI produced 2 series of cards, on health and safety, containing important information on the reverse for Clubs to hand out to the public.





Foreword by Ruth Healey

Chairman of the Board 2023-2025

I am delighted to be able to present the Annual Report for Soroptimist International Great Britain & Ireland (SIGBI) for the year to 31st March 2025.

In SIGBI's 90th year club members have continued to dedicate many hours of volunteering to contribute towards the Federation's aims to Stand Up for Women & Girls and much of that work is outlined in the following few pages.

The Federation also marked its 90th year by offering clubs the challenge of doing '90 for 90', 90 acts of kindness, 90 women helped and so on. The choice was down to the club and the variety of '90's' was amazing from 90 twinned toilets, 90 books collected, 90 trees planted and even 90 cocktails drunk! Clubs engaged and had fun picking up the challenge and some of these were celebrated in our annual conference in Edinburgh, October 2024.

Also celebrated in Edinburgh was the Best Practice Awards showcasing the best of SIGBI's projects across the Federation. For the first time, these awards were applied for by clubs attracting over one hundred applicants. I congratulate the Programme Team on managing to pick winners – that was no small task – and I equally congratulate the winners and all the other entrants on all their hard work. The winners and runner ups were featured in a printed Best Practice Awards 2024 Leaflet.

Volunteer membership organisations across the UK & Ireland are working in a challenging environment, finding it increasingly difficult to attract younger members to join, though the picture is quite different across SIGBI's Asian and Caribbean countries. However, I'm delighted that, yet again, in the last twelve months nearly 10% new members have become Soroptimists in SIGBI and eight new clubs have been formed. SIGBI warmly welcomes all our new members and wishes much success to the new clubs embarking on their journeys.

It was reported last year that SIGBI had engaged a PR company to aim to raise the profile of the organisation and the work done. The annual report received shows this to have been a worthwhile investment with increasing requests for articles and statements reaching, over the last year, a potential readership of over nine million. SIGBI continues to learn what is 'newsworthy' and what is not and to improve visibility across all channels.

SIGBI Board Directors and club members have continued to engage with other Soroptimist Federations and external organisations. In particular, many members from SIGBI attended the Commission on the Status of Women in New York in March, working with over 100 Soroptimists from all over the world to form the largest single delegation at the event. Meetings were held with the UK Equalities Office and some of the UK Ministers that had travelled to the UN.

During the year, SIGBI appointed a new Assistant Programme Director of Advocacy to help support our campaigning work. Recent work undertaken has included the launch of a position paper asking for Gender Impact Assessments to become mandatory in government prior to policy decisions being made. This work is ongoing and will form part of SIGBI's advocacy work throughout the next twelve months.

I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to all our club members, our Associate members and staff across all our territories for the time, effort and unwavering dedication to making the world a better place for women and girls – it is very much appreciated.

SIGBI Ltd Trustees 2024-2025

Ruth Healey, President
Gillie O'Rourke, President Elect

Chris Corless, Finance Director
Giselle Davies, Governance Director
Lindsay Green, Programme Director

Dishi Attwood, Membership Director (until November 2024, then position vacant)
Deborah Kingsley, PR, Marketing and Communications Director (from November 2024)



Programme Action Overview 2024-2025

Lindsay Green, Director of Programme

2024-2025 has continued to be a very successful year for Soroptimist International Great Britain & Ireland (SIGBI). 1132 reports have been submitted to our central Hub for new projects that commenced between 2024-2025 and we also have a significant number of ongoing projects that have been updated during the year. By looking at the reports, available to all members through our Hub, inspiration can be gained, and many projects can be replicated across SIGBI with a few local adaptations. The Programme team also highlight projects throughout the year and we know that most reports have been looked at up to 8 times by members.

During 2024-25 we introduced further changes to our Programme work. We have an additional Assistant Programme Director and she has a team looking at Advocacy in the UK. From August 2024 we introduced 4 new categories into our reports, Service, Advocacy, Gifting and Activity. This was to make the reporting easier for members and allows them to concentrate on giving more detail when they write up their service projects, which then helps the Programme team with submissions to the UN on our work.

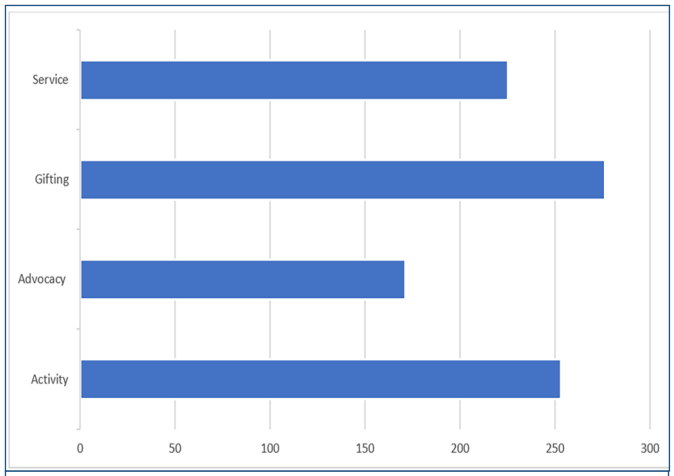
In recent years we have labelled our reports under one or more of the 5Ps – Peace, Prosperity, Partnerships, People and Planet and then linked these to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and SIGBI's charitable objects. This has proved confusing, so this year we have moved away from using the 5P approach and instead we have highlighted our charitable objects and how they fit with the Sustainable Development Goals. This has helped to ensure that the work we are doing is meeting our Objects as an organisation. We have also adjusted the Programme team so each of the Assistant Programme Directors are aligned and responsible to these objects as well as the Sustainable Development Goals SDGs.

The Objects (taken from our Articles of Association) are:

4.1 To promote either directly or by the encouragement and support of others including Clubs:

- *(a) the advancement of education;*
- *(b) the advancement of health and saving lives;*
- *(c) the relief and/or prevention of poverty;*
- *(d) the advancement of good citizenship and community development;*
- *(e) the advancement of human rights (as set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and*
- *(f) the advancement of equality and diversity.*

4.2 to promote volunteering in furtherance of the objects set out in 4.1 amongst individual Soroptimist Members of Clubs.



Numbers of Projects recorded under the new categories

To help with 4.2, since August 2024 we have asked members to record the hours they have spent on their project work. So far, members have contributed 39,500 volunteer hours in their reporting .

Reports show that we have directly helped over 82,000 women and girls across SIGBI and raised £420,000 which has been used to support our projects, assist other charities and give direct grants to women to assist their education and occupations.

At our 2024 conference, we awarded Best Practice Awards around the three E's - Educate, Empower and Enable. We have continued with the ultimate Delegates Choice award at conference and members continue to apply to win Best Practice awards for their programme work.

Our separate working groups now include all of SIGBI and we have 3 new groups this year. Education has been charged with producing materials that members can use when engaging with schools. The first piece of work will be launched at Conference and focusses on Primary aged children. The Women's Safety group have produced 2 series of cards, one set on women's safety and one on health. Two health cards, on screening and HPV, support our campaign to end Cervical Cancer. There is a further working group taking this particular issue forward.

We have re-launched a survey on women's safety on UK railway stations, which was last done 30 years ago. This will inform our joint work with various railway companies across the Country. In March, six members from SIGBI attended the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in New York where we had the opportunity to advocate for women and girls by networking, holding events and taking part in meetings. As last year, many more members took the opportunity to join events virtually from their homes.

Our achievements towards the UN Sustainable Developments Goals (SDGs)

Partnerships and End Food Poverty

Ayushi Kundu

Working together through strong partnerships means pooling ideas, resources and support, making it possible to tackle poverty more effectively and sustainably. SIGBI Clubs have worked with 464 other partner organisations in their projects.

- **Education:** Clubs partnered with schools and other organisations to educate children, providing spoken English classes and tuition to first-generation learners. Funds were raised to support the lifelong education of a girl from a poor family.
- **Domestic abuse:** Clubs provided Christmas gifts, including personal hygiene items, to women from refuges and care homes. Interactive educational sessions were held for university students to raise awareness about the Orange Campaign.
- **Food poverty:** Members provided food to rough sleepers and donated food items to food banks.
- **Health:** Clubs partnered with one another and other organisations to provide prosthetic limbs to financially disadvantaged women and girls. Girls from low-socioeconomic backgrounds have been given talks on menstrual health and hygiene and supplied with menstrual products.



SI Chennai provided glass painting classes to improve children's creative skills.

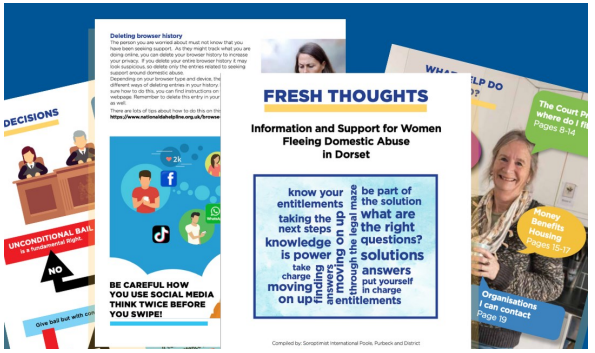
Peace and Gender Equality

Meenakshi Ray

SDG 5: Gender Equality. 189 projects were undertaken, with 4891 volunteer hours spent.

SDG 16: **Peace** 43 Projects were undertaken with 1072 volunteer hours given

- Clubs sent donations in cash and kind through SI Europe and other agencies to people affected by the war in Ukraine.
- Clubs across the Federation marked 16 days of Activism in November/December 2024 and several clubs held monthly Orange Cafes to raise awareness regarding gender based violence, domestic abuse and modern day slavery.
- UK Clubs highlighted 'Women's Safety issues at Night' through rallies, seminars and awareness programmes.
- Several UK clubs brought out booklets with information to help domestic abuse victims.
- Several UK clubs supported refugees and asylum seekers through gifts, social gatherings, training programmes.
- Many members attended Special Domestic Abuse Courts in Wales South Region.
- International Day of Peace was marked on 21st September 2024 by clubs throughout the Federation.



SI Poole, Purbeck and District created a booklet to help women fleeing domestic abuse.

Advocacy in UK and Ireland

Moraig Henderson

- Soroptimists in UK and Ireland undertook a wide range of impactful advocacy activities, lobbying MPs on critical issues related to women's health, calling for improved access to services and greater investment in gender-specific care.
- Clubs across all regions marked International Women's Day with vibrant celebrations that spotlighted women's achievements and reinforced SIGBI's commitment to gender equality.
- During the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, Soroptimists collaborated with partners to host educational events, vigils, and community outreach campaigns. Many clubs have held monthly "Orange Cafés"—safe, inclusive spaces aimed at raising public awareness about violence against women.

Through these initiatives, SIGBI continues to raise its profile and deepen its advocacy, embodying its mission to educate, empower, and enable women and girls everywhere. 1200 volunteer hours have been spent undertaking advocacy work.



SI Edinburgh's Orange the World campaign.

Our achievements towards the UN Sustainable Developments Goals (SDGs)

Planet and No Poverty

Debra Joseph

Climate change and climate disasters affect our health, our ability to grow food, and cause instability of housing, safety and employment. It is acknowledged that women and girls are more adversely affected in these situations. Members have undertaken 77 projects in this area, focusing on the impact on women and girls, their communities or within their own lives.

- The Big Plastic Count project was continued by many clubs in the UK to support the reduction of single-plastic use and encourage re-cycling.
- Planting of trees and shrubs and other related activities, to enhance air quality, reduce flooding, prevent excessive heat and provide shade, remove carbon from the atmosphere and promote well-being.
- Beach Clean-ups to prevent the harm caused to oceans, to wildlife, to coastal economies, and even to beach-goers.

With regards to Relief/Prevention of Poverty, 199 projects have been reported with members contributing 3658 volunteer hours. £45,786 has been raised, but also many packages containing foods, goods and materials have been also given to alleviate poverty across the Federation, via local Foodbanks, refuges and women's centres. This benefits children who are better able to learn and gain more from educational opportunities, as they are no longer hungry.

Quality Education

Shukla Chattopadhyay

152 projects were conducted across various regions in the Federation under SDG 4, focusing on quality education. Projects recorded 1840 volunteer hours, averaging about 21 volunteer hours per project.

- These initiatives targeted diverse groups such as women and girls, children, and community members including boys through projects like student sponsorship, skills training, competitions, and digital safety workshops.
- Notable efforts include the Sponsorship of a Cambodian Student, Sponsorship of four girl students in Kathmandu, Nepal, Sponsorship of Ugandan girl, Supporting Probational Children's Project in Colombo, Sri Lanka, Becoming Medicine Savvy, Public Speaking Competitions, and World Youth Skills Programme, all promoting sustained educational benefits.
- Many clubs generously donated story books for children as well as text books for professional courses.

Health

Eleanor Evans

Clubs around the world have continued to work on many projects to improve the health and wellbeing of women and girls.

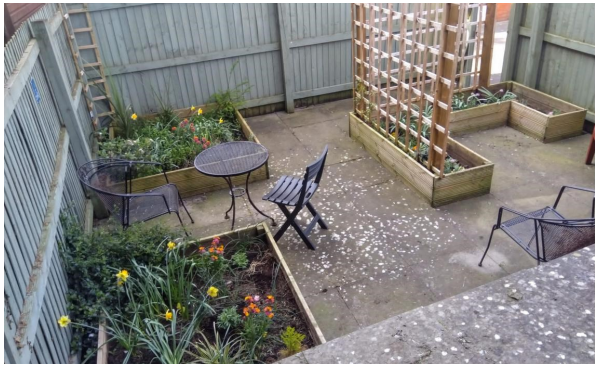
- Events giving access to dentists, urinary health checks and cervical cancer screening in India and to health checks in Jamaica
- Social events and befriending services to older people in the UK to prevent loneliness
- Raising awareness of health conditions as they impact women including osteoporosis, breast cancer, menstrual hygiene, autism and mental health
- Advocating for retaining ban on FGM in The Gambia, for anti-spiking legislation and improved access to dentistry in the UK
- Making of items for babies and post breast cancer surgery patients
- Fundraising for breast cancer, blood cancer, dementia, mental health and bereavement charities



SI Chaguanas created a book aimed at children on climate change and renewable energy.



SI Delhi provided sewing training for women to allow them to earn a living.



SI Bromsgrove and Redditch created a sensory garden at their local women's refuge.

Benevolent Fund - Charity No: 211840



The charity that recognizes that hardship can knock on any door, often when least expected. Working to assist current and recent past members In the UK and Ireland, who find themselves in financial difficulty.

The cost of living continues to be high, having a significant impact on members with fixed, limited incomes. Most recently, beneficiaries currently assisted by the fund have lost the winter fuel allowance, making the choice between eating and heating a difficult one. Trustees maintain contact with beneficiaries to ensure that evidence of additional hardship is recognized quickly.

The Fund is dependent on income from investment, members contributions via capitation; donations from clubs, regions; individuals, and legacies. We are immensely grateful to those who remember the Fund in their bequests. This year we have received one very generous legacy of £5,000. During this year we have paid grants to 10 members. At the AGM we diligently review all applications; recent and longer standing, to ensure that help is given where the need is greatest.

Trustees consistently work enhance the profile of the Benevolent Fund throughout the UK and Ireland. They endeavour to keep up to date with state benefits available and direct beneficiaries to appropriate departments.

Diamond Education Grant - Charity No: 1139668



The charity now has five trustees.

Income for the year 2024-25 was £30,942 , which included donations, levies and legacies of £26,742 and investment income of £4,200.

Expenditure for the year was £29,802, which included grants of £28,000, investment management charges and other costs of £1,472 , and Independent Examiner's fees of £330.

There were 28 grants awarded, from 348 applications received. The total amount allocated in grants was £28,000, and the average amount of each grant was £1,076.

One student told us "Thanks to this award, I have achieved a career goal that I have had for years. I am now a qualified Sport Massage Therapist and have started to build an independent business."

Emergency Relief Fund Charity No: 211231



The Emergency Relief Fund is used to help those people in immediate need of primary relief due to either natural or manmade disasters throughout the world. Previously this relief had concentrated on locations within the SIGBI Federation, however in 2024/25 the Trustees agreed that this should be extended to include relief wherever it was needed throughout the world. This statements was approved by the Charity Commission and is now incorporated within our documentation.

Individual members may recommend that funds are provided for certain situations. The Trustees then consider the recommendations and where applicable, the size of the grant. The operating protocol for the Fund details the approved charities to which funds will be forwarded; in exceptional circumstances, where there are no charities working in the affected area, funds may be channelled to a Soroptimist club.

Income 2024/25

- Levies £2,109
- Gift Aid £311
- Donations and legacies £27,726
- Investment income £4,028

Donations

- DEC Middle East Appeal - £2,000
- Trussell Trust - £1,000
- Care International Myanmar Earthquake Appeal - £2,000

Company Details

Soroptimist International Great Britain and Ireland (SIGBI) Limited
Company Number: 07058666

Headquarters

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About Us

Soroptimists educate, empower and enable women and girls to improve their lives.
Soroptimist International of Great Britain and Ireland (SIGBI) has nearly 5,000 Members in 250 Clubs operating across 19 countries in Asia, the Caribbean and Europe.
The word “Soroptimist” is a combination of the Latin words “soror” meaning Sister and “optima” meaning best - so we want the best for women.
Soroptimists implement projects across the world, advocate at local, national and international levels and enable women and girls to reach their full potential.

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.

Founded in 1921, Soroptimist International is a worldwide service organisation for women. We are committed to a world where women and girls together achieve their individual and collective potential, realise aspirations and have an equal voice in creating strong, peaceful communities worldwide.

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