

## PROGRAMME NEWS

*No. 7, May 2010*

### **Dear Soroptimists,**

Let us welcome you to another issue of the Programme News. Please share this as widely as possible!

### **Long Term Project (LTP)**

In April, all SI Unions and Single Clubs received the packet for voting for the Long Term Project topic. The SI Board asks each club to vote for their selection of the issue that the SI LTP should address. Please read the two background papers for the topics “Violence Against Women” and “Education and Leadership” on [www.soroptimisteurope.org](http://www.soroptimisteurope.org). All Unions and Single Clubs are required to send back the results to SI/E HQ [siehq@soroptimisteurope.org](mailto:siehq@soroptimisteurope.org) by **15 June 2010**.

### **6<sup>th</sup> Peace Marathon & RWANDA**

On 23<sup>rd</sup> May, we organize yet another Peace Marathon in Kigali, Rwanda. We would like to take this opportunity to shed some light on this fast growing country. Since the genocide in Rwanda in 1994, the political landscape of the country transformed drastically and women have found themselves increasingly in positions of power. Many of those who died were men and many women have found themselves caring for their families and for orphans alone.

In the last 16 years, Rwanda has made huge efforts in gender equality and women’s empowerment. Women have been influential in the peace building process. The new constitution calls for a minimum of 30% of all decision making bodies of the state to be comprised of women. In 1994, women held only 1 in 5 parliamentary seats. In the 2008 elections, women secured 56.25% of the seats in Parliament, making it the first Parliament in the world to have women in the majority.

There have been several important political accomplishments of women since the genocide. The national laws regarding rape and sexual violence were mild in Rwanda previous to the genocide. As many Rwandan women suffered from rape and sexual violence, many contracting AIDS or becoming pregnant, women’s groups advocated for a change to heavily criminalize acts of sexual violence as the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda did.

Additionally, there were numerous land disputes after 1994, as previously, women could not inherit land. Rwandan women lobbied so that women now can own and inherit land and so that children, both boys and girls, inherit equally.

Women have also taken leadership positions in the private sector. Women head approximately 42% of enterprises. The women of Rwanda have been able to gain independence through the recent laws allowing inheritance and ownership of land; many women are the sole owner of their businesses or have business partners who are not part of their families.

As Rwanda is making immense strides in improving gender parity, their successes can be measured by the Millennium Development Goals. Though Rwanda will most likely not reach all of the MDGs, they have made great steps in increasing education for both genders, increasing gender parity, combating the spread of HIV and malaria, reducing child mortality and improving maternal health. Four years away from the 20th anniversary of the genocide, the women of Rwanda prove to be an example of strength and leadership.

Women’s progress in politics and decision-making positions is key for a country’s development. In the world of politics female leaders are actively sought after as opposed to the business sector. It is our responsibility as a women’s international organization to empower women and promote female leadership in all sectors and at all levels.

### **Haiti - Arche noVa Project Update**

First of all, a big Thank You goes out to all Soroptimists around the globe for their donations for Haiti. The SI/E Board decided to collaborate with the organization arche noVa – Initiative for People in Need and fund the project “Drinking water supply and hygiene promotion in Petit-Goâve/Grand-Goâve and Carrefour, Haiti.” Arche noVa has been present in Haiti since shortly after the earthquake. While in the first weeks, arche noVa teams provided bathing spaces and latrines for a hospital in Léogane, they are currently providing portable water to Petit-Goâve, a small town located approximately 60 km west from Port-au-Prince and hard-hit by the earthquake. Arche noVa has formed a Hygiene Promotion Team to create awareness among the population about

sanitation. They also work very closely with the local community. In addition, they have received 30 SkyHydrants to install in the region. SkyHydrants are simple potable water filtration system intended for sustainable low cost purification. SkyHydrants are also very easy to maintain.

### “Many Species. One Planet. One Future.”



Every year since 1972, World Environment Day is celebrated on **June 5**. It is a day meant to remind all of us of our interconnectedness with our planet and to encourage environmentally friendly behaviors.

Scientists estimate that there are between 5 million to 100 million species on earth, but only about 2 million have been discovered so far. Currently, a total of 17,291 species are threatened with extinction, but there are many more that will disappear before they are even discovered. The rate of species extinction has increased to 1,000 times that of the natural rate and it is all due to human activities such as deforestation, the depletion of fish stocks, and emitting noxious gases into the atmosphere. This is threatening our planet's biodiversity, which threatens all of our livelihood. Life on our planet is interconnected and when biodiversity is threatened so is human health, food supplies and clean water and air. For these reasons, the United Nations declared 2010 as the International Year of Biodiversity and the theme of this year's World Environment Day is “Many Species. One Planet. One Future.”

This theme is to remind us of our dependence on one another for our collective future. The goal is to make World Environment Day the most successful to date and projects relating to the theme, from individuals or groups, are welcomed by UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme). To register your own projects for World Environment Day or to get ideas from other groups doing projects for June 5<sup>th</sup>, log onto the World Environment Day's website to view their interactive map at <http://www.unep.org/wed/2010/english/activitymap/>.

### European Meeting and Friendship Days 2010

The five clubs of Spain will be hosting the 8th European Meeting and Friendship Days in Mijas, Spain from the 15th to 17th of October 2010.

The conference opens with a welcome session on Friday evening, followed by a full day conference on Saturday with guest speakers and round-table discussions.

There is an optional excursion planned to Malaga on Sunday as well as optional excursions planned for Monday and Tuesday. For more information and registration, please visit the website: [www.si-es.org](http://www.si-es.org)

### Governors' Meeting 2010

At this year's Governors' Meeting in Ghent, all representatives are welcome to bring photos and posters displaying their Union / club's projects. The images and posters will be displayed throughout the meeting in order to share project ideas and successes amongst the participants.

Thank you for all your interesting project entries for the SI/E Best Practice Awards. It will truly be a difficult task to select this year's winners but the candidates are welcome to display their projects at the GM 2010. The winners will be announced during the Governors' Meeting.

If you have any questions, please email [suba@soroptimisteurope.org](mailto:suba@soroptimisteurope.org)

### Advocacy

The Programme Team has been hard at work in the Advocacy area of SI. We have submitted several exciting reports to the UN, including a submission to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights for a study on children and migration, where we highlight our work on trafficking in Moldova (Hope and Dreams for Everyone), and a submission to UNESCO on the Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, where we showcase our work in post-war Sierra Leone through Project Sierra. The team has also written new guidelines for Soroptimists to undertake their own advocacy in their own communities. All of this and more will be available on SI's website (<http://www.soroptimistinternational.org/>) in the coming weeks!

### Digital TIS

The new digital TIS – The International Soroptimist can be read on SI's website:

<http://www.soroptimistinternational.org/>

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Please send your comments directly to Suba Parthiban at [suba@soroptimisteurope.org](mailto:suba@soroptimisteurope.org)

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