



Annual Report: 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023

Soroptimist International Great Britain and Ireland (SIGBI) Ltd



STANDING UP for Women and Girls

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Front cover picture:



Foreword by Cathy Cottridge

Chairman of the Board 2022-2023

Soroptimist international Great Britain and Britain (SIGBI) Ltd is a volunteer women's organization focused on service in all its forms, which we call Programme Action. Our 252 Clubs, which are throughout the UK, Republic of Ireland, Malta, Asia, and the Caribbean, have 5,300 members who are all working to educate, empower and enable women and girls in order to advance their status, position, and role in society.

The Charity's purposes are the advancement of education; health and saving lives; good citizenship and community development; equality and diversity, the relief and/or prevention of poverty; the advancement of human rights throughout the world for the benefit of the public and in particular for women and girls.

SIGBI has enabled and encouraged the Clubs to use their programme work to progress the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with their particular focus on SDGs 1 and 2 - No Poverty and Zero Hunger; SDG 3 – Good Health and Wellbeing; SDG 4 – Education; SDG 5 – Gender Equality; SDG 6 – Clean Water and Sanitation and SDG 13 – Climate Change. To bring about the necessary change, it has required establishing strong Partnerships (SDG 17).

Over the last year, the war in Ukraine has shocked the western world, the impact of which has been felt globally, with the resultant refugee crisis, financial hardship, and increased violence against women.

The need for the contribution to society that Soroptimists deliver is as great as ever, and I would like to thank you all for your continuing commitment to improving your communities and standing up for women and girls.

My thanks for all the support from the entire programme team, the dedicated staff at head office and for our Board, who continue to work to ensure the future success of our Federation.

Our Key Achievements 2022-2023:

- Continued focus on the 4 goals of the 2021 – 2025 Strategic Plan - Ensuring SIGBI's work supports SIGBI Ltd's charitable purposes; Increase Membership and reduce the age profile; Increase its public profile; Ensure systems, governance, structures, and finances are fit for purpose.
- In January 2023, the launch of the Hub, a new operating system which will provide greater efficiency and improved communications.
- The chartering of two new clubs in India, SI Delhi and SI Leh and SIGBI's first online club, SI Libertas.
- The five Soroptimist Federations working closely together, including holding joint webinars on specific UN Days, to showcase members' projects.
- The completion of the three-year project to investigate proceedings at England's Specialist Domestic Violence Courts.

SIGBI Ltd Trustees 2022-2023

Cathy Cottridge, President (April 2022- March 2023)
Ruth Healey, President Elect (April 2022 – March 2023)

Reena Bhanatha, Finance Director (April 2022 – Nov 2022)
Ruth Healey, Finance Director (Dec 2022 – April 2023)

Sylvia Watson, Governance Director (April 2022 – Oct 2022)
Giselle Davies, Governance Director (Nov 2022 – April 2023)

Kay Richmond, Programme Director (April 2022 – Oct 2022)
Lindsay Green, Programme Director (Nov 2022 – April 2023)

Nisha Ghosh, PR & Marketing Director (April 2022 – Oct 2022)
Anne Rogers, PR & Marketing Director (Nov 2022 – April 2023)

Chevonne Agana, Membership Director (April 2022 – Oct 2022)
Dishi Attwood, Membership Director (Nov 2022 – April 2023)



Programme Action Overview 2022-2023

From February 2023 we saw the introduction of the Hub, and reporting has continued to increase as members became more aware of the power of its visual presentation and the ease of reporting on their activity - in the first month reporting was up by 28%. Current numbers are about the same as last year with 1690 reports showing for the same time scales. These break down as shown in figure 1.

It is interesting to see how the spread of the work equates across the 5 P's. People and Planet work being the most reported, as shown in figure 2.

Toilet Twinning

Many clubs in the UK have worked in partnership with Toilet Twinning, 1036 Toilets have been twinned in over 24 Countries. Some clubs having twinned 1 toilet at a time, whilst others have been more ambitious, in supplying blocks of toilets to schools. At least 14 clubs gained Twinned Town, Twinned District or Twinned City status in the process, thus raising the Soroptimist profile.

Working for women and Girls

Members reported that they had directly helped 367,57 women and girls across the federation. The staggering total of £549,343.59 was raised and contributed to our programme work, charitable giving and the gifting of student grants. Many clubs have started to give loans via Kiva and Lend with Care, helping women all over the world. It is heartening to see that these loans are usually fully paid back by the borrowers, ready to be reinvested to another recipient.

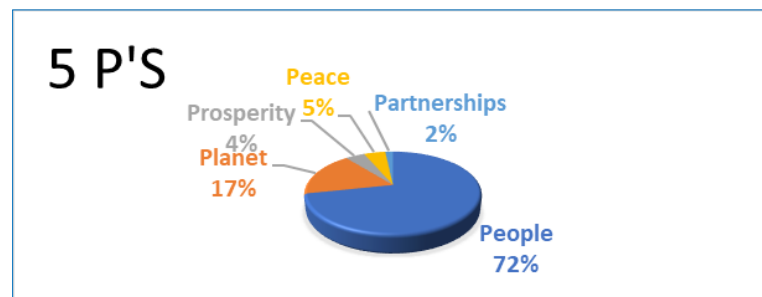
Where projects are working with communities and schools it is very difficult to quantify the actual numbers helped, so our overall totals are likely to be higher.

Tagline Change

We changed our tagline to “standing up for women and girls” which is a stronger message and is more “Action” oriented.

This shows in the Advocacy work we have done over the last year. This has taken the forms of petitions, letters and lobbying both in the UK and abroad. As an organisation we have co-signed letters re:- UK overseas aid cuts, to the home secretary on policing. At the UN we signed statements on Mothers and decent work, the UK women's alliance statement on the priority theme at the Commission on the status of women (CSW), and for the expulsion of Iran from CSW. In March 2023 five members went to New York for CSW in person, connecting with the delegation of Soroptimists from all five federations, uniting in the common theme of making the voices of women and girls heard, and many more members joined virtually.

The programme activities we have accomplished and continue to achieve is something every Soroptimist in the Federation can be proud of.



Our achievements towards the 5Ps

Partnerships and SDG 1: End Poverty

The purpose of partnerships is to enable effective cooperation between different entities including the government, private sectors, and civil societies, to achieve the implementation of the goals and sustainable development. In this regard, clubs across the federation have carried out meaningful partnership projects to achieve the missions of our organisation.

- To help communities that are continuing to suffer the setbacks of the Covid-19 pandemic and trying to cope with the cost-of-living crisis, primarily due to poverty, clubs have partnered with food banks, local restaurants, and retailers to provide nutritious, staple food supply to people suffering from food insecurity.
- To partner with local supermarkets to supply periods and sanitary products to young girls in schools, involved in sports and other activities, so that they do not miss out on these activities or do not suffer from the stigma of having periods due to lack of awareness. Education regarding menstrual health and hygiene have also been undertaken by clubs.
- To try to ensure healthy lives for persons from low income/poverty-stricken backgrounds by partnering with hospitals and nursing homes to provide health check-ups, including eye check-ups and women's health related check-ups.
- To provide disaster relief to victims of wars, natural disasters, and other forms of displacement, by ensuring food security, providing clothes, sanitary products and other items of necessity.



Peace and SDGs Gender Equality

In 2022-23, the mood was uplifting due to return of normalcy in our lives after the covid pandemic. However, the war and conflict in Ukraine continued to horrify the world with death and devastation leading to a heartrending refugee crisis.

- Members raised funds for Ukraine which were sent through SI clubs in Europe and other organisations engaged in relief work. Supplies sent included medical equipment, clothing, children's toys, food and sanitary items. There was also assistance from clubs for refugees who are starting a new life in UK in the form of clothing, toiletries, and starter kits.
- Awareness on the need to change this conflict laden world into peaceful, just, and inclusive communities was carried out by several clubs through peace marches, webinars, discussions, and programmes held on the International Day of Peace.
- 16 days of Activism in November/December 2022 was marked by clubs across the Federation to fight gender-based violence, domestic abuse and modern day slavery. The campaign included lighting up public buildings in orange, social media and posters, and workshops to educate girls/young women on the need to fight any kind of exploitation or abuse.
- Clubs assisted domestic abuse victims in refugees through need-based gifts and sponsoring activities to improve their quality of life.
- UKPAC conducted a project where club members attended Special Domestic Violence Courts to understand the process, make observations and give suggestions for improving the system.
- Several clubs took up petitions with local MPs and other authorities to advocate for a variety of humanitarian issues such as human rights, better lives for refugees, women's safety, sexual harassment, online abuse and other relevant causes.



Planet and SDG 2: Food Poverty

Climate change is the defining issue of our time & without drastic action today, the future is going to be devastating. Understanding the importance of this, clubs across SIGBI have been doing a lot of awareness projects on this subject.

- Beach litter picking, collecting blister packets for recycling, toilet twinning are still popular among the clubs in the UK.
- A lot of clubs have created awareness among their own members and family to switch over from using non bio degradable to eco-friendly bio degradable products.
- Many clubs across SIGBI and Soroptimist International continue to support the Mangrove tree planting in Calcutta.
- Soroptimists in all clubs are engaging in meaningful activities to alleviate plastic pollution.
- Our lives are fulfilling when we give and share. To support the cause of ending hunger & poverty, on October 16th, World food day, clubs took to fundraising, partnering with other Organisations. Food for homeless children & festive hampers were provided for families at Christmas and at Easter. Many Clubs in the UK support their local foodbanks.



Prosperity and SDG 4: Education

Prosperity aims to improve the quality of life for people, especially for women and girls across the Federation. Quality Education helps in improving the prosperity quotient of communities.

- SI South Kolkata took up Crab Cultivation to augment the livelihoods of marginalized coastal women. Mangrove Regeneration continued along the coastline bringing about prosperity for women and their families.
- Lobbying and generating local awareness of issues, participating in consultations, particularly when changes negatively impacting lives were being discussed by civic authorities, were initiated by SI Clubs.
- Providing support and empowerment to girls and women in various parts of Africa, including the provision of sanitary kits, dresses, jumpers, blankets, and washable sanitary wear. Schools supported by the Baraka charity in Zambia and the Kids Club Kampala charity in Uganda saw unhindered continuation of education.
- Upcycling and recycling plastic products into attractive jewellery by the Port of Spain Club in Trinidad and Tobago helped counter the devastating downward economic trends during the Covid Pandemic and create sustainable prosperity.
- Clubs across the Federation donated books and an even more precious resource, their time, to teach. Education is the single most impactful element towards creating prosperity.



People and SDG 4: Health

Clubs around the Federation have continued to work to improve the health and wellbeing of women and girls.

- Making items for premature babies, care homes, fistula clinics, dementia sufferers and those recovering from breast cancer.
- Organising events such as well-being conferences, first aid training and health camps.
- Volunteering within communities including talking newspapers, support for victims of burns, coffee and chat clubs for those who are lonely, and those struggling with mental health.
- Fundraising for a range of causes including those relating to cancer, mental health, hospices Alzheimer's, midwifery training and endometriosis.
- Advocacy on topics such as reform of the care sector, air quality, dementia research and worldwide access to vaccines.



Benevolent Fund - Charity No: 211840

Throughout the year end March 2023, the Benevolent Fund has continued to operate via the Trustees of each Region in the United Kingdom, to assist current and past members who find themselves in financial difficulty

Inevitably the after math of the Covid pandemic, coupled with the more recent cost of living increases - particularly food, fuel, and interest rate fluctuations, have impacted on those people with fixed, limited incomes. Trustees have been diligent in maintaining contact with beneficiaries and highlighting areas of concern.

The Benevolent Fund is dependant on income from investment, (which has been exceedingly low during the majority of the reported financial period), contributions from members via capitation, donations from clubs, Regions and individuals, and legacies. We are immensely grateful to those who remember the Fund in their bequests.

During the year the charity made grants totaling £50,417. Twenty one (21) present or past Soroptimists have been in receipt of assistance, being either quarterly support or one off payments.

Diamond Education Grant - Charity No: 1139668

Income for the year was £12,352 , which included donations, levies and legacies of £7,816 and investment income of £4,536.

Expenditure for the year was £44,974, which included grants of £43,475, investment management charges of £1,163, and Independent Examiner's fees of £300.

There were 43 grants awarded, from 217 applications received. Some of the original grants are not taken up, so we then offer those grants to applicants on the reserve list. The total amount allocated in grants was £43,475, and the average amount of each grant was £1,011.

One paramedic student told us “Thanks to the grant I didn’t have to take extra shifts at my part-time job to pay for my C1 licence, so could concentrate on my studies.”

Emergency Relief Fund Charity No: 211231

The Emergency Relief Fund is used to help those people in immediate need of primary relief due to disasters throughout the world. 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.

Donations made in 2022-2023 were £1,056.13 for Ukraine, £1,000.00 each to Trussell Trust Food Crisis and World Food Programme, £2,000.00 for Floods in Pakistan and £2,000.00 to the British Red Cross for their Turkey-Syria Earthquake Appeal.



Company Details

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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 6,000 Members in 260 Clubs operating across 18 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.

