



The Link

A global voice for women

I/2009-2010 N° 216



SI/E Board
Responsibilities in
the New Biennium

A Call for Candidates
Dr Suzanne Noël Fund and
the SI/E Scholarship Fund

Biennium Theme
Safe Water
for a Safe Life

Soroptimist International (SI) is a worldwide organisation for women in management and professions, working through service projects to build a better world for women and children. There are currently over 90,000 members in more than 3,000 clubs in 124 countries.

Soroptimist International of Europe (SIE) is one of four federations of Soroptimist International. It has some 35,000 members in over 1,200 clubs in 57 countries.

Soroptimists inspire action and create opportunities to transform the lives of women and girls through a global network of members and international partnerships. Please consult our website at www.soroptimisteurope.org for more information about the aims, activities and projects that characterise our organisation.

Note from the Editor

THE LINK SHOWS SIE AT ITS BEST!

As the article on raising public awareness about our organisation says (see page 10), many of us have had the experience that Soroptimist International is not very well known. If you want people to understand who we are and what we do, show them a copy of The Link. Your SI/E magazine is full of excellent examples of our outstanding work and projects. It is the perfect vehicle to convey what SI stands for and how we improve the lives of women and girls.

It was one year ago that the then SI/E President Mariet Verhoef-Cohen asked me to act as Interim Editor of The Link. Taking into account the suggestions of the Working Group, we came up with a new look for The Link. Over these 12 months, it has been our great pleasure to present your projects and activities to a wider Soroptimist audience. Your encouragement is highly appreciated.

SI/E President Eliane Lagasse has kindly appointed me Editor for her biennium, and I thank the Governors for their confirmation. The SI/E Board and I are grateful for your support because it is ultimately your contributions that make our organisation – and this magazine – so unique. To allow for

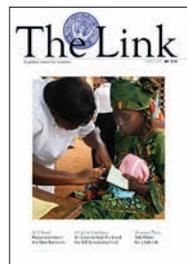
as many articles as possible and to make The Link attractive to readers, please keep your texts short and your photos of high quality. With your help, I am sure we can make your Federation magazine even better!

Christine Cromwell-Ahrens, Editor, The Link

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Cover page



Club Cotonou Doyen supports this maternity ward in the village of Ze, where the late Past SI President Lynn Dunning distributed mosquito nets as part of the 'Soroptimists Roll Back Malaria' campaign.



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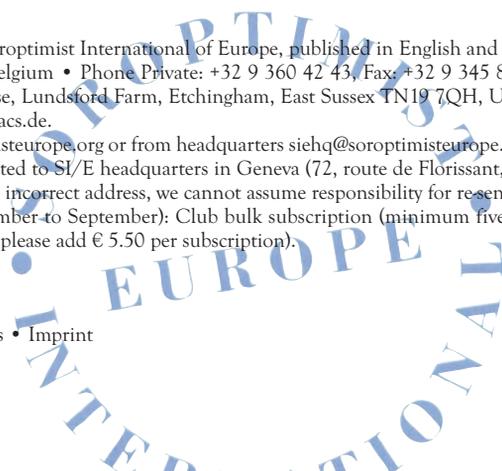


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Dear Soroptimists,

Since Soroptimist International was founded almost 100 years ago, its principles have remained service to the community, friendship and networking. These core values are also reflected in the vision and mission of SI: Soroptimists inspire action and create opportunities to transform the lives of women and girls through a global network of members and international partnerships. By becoming a member of SI, you subscribe to these values, and you accept the moral obligation to try to realise them. We strive to support and empower women and girls so that they can reach their full potential and live the life they choose, without any restrictions imposed by gender, law, culture or religion.

Women face challenges all over the world, not only in developing countries but also in so-called developed countries. The problems are different but nevertheless very real – including the 'glass ceiling', inequality of representation in our governments, gender differences in pay and trafficking.

Transforming lives by empowering women

Former UN General Secretary Kofi Annan once said, 'There is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women.' SI understands this; we want to empower women, not give them charity. Programme and projects benefiting women and girls are the core business of SI and unite all Clubs, Unions, Regions and Federations in our effort to build a better world. By implementing projects based on our 10 Programme Focus Objectives, we can further our mission and transform the lives of women and girls.

Equal rights, health, education and access to clean water and sanitation are intertwined basic needs. A woman who does not feel respected or recognised for her contribution to the community or family will not have the drive or means to fight for a better future. An uneducated woman is unable to stand up for her rights and change her situation. Being ill or caring for sick family also impacts the lives of women and girls. Education, health and gender equality may be interrelated, but what really ties them together is access to clean water and adequate sanitation.

Safe water is a prerequisite for life

This is why I have chosen safe water and proper sanitation for my biennium theme. With projects already exceeding a value of one million euros, we are making progress! But a lot more can be done. Working together, we can implement projects to access clean water, purify water, provide adequate sanitation



SI/E President Eliane Lagasse's biennium theme focuses on clean water and adequate sanitation for a better life.

with a gender-balanced approach, secure hygiene and health care, stop pollution and treat wastewater. It is also important to educate and raise awareness about water, the environment, sustainable agriculture and climate change as well as to initiate capacity-building programmes for women focusing on water and sanitation. These are just a few possibilities and all of them can be addressed as Awareness, Advocacy or Action projects and are related to our 10 Programme Focus Objectives.

There is no shortage of projects, but money can be a problem. That is why I promote the Project Exchange Pool (PEP) so that European clubs can support projects implemented and supervised elsewhere. The new Experience Exchange Pool (EEP) allows you to invest your time and experience in projects. We must use all resources at our disposal and that includes our 35,000 members and their many skills!

This issue of *The Link* contains many interesting articles about our projects and activities. We can be extremely proud of our organisation and our members. Women of all ages and backgrounds should realise that they have the potential to be each other's strongest allies and that they must learn to show their solidarity – beyond differences in nationality or culture. Indeed, Soroptimism is not only about project work; it is also about friendship and tolerance. Our diversity is our strength, so we should accept different opinions and be able to discuss them without conflicts.

I sincerely hope that, working together, we will make the two years of my mandate productive and positive for SI/E. Since I strongly believe in transparency and good communications, I would greatly appreciate your comments and suggestions. In closing, I wish you good health, personal happiness and much success for the New Year!

In friendship

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Eliane'. The signature is stylized and fluid, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Eliane Lagasse
SI/E President

RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE NEW BIENNIUM

2009-2011 is the first biennium with four Vice Presidents in the SI/E Board. While the tasks of the President, Treasurer, General Secretary, Committees and appointees are self evident, it is perhaps useful for members to know the new division of responsibilities among the remaining officers of the Board.

Immediate Past President Mariet Verhoef-Cohen will be responsible for the SI/E Action Fund. In collaboration with SI/E President Eliane Lagasse and SI/E President elect Kathy Kaaf, she will also coordinate and liaise with SI and SIA on issues pertinent to the Federation. In addition, Mariet will be the adviser on water projects and act as a liaison for preparations in connection with the 2011 SI Convention in Montreal, Canada.

Besides working with Mariet and Eliane on SI and SIA matters, President elect Kathy Kaaf will be responsible for the 2010 Peace Marathon in Rwanda, the SI/E Peace Prize and Project Sierra.

1st Vice President Ulla Madsen will coordinate the twinning of mature and young Unions. In addition, she is responsible for Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Iceland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Russia when it comes to collecting Union and Single Club reports in order to compile the annual coordinated report for the Governors' Meeting.

The Dr. Suzanne Noël Award is the responsibility of Vice President Rina Dupriet. She will oversee the countries France, Monaco, San Marino, Greece, Cyprus, Italy, Belgium, Switzerland,

Spain, Portugal and Luxembourg. In collaboration with Past SI/E President Monique Rivière, she will also be the Board contact for North Africa and Egypt. Here, too, the main concern is the information for the yearly coordinated report.

Vice President Bogusia Kalita is working on a new layout for this annual coordinated report. As with her colleagues, she also has specific country responsibilities, in her case for Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, Ukraine, Georgia and Moldavia.

Overseeing the development of the Mentoring Programme at a European level will be the task of Vice President Daniela Stern. The countries under her supervision are Germany, Austria, The Netherlands, Hungary, Slovenia, Israel, Slovakia, Lichtenstein, Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Czech Republic and Kosovo.

Many of you already know the administrator of the 'Sorooptimist go for Water' website, Ina Stoppelberg, and her excellent work in presenting SI/E's water projects. Assisting her in the new biennium is Gerda Rosiers, who is also the contact address for PEP and EEP.

To see the entire Board and the various appointees, please consult the SI/E website: www.sorooptimisteurope.org.





Immediate Past President
Mariet Verhoef-Cohen



1st Vice President
Ulla Madsen



Vice President
Daniela Stern



General Secretary
Marie-Claire Bloes



Treasurer
Evgenia Koleva



PEP and EEP Contact
Gerda Rosiers



Water Website Administrator
Ina Stoppelberg



President-elect
Kathy Kaaf



Vice President
Bogusia Kalita

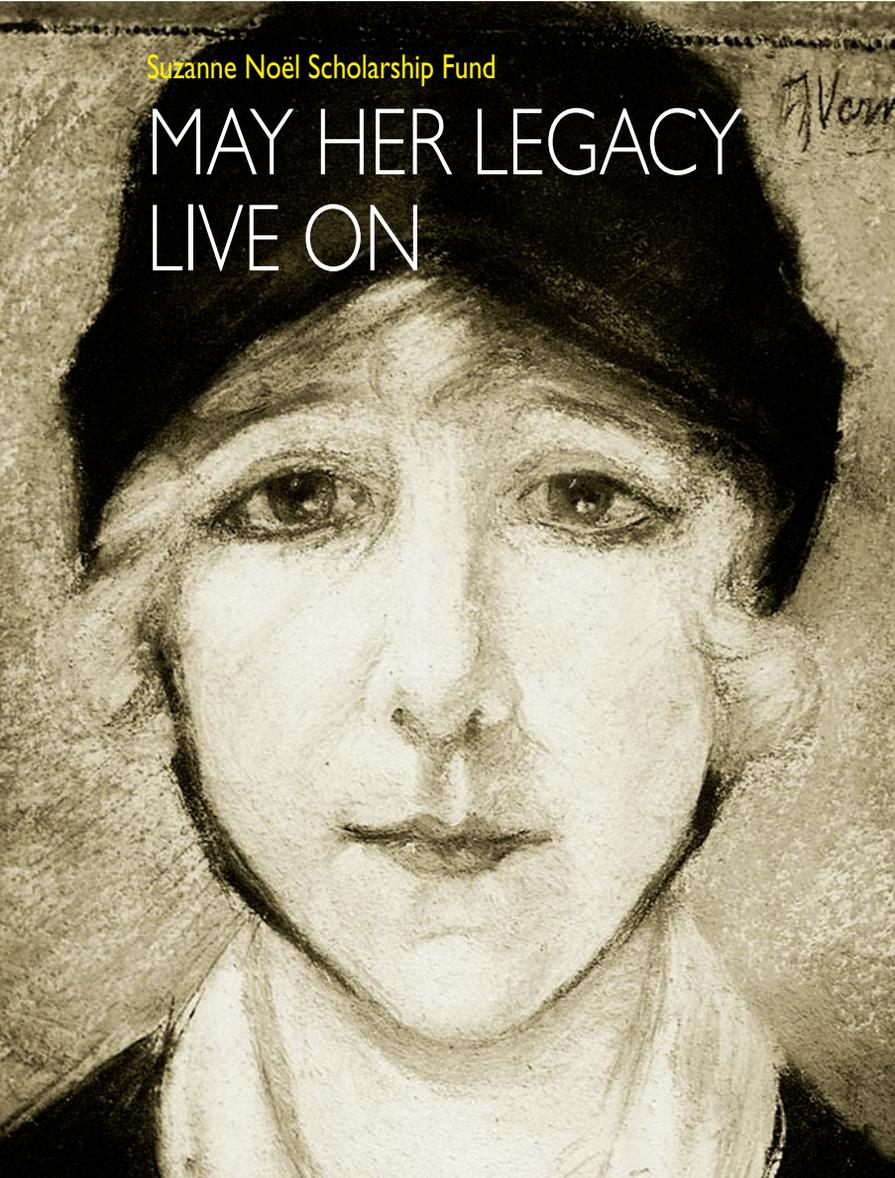


Vice President
Rina Dupriet

The legacy of Dr Suzanne Noël (1878-1954), the woman who was instrumental in securing the future of Soroptimist International in Europe, lives on in the Doctor Suzanne Noël European Fund, which was created in her memory in 1960. A call has gone out to submit candidates for the 2010 scholarship. The deadline is 31st March 2010. All Unions and Clubs may nominate qualified women.

Suzanne Noël Scholarship Fund

MAY HER LEGACY LIVE ON



Dr Noël was an eminent Soroptimist, who founded the first French club in Paris in 1924. With her help, many more clubs were chartered, ultimately resulting in the European Federation in 1930. She was also a specialist in plastic and reconstructive surgery. She gained national and international recognition during her career, and her techniques are still being taught to plastic and reconstructive surgery students today.

Financed by the European Federation (€ 0.15/member/year), the Suzanne Noël European Fund is used to grant scholarships to Soroptimists and/or non-Soroptimists under the age of 50 who already have a degree in medicine and wish to specialise, perfect their skills or carry out research in the field of plastic and reconstructive surgery. The French Union, its respective President and an administrator, appointed by the French Union and approved by the Governors' Meeting, manage the Fund. The current administrator of the Fund is Marie-Claire Pasteur, Club Grenoble. The Fund awards scholarships every two or four years, depending on the funds available. In October 2009 Unions and Singles were invited to submit candidates for the 2010 scholarships. Applications can be obtained from SI/E Headquarters.

Two scholarships were awarded in 2008. The recipients were Dr Nedra Gharbi, put forward by Club Tunis Fondateur, Tunisia, and Dr Nelly Assiobo, nominated by Club Lomé 1, Togo.

Dr Nedra Gharbi was awarded € 5,000. After her two-and-a-half-month training with Professor J.M. Servant at the Hôpital Saint Louis in Paris, Dr Gharbi reported on what she had learned in, among other areas, microsurgery, tissue strip transfer to cover tissue loss, partial and total nose and ear reconstruction and breast reconstruction using mammary prostheses. She attended the 53rd Congress of the French Society of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery in November 2009. On returning to Tunisia, she invited Professor Servant to explain his techniques to young plastic surgeons at the Faculty of Medicine of Tunis Hospital.

Dr Nelly Assiobo was awarded € 10,000. She earned a diploma in facial plastic surgery from Claude Bernard University in Lyon in 2009 and gained practical training at the Hôpital Edouard Herriot in Lyon and the Hôpital Saint Louis in Paris. Dr Assiobo was the highest-ranking student in her class and will soon finish her dissertation on 'Noma', an infection appearing in poor populations that leads to the rapid destruction of the face and often to the social exclusion of sufferers, who are mainly girls. She also participated in the Congress on surgery for the aforementioned disease.

Both women have expressed their gratitude in receiving these scholarships. Dr. Noël would be extremely proud that these women have been supported by a Fund bearing her name!

Marie-Claire Pasteur, Club Grenoble
Fund Administrator

The Governors' Meeting confirmed scholarships amounting to € 69,950 to twelve of the 26 applicants in Amsterdam this year. The following is a summary of the grantees.

The grantee from Belgium is a 34 years old Venezuelan with a training in Pharmaceutical Sciences. Unable to work in her profession in Belgium, she has started a degree programme in Public Health at the University of Liège. The grant will support her during the last period of her studies.

- A 40-year-old Bulgarian will receive a grant to cover her expenses during her research on the Fetal Alcoholic Syndrome (FAS) at the University of Thessaloniki.

- The 42-year-old Romany in Finland is earning a degree in Social Sciences at the University of Kuopio, which will enable her to qualify as a teacher and train other teachers to work with Romany children.

- To improve her professional position, the 42-year-old Greek grantee is pursuing her postgraduate studies in Political Theory and Philosophy at the University of Thessaloniki. The grant will cover her housing and living expenses.

- The 24-year-old grantee from Iceland has a degree in Comparative Literature. She will

receive support to study film at Columbia University in New York, where only 6-8 percent of each year's applicants are accepted and women are a minority.

- To fully qualify as a lawyer, the 47-year-old Israeli grantee has to train one year at a lawyer's office, meaning she has to quit her present job. The grant will cover her living expenses and tuition fees.

- Besides working, the 30-year-old grantee from Kenya is pursuing a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration at the Kenya Methodist University of Nairobi to achieve better qualifications. The grant will cover her tuition fees and administrative costs.

- The grantee from Portugal is 30 years old and works as a Marketing Assistant. With the postgraduate programme in Marketing Research & Customer Relationship Management (CRM) at the University of Lisbon, she can improve her qualifications, as CRM is a key innovative technology of increasing importance in the field of marketing management. The grant will cover most of her expenses.

- Although she has to care for her two younger sisters and a brother, the 26-year-old grantee from Rwanda wants to finish her studies in Agronomy and Rural Development at the Institute of Agriculture and Breeding of Busogo. The grant will cover all her costs.

- The 51-year-old grantee from Sweden worked in Africa as a trainer of trainers in co-operative projects and saw the sociolinguistic challenges of sub-Saharan countries. The grant will help cover expenses while she completes a PhD programme on official and non-official language management in Rwanda and Uganda at the University of Göteborg.

- The 20-year-old grantee from Moldova will study economics at the University of Moldova. The grant will cover tuition fees and her living expenses.

- The 21-year-old grantee from Burkina Faso has enrolled at the School of Management and Finance in Paris to study accounting, a field in which women are in the minority. The grant will cover the tuition fee of her final year.

SI/E SCHOLARSHIPS

GRANTEES FOR 2009-2010

SI/E SCHOLARSHIP FUND Established in 1968, the SI/E Scholarship Fund awards scholarships/grants to women in a profession or business who want to undertake further training or achieve a career change. Women who have started a professional and/or vocational training may be awarded as well when they are living in a developing country that has an existing SI/E Club. The candidates may be Soroptimists or non-Soroptimists. Preference will be given to professions and vocations in non-traditional fields for women and to candidates attending the last year of their studies or training courses. Each year the SI/E Scholarship Fund has some € 70,000 available for scholarship and/or grants. The maximum for each scholarship/grant is € 10,000.

A Union may nominate two candidates and a Single Club one candidate. Unions can only promote candidates recommended by their Clubs. The Club that supported a candidate is responsible for the application as well as the follow-up of the grantee's progress during the scholarship period and the grantee's final report back to SI/E. To monitor the impact of the scholarships/grants on their professional/vocational advancement, the grantees should be followed for some years after finishing their studies/trainings. Unions or Single Club may set up a Scholarship Committee or Officer with responsibility for selecting suitable candidates. It is important to promote better awareness of the SI/E scholarship/grant. After all, the SI/E Scholarship Fund is a tool to increase the number of potential members and to achieve our goals!

SEND IN APPLICATIONS **NOW!**



NEWS FROM THE SI FRONT

SI President Hanne Jensbo reports

My first months as SI President have been exciting, and it has been a great pleasure to meet so many of my fellow Soroptimists. In terms of SI work, our challenge at the moment is to implement the measures adopted in the Strategic Plan, and we are gradually making progress. We have hired a new Financial Director for SI Headquarters in Cambridge and are currently interviewing highly qualified candidates for the position of Programme Director. I am convinced that the changes at HQ will benefit our work. The new SI website will be up and running at the beginning of 2010. The details of the new corporate identity, encompassing both printed media and logo, will follow later.

The International Soroptimist (TIS) you receive in December 2009 will be the last printed version. SI is developing an electronic version of TIS, which is to be launched in March/April 2010. Sheila Manchester, SIGBI, will act as editor and publisher. An Editorial Committee is being set up to develop the guidelines, structure and timeline for production of this new SI medium. The Committee consists of SI



President Hanne Jensbo, International Programme Director Dawn Marie Lemonds, SI Executive Director Rosie Couatts and a representative from each Federation. Christine Cromwell-Ahrens has been selected to represent SI/E on this committee.

The discussions concerning a long-term project for SI continue. We hope to present some proposals to members in the late spring of 2010.

SI has entered into a formal partnership with the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS), which shares many of the same goals and values as SI. Many of you Soroptimists are familiar with the work of this movement, and I personally am very pleased about our new partnership. We intend to support each other and coordinate some of our activities, e.g. at UN level. More information about this partnership will be announced on the SI website.

Thank you for your contributions to the December 10th Appeal, 'Hopes and Dreams for Everyone'. Your donations will help young girls in Moldova. A study tour to the boarding schools we are supporting is planned for 17th-22nd March 2010. For more information, see www.soroptimistinternational.org.

Hanne Jensbo, SI President

Project Sierra 2007-2011

A FAMILY AND A FUTURE

Lynn Dunning, who served as SI President from 2005 to 2007, died in hospital on 22nd September 2009. Despite suffering from cancer for the past 10 years, she continued to work with untiring vigour and commitment both as a Soroptimist and in her professional life as Head Teacher of Darwen Vale High School in Lancashire.

Lynn joined SI Ramsbottom in South Lancashire in 1983. She served as Club President twice. It was whilst serving on the club Programme Action Committee (PAC) that her passion for programme developed. This great interest in programme led to a post as committee chair at regional level and later represented her area on the National Programme Committee.

Lynn next became Regional President and she also represented the region on the SIGBI Executive



AN EXCEPTIONAL SOROPTIMIST

A Tribute to Lynn Dunning

Council. Over the years, she served on several committees and chaired the Constitution Committee. Before she was elected SIGBI Federation President 2002-2003, Lynn worked as Programme Co-ordinator for Human Rights and the Status of Women.

As International President, Lynn sought to modernise our organisation. She initiated the Strategic Planning Group and served as its Chair. At the close of her presidency, the Board adopted SI's first Strategic Plan, which was largely realised thanks to her conviction and perseverance.

In her letter of condolence to Lynn's husband Brian, SI/E President Eliane assured him that Lynn's many contributions to SI would not be forgotten. 'With her enormous commitment to our cause, Lynn was highly respected by all Soroptimists,' wrote Eliane. 'We will miss her dearly.'

Our Quadrennial Project Sierra to support women and children living in extreme poverty in the Western African country of Sierra Leone was launched at the Convention in July 2007. With our partner Hope and Homes for Children, the aim is to collect two million US\$ (€ 1.34 million) for this project in one of the world's poorest countries. So far, € 487,000 have been donated worldwide, of which just € 23,000 were collected from SI/E.



The following details illustrate the success of the project so far: 129 young mothers are now able to care and provide for their babies independently, after having completed their education or vocational training. Some 200 families have been helped to move from a situation of extreme poverty to one of stability. All their children have returned to school and are making good progress.

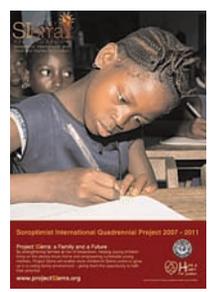
A further 75 families have gained long-term financial independence and are successfully exiting the project. 48 children who were living on the streets of Freetown have now been reconciled with their families. They are all back in education or have completed vocational training and apprenticeships.

To meet our goal more Unions and/or Clubs will have to get involved. If you have not already appointed a Project Sierra Ambassador, please do so now. I urgently encourage all Soroptimists in Europe to help SI make a difference in Sierra Leone.

For more information, please go to www.projectsierra.org, where you will also find a new film and a downloadable leaflet. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at lisbeth.hass@privat.dk.

Lisbeth Hass
SI/E Project Sierra Liaison

SI/E Project Sierra Liaison Lisbeth Hass initiated a gift letter campaign for Project Sierra, which raises money for direct support in Sierra Leone.



Project Sierra has already been able to help some 200 families from extreme poverty to stability.

COUNTDOWN TO COPENHAGEN

Heads of state and ministers of environment, energy, transport and commerce as well as other representatives from 192 nations will gather at the UN High Level Conference on Climate Change in Copenhagen from 7th to 18th December 2009. The Danish Union has been preparing for this important meeting.

The goal of this 15th Conference of Parties (COP-15) is to reach a long-term agreement on the reduction of carbon emissions by nation states, which will replace the Kyoto Protocol when it expires in 2012. The process is coordinated through the UN's Framework Convention on Climate Change (www.unfccc.int).

The COP-15 is also open to NGO delegations and, of course, SI will be there. Early this year the Danish Union encouraged its Danish clubs to make 2009 a year for involvement in climate change activities. To assist clubs and help prepare for a SI exhibition stand at the NGO Forum at the COP-15, a temporary climate change committee was set up by the Danish Union in March. The members are Evabeth Moenster, Danish Union Coordinator for Environment, Birgit Moll Aarsnes, Contact person for Union Coordinators Karen Lundbo, Aarhus club, and Else Larsen, Vejle club. Since then a total of 145 club level Environment coordinators and other members, representing nearly all 70 clubs in Denmark, have participated in orientation workshops. These workshops have generated a lot of practical suggestions for club-level projects focusing on use of alternative energy sources, environment protection, lifestyle changes at homes/workplaces, sustainable food production/consumption, waste management, communication and transport.

Many clubs have presented project proposals for funding by the Peoples Climate Action (PCA), an umbrella organization for 40 Danish NGOs preparing climate campaigns before and during the COP-15 (www.peoplesclimateaction.dk/uk). PCA



As part of the Danish Union project Women and Climate Change, Club Horsens arranged an event in the town square, which was opened by Danish Minister for the Environment Troels Lund Poulsen.

has since granted the Danish Union the equivalent of nearly €17,000 for its Women and Climate Change projects. By December this year the Danish Union will have:

- a pool of 800 SI climate change ambassadors;
- reached 10,000 citizens, particularly women and youth, who, through questionnaires, will consider lifestyle/behavioural changes on reduction of carbon emissions
- reached an additional 50,000 people, who, through visits to SI organised climate cafés and exhibitions, will gain information about the effects of climate change globally and locally.

All income generated from the climate cafés and from the sale of energy saving- and recycled products will benefit other SI projects such as Go for Water in Sierra Leone, school lunches in South Africa and Tanzania and a low energy light project in Kenya.

The climate change committee will report on the results of the Conference in the next issue of The Link.

Birgit Moll Aarsnes,
Contact person for Coordinators of the Danish Union

Three members of Club Horsens advertised the Climate Day in town.



Picture this: You're watching the evening news and your favourite anchorwoman wears a SI-pin, reporting on an award-winning best-practice project. Paparazzi shoot photos of political activist and celebrity Nicole Kidman sporting T-shirts displaying a big SI logo, the new 'it-thing' to have. Or honorary Oxfam president Mary Robinson, wearing a SI scarf, mentions the 'Soroptimists go for Water' campaign at the Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen. SI Presidents and representatives are asked to join discussion forums. They are invited to talk shows informing about a successful international women's network, magazines portray the 'Mentees of the Year' and celebrity spokespersons promote projects and help solicit donations. How would you feel? Extremely proud and 'soroptimistic', we guess.

Now back to reality

Although we have close to 90,000 members in 125 countries, more often than not the standard reply to introducing yourself as a Soroptimist is 'you are a Soro... what?'. And although the clubs and individual members are for the most part well known in their communities, the organisation behind it is not – as opposed to other service clubs.

How come?

Initially SI was considered to be an exclusive organisation of privileged women who had the time and (in many cases their husbands') money to do good deeds and help other women and young girls to develop. New members were mainly solicited in the known circles, so public relations activities were not necessarily relevant. With the rapidly increasing international media presence, however, and especially with the introduction of worldwide web, this stance must change.

Recipes vs. Investments

Only recently, supported by a strong women's rights movement, an increasing number of professional women have begun to establish their own networks –

albeit still not matching the ones of the 'old boys'. In addition, the broad public and the media still consider women's organisations as coffee circles, at which gossip and recipes are exchanged whereas in men's clubs business deals are negotiated, investments and world politics discussed.

Facts in times of change

Let's face it: We are losing members worldwide. The clubs are getting 'older' the average age of many is around 65. There is so much knowledge and experience to tap into – not to forget the worldwide projects and initiatives to be thankful for.

On the other hand, times have changed. Working women are an established part of society. However, one challenge hasn't changed: the dilemma of having to juggle a demanding job with household and family. And the stress only increases in an economic crisis like the one we face today.

Benefit from Experience

Many are looking now for a professional network of women where they can share and exchange experiences, get advice, find support, and yes, have fun, too. We need to attract these young professional women! So, how do we go about it? Building and retaining membership are top priorities on the agenda of SI/E President Eliane Lagasse. But we can't do the job without you. Your ideas, activities and, yes, persistence are needed to reach our goal: Oh, you are a Soroptimist, how wonderful, can I join, too??

Raising public awareness of SI

FRESH
THINKING,
FRESH
IDEAS

DR HAMLIN HONOURED

Right Livelihood Award

Australian Dr Catherine Hamlin, the now 85-year-old founder of the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital, has been named co-winner of the 2009 Right Livelihood Award, also known as the Alternative Nobel Prize, for her enormous efforts in helping women suffering from obstetric fistula in Ethiopia. Obstetric fistula occurs during childbirth and affects one out of every 12 women in Africa. It can lead to bladder, vaginal and rectal injuries that often stigmatises its victims.



Past SI President Margaret Lobo (right) visited Dr Catherine Hamlin at the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital in May 2009 to unveil a plaque acknowledging Soroptimist funding of the Juniper Café.

Since its inception in 1974, the Hospital has treated over 25,000 women, the majority of whom have been cured and have returned to their villages to live normal lives. For her President's Appeal, Past SI President Margaret Lobo asked Soroptimists to support her Desta Mender Project in Addis Ababa, a special village where women who could not be completely cured from this disease are given medical care.

SI/E congratulates Dr Hamlin on this well-deserved award!

SEEING THE FRUITS OF OUR EFFORTS

Projects in Mali For this issue SI/E Project Manager Africa Roswitha Ott has written an informative report about her trip to Mali, a country full of hospitality and friendliness. For the first time she travelled with six members of her own Club Bad Ragaz to show them the results of their contributions during her nine years as 'Mama Africa'. Many of these projects are excellent examples of the new biennium theme 'Safe Water = Safe Life', and some still require support.



'Mama Africa' Roswitha Ott cuts the ribbon to inaugurate the new well in Soukoulabougou.



Girls begin their apprenticeship as tailors.



A Swiss couple who lost their parents last year helped finance the wonderful well in Soukoulabougou.

Difémou

As always in Mali, the first trip was devoted to the long-term project Difémou. The children welcomed us with enthusiasm and showed us the school and the new toilets. The very old building was repaired as best as possible two years ago, but it is obvious that Difémou now needs a new schoolhouse. Today, 300 children are schooled in three rooms in two groups mornings and afternoons.

School of the nuns of Marie Immaculée

Since 2005 many Swiss Soroptimists have supported the 22 girls at the Centre of Marie Immaculée who have learnt to read and write. After three years of basic instruction, they have started an apprenticeship as tailors. Two of them have finished already and received diplomas. The next step is to open a studio where the girls can work as tailors and earn a living. € 3,500 are required to fund this project.

Wells in Sanankorobougou

The population of Sanankorobougou welcomes us with music and dance. This village now has two new wells financed by Club Bad Ragaz and my former students. The wells are furnished with India pumps, are 23 metres deep and work well.

Inauguration of the well of Soukoulabougou

The reception at Soukoulabougou with local authorities, the whole population and Mali TV was overwhelming. The new well in Soroptimist colours is 23 meters deep, well protected and with two areas for the animals. A couple in my area financed it in honour of their deceased parents. As this was known, the opening was very solemn. Two similar projects in Kouloulabougou and in Mountougoulabougou are now planned. Many thanks to the Club Bamako Espoir and Aminata Traore for the development work over the past two years.

Welcome from the women of Bla

After the devastating floods in 2008, Club Liestal has helped in Bla with new donkeys, carts and tools by selling tulips from Amsterdam. The four wells in the vegetable garden and the fences were rebuilt by Club Kalmar in Sweden.

Village of Tallo

Many Clubs have worked on the development of Tallo under the guidance of Coumba Dembele Traore, who has dedicated her life to support her hometown.

Tallo now has primary and secondary schools, a medical centre, vegetable gardens with two wells, a grain silo and a football team.

Tombouctou

Club Alliance of Tombouctou was chartered in 2006. In the past three years the Club has worked successfully to develop the town and the area. Founding President Aissa Baba Kalil Touré has been an important motor for the various projects, including a mill for Tombouctou, schooling for 27 girls, building a well in the nomad camp of Koriomé, a scholarship for a medical doctor, medical equipment for the hospital, operation of ten women suffering from ostetric fistula, distribution of mattresses, mosquito nets, etc. Of course all this was only possible with the help of SI/E and European Clubs.

Toilets for Koriomé and water for Toya

The women of Koriomé showed us their new well financed by the SI/E Action Fund. With clean water cases of cholera and many other diseases have decreased. However, toilets are urgently needed. Many use the Niger as a toilet, while further downstream people drink the same water. A new toilet project requiring € 10,000 is now in the PEP.

Since Toya is too far away and dangerous for a visit, Mayor Jehia Konta met us at Tombouctou to propose a water project for 16,000 people in the area. My own Club Bad Ragaz has decided to finance this project with € 10'000. Club Alliance of Tombouctou is responsible for the realisation.



The new well in Koriomé near Tombouctou was built with the support of SI/E.

Shortly before taking office as SI/E President, Eliane Lagasse travelled to Cotonou in September in order to charter the fifth club in Benin, Club Cotonou Sika-Or. During her four-day stay Eliane also had the opportunity to visit the various projects being realised by the now five Soroptimist clubs in Benin: Cotonou Doyen, Cotonou Amazone, Cotonou Gazelle, Parakou Grande Royale and the newly founded Cotonou Sika-Or. Many of these projects are exemplary of her biennium theme 'Safe Water for a Safe Life'. Béatrice Aguessy, who founded the first Soroptimist Club in Benin, accompanied the now SI/E President to the village of 'Adounko', not far from Cotonou, where Club Cotonou Doyen, whose President

Koubourath Osseni is the god-mother of Club Cotonou Sika-Or. She is starting a PEP project to set up a drinking water and sanitation network. Eliane then visited the site where Club Cotonou Doyen is setting up a library in the Tokplégbé district of Cotonou and also saw the mini-watertower and wells being built by Club Cotonou Amazone at the Cité Tranquille public primary school in Abomey-Calav.

Eliane and the other visitors were particularly interested in the ongoing PEP project in Dangbo, in which Club Cotonou Gazelle is helping to construct three large wells for drinking water. The water will not only be available for local consumption, but also for revenue-generating activities.

A paediatrician by profession, SI/E President Eliane was deeply impressed by the success of the long-standing joint-club project 'Soroptimists Roll Back Malaria', set up in the village of Ze, where young mothers are able to have their children vaccinated. Club Cotonou Sika-Or

has helped to restore the open-air canteen at the Ecole Urbaine Centre in Cotonou and donated supplies and equipment to the Care Centre for the Elderly of Tokan at Abomey-Calavi.

Everyone agreed that Benin is making enormous strides in efforts to secure clean drinking water – thanks to the untiring efforts of the country's Soroptimists and their sisters in Europe.

SEEING FIRSTHAND THE SUCCESS OF PEP

Projects in Benin



SI/E President Eliane and Club President Koubourath lay the foundation stone for a library.



Soroptimists appraise their new well, which provides clean water to some 200 families in Sierra Leone.

A collaboration of Friendship Links

CLEAN WATER FOR SIERRA LEONE

I lost my husband in December last year. Either I could have let myself collapse and drown in my sorrow, feeling pity for myself, or I could force myself to think of others who might need help and find a way to engage myself in 'hard work'. So, I thought - what about a Soroptimist project? To me the big SI projects were a bit removed and based on cooperation with other big international organisations. What about a project from Soroptimists to Soroptimists? What about a Friendship Link project?

Like many clubs, my own Club Costa del Sol, Spain corresponded with our Friendship Links in Denmark, Sierra Leone and England. So, I contacted them about creating a new project. Through our own friendship, we would have a more personal relationship with the project. I suggested raising funds for a water well in Sierra Leone – with Soroptimists in Sierra Leone taking charge of the project locally!

Together with Bente Lerche, our Friendship Link officer, I presented the idea to my club. They loved it, and so did our Friendship Links. Karin Koie from Copenhagen North galvanised other Danish clubs, and we have become 20 clubs working together. We hoped to sponsor the digging of one well; in fact, we now have funds for three. AND, more clubs are still joining us. The first well in Kissy Mes Mes is almost completed. It will supply some 200 families with clean drinking water. Up till now, their only water came from a polluted river. The new well provides clean water, and more wells are to follow. For more information, see www.si-es.org. In my heart is joy. Life goes on...

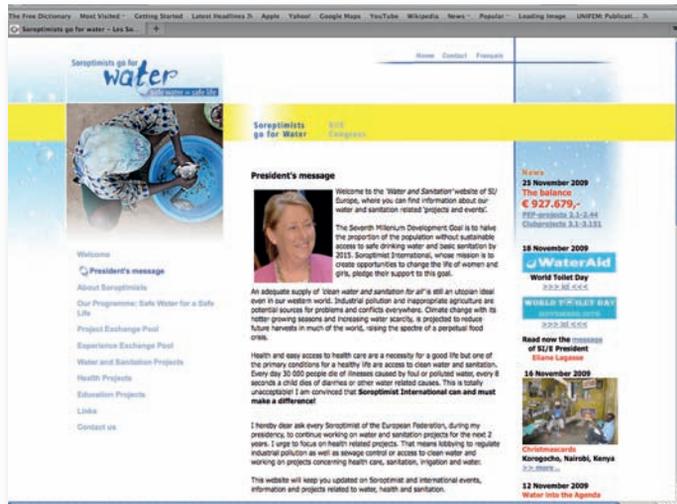
Jytte Dam,
Club Costa del Sol

Revamped SI/E Water Website

PROJECTS TOP ONE MILLION MARK!

With the successful Congress behind us and with the transition to the biennium 2009-2011, the SI/E water website 'Soroptimists go for Water' is being revamped to focus on the new theme 'Safe Water = Safe Life'.

In her introductory letter, SI/E President Eliane Lagasse has explained why our continued support for water projects is so important. The SI/E water website – www.soroptimistsgoforwater.nl – will keep you informed about water/sanitation projects realised by the Clubs and Unions of our Federation, international or local events connected with water or sanitation and any initiatives that promote the SI/E theme. The original webmaster, Ina Stoppelberg, has kindly agreed to continue with this enormous task, in collaboration with Gerda Rosiers.



Make use of the PEP and EEP

Two extremely important features of the website are the PEP, the Project Exchange Pool and the EEP, the Experience Exchange Pool. PEP is a project database where clubs can present projects or ask for assistance with a project, so that other Soroptimist clubs can join up and cooperate. For example, a club in Eastern Europe or Africa, where a lot still needs to be done for women and children, can propose a project with budget specifications and post it on the PEP inviting other clubs to contribute. Through this exchange and networking, larger scale projects can be realised in the Federation. So far, 30 PEP projects have been completed, and 15 are ongoing and need financial support. In total, SI/E has now funded projects for over one million euros!

Although important, fundraising is not the only way to achieve goals and support projects. This is why President Eliane has introduced the Experience Exchange Pool or EEP, which encourages clubs and individual Soroptimists to share expertise and knowledge. Language courses, training workshops, medical help and technical advice are just a few examples of what we hope to offer through EEP.

Maximising our resources

Let's say a Club wants to support an orphanage for 40 girls, but the sanitation and toilet blocks are

insufficient, and a well has to be drilled to provide clean water. The Club would also like to educate the girls so that they can earn their own living. For this, the orphanage needs textbooks, sewing machines, teachers, etc. Rather than trying to raise the necessary funds on its own, the Club can submit a request for assistance and funding through PEP. Using EEP, the Club can ask if somebody would be willing to teach the girls on a voluntary basis for a few weeks or show them how to sew. Many of our members want hands-on projects; the EEP gives them the opportunity to be part of a project and make a difference for women and children.

Clean water, adequate sanitation, health and education are basic requirements for a safe and normal life. 'Water, health and education are deeply interconnected, and you can't have one without the other,' says SI/E President Eliane. This principle is reflected in the PEP and EEP. All projects involving water and/or sanitation, whether educational or health-related, will be taken into consideration. So, please check the water website regularly and offer your expertise for the EEP. Details are on the website.

Solidarity between women

We encourage you to embrace our SI/E goal 'Safe Water for a Safe Life' and are certain that we will all benefit from our PEP and EEP! It is the best way to fulfil our Soroptimist mission and show true solidarity between women.



A EUROPEAN EFFORT TO ADVANCE WOMEN

Mentoring Programme

Unions interested in the Mentoring Programme of the German Union held a meeting during the SI/E Congress in Amsterdam to discuss and find out more about the planned extension to a European level. Up till now, the successful Programme in Germany has involved 62 young women, and a third of them have gone on to become Soroptimists. The objectives of the Programme are to support young women with leadership potential, prepare them for managerial positions, encourage them to combine occupational and family life, expand the network that exists between women and gain new and motivated members.

The first SI/E Unions to support the idea of a cooperative project for mentoring in Europe were Belgium, Denmark, Iceland, Luxembourg, Portugal and Sweden. Greece and Turkey have since

expressed an interest as well. A kick-off meeting took place on 4th October in Berlin. Its purpose was to clarify who would take part in the first round of a European mentoring programme and to decide how it would be structured.

The participants in this kick-off meeting were Gudrun Horst (Luxembourg), Ulrike Kylberg (Sweden), Helga Lukoschat and Manuela Möller from the European Academy for Women in Politics and Business (EAF), the partner organisation in this programme, and Ulrike Schnell, who initiated the Mentoring Programme in the German Union. Located in Berlin, the EAF is responsible for the conceptual preparation work and organisation of the programme. The meeting offered the opportunity to exchange experience and ideas that will be integrated into the European programme.

MEETING HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT

Visiting Benin

As a final touch to her September visit to Benin, the now SI/E President Eliane Lagasse had an audience with the President of the Republic, his Excellency Dr Thomas Boni Yayi, who was hugely impressed with what the Soroptimist clubs have achieved in his country. SI/E President Eliane used the occasion to explain Soroptimist International's goals. Dr Yayi, who takes a particular interest in the status and well being of women, was highly enthusiastic about our organisation and all that it is doing in Benin and throughout the world. The delegation accompanying SI/E



President Yayi greeted SI/E President Eliane and Kathleen De Batselier from Club Zuid Oost Vlaanderen.

President Eliane consisted of the President of the Cotonou Doyen Club and two members of the board, the past President of the Parakou Grande Royale Club and the First Vice-president of the Cotonou Gazelle Club.



Besides the one-on-one discussions with their mentors, the mentees in the German Programme met for seminars.

After a wonderful weekend in Berlin, everyone agreed that the European expansion would be extremely beneficial. After all, an expanded network of professional women would offer participating young women a wider cultural perspective. The Mentoring Programme itself is also perfectly in line with SI Programme Focus Objective 10: Assure women's advancement in management, politics and decision-making.

A detailed time frame was drawn up at the meeting in Berlin. The official announcement of this cooperative venture is expected in April 2010. Updates will be provided on the SI/E website. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Ulrike Schnell or SI/E VP Daniela Stern, who is responsible for this new Programme on the Board.

Ulrike Schnell,
Club Kassel-Kurhessen-Waldeck
Initiator of the Mentoring Programme



A UNIQUE RWANDAN EXPERIENCE!

A Call to the 6th Peace Marathon

There are many reasons to go to Rwanda for the Peace Marathon 2010 on 23rd May. For one thing, you will witness the enormous progress this beautiful country has made since the horrific genocide of 1994. Be inspired by the incredible enthusiasm of the youngsters participating in the Run for Fun event. They are the future of Africa!

Don't miss the opportunity to visit the San Marco Centre, a unique Soroptimist project which has created a huge multifunctional meeting hall and training facility in Kigali. You will be tempted to buy some of the fine handmade objects from

pupils of San Marco and other educational projects. The workshop in vegetable fibres for Young Designers from Europe and from Africa is also extremely fascinating. You can also learn about the traditional Rwandan techniques used to create lovely jewellery and see what they can build from materials like banana leaves and bark.

The marathon is the perfect occasion to meet our Rwandan Soroptimists and to visit their many education and water projects around the country. You will also enjoy the wonderful Rwandan food with the freshest vegetables and fruit you can imagine!

Several tours will be offered which you will find under www.kigalimarathon.com. For example, seeing the gorillas in their natural habitat is an unforgettable experience!



The Fun Run in connection with the Peace Marathon always attracts many children in Rwanda.

To further support the event even if you cannot personally go to Rwanda, why not contact the marathon organisations in your country and have them advertise the marathon on their website. Also, you can create a link to www.kigalimarathon.com on your own website. Another idea is to organise a Peace Marathon evening in your community showing photos and a video of previous marathons. Information can be provided about how to register and travel to Kigali. Or, why not sponsor runners from your country to participate in the full marathon or the half-marathon?

The Peace Marathon is a good PR tool for SI/E. Contact the media. Send press releases and reports before the run, and ask the media to publish articles about the results of the run. Of course, always emphasise that it is a Soroptimist event that benefits the people of Rwanda!

For more information contact: Gudrun Horst horstgu@lpt.lu, Bettina Scholl-Sabbatini betmar@tele2.lu or me at kathy.kaaf@arcor.de. Event details and costs are available at www.kigalimarathon.com.

Kathy Kaaf, SI/E President-elect



Katrien Wayenberg is a Friendship Grantee in Izmir

A TRULY AMAZING EXPERIENCE!

On the occasion of their 20th club anniversary last year, Club Karsiyaka in Izmir decided to offer a Grant of Friendship to two Soroptimists. I successfully applied, flew to Izmir at the beginning of November 2009 and was warmly welcomed by the current President of the Club, Ilgün Canbeyli. The programme the club had prepared was truly amazing. I shared home-cooked meals with several hosts and was offered private tours in museums, at historical sites and around town. The club's delegates invited me to join them on a three-day trip to SI Turkey's national conference in Eskisehir, and I also attended the monthly club meeting, which was followed by a special farewell dinner and traditional Turkish music. When I enthusiastically expressed my gratitude about the programme, which combined culture and history, tradition, excellent food and warm friendship, one of my new-found sisters spontaneously said, 'Well, all of this is Turkey, and we like to share it with you!' And sharing is what we did: stories, food, ideas and experiences, both professional and personal.

It is a privilege for Soroptimists to be able to establish such a profound relationship of trust and openness so quickly. This spontaneous affinity allowed a very personal exchange of thoughts on daily life in Turkey and Europe, the role of women in both societies, the challenges of being a businesswoman in a man's world, politics and SI projects. We danced, laughed, visited a hammam (Turkish bath) and sang together.

As a former mentee in Germany myself, I was pleased to have the opportunity to present the planned SI/E Mentoring Programme (see article on page 16) to Club Karsiyaka in Izmir and to the Turkish Union President herself, Emine Perviz Erdem. The Turkish Soroptimists were extremely interested in the structure and objectives of the programme. I was delighted to answer questions, and I hope to see many young Turkish women with a leadership potential participate in this career-building programme.

In closing, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the members of Club Karsiyaka for their warm hospitality and friendship. My visit has not only enriched me culturally, but also personally. I enjoyed a fantastic home stay, the mutual interest in business and personal experiences and an inspirational exchange of project ideas. Thank you so much for this true Gift of Friendship!

*Katrien Wayenberg, Club Hannover 2000
Goff Recipient, November 2009*



Above: Ilgün Canbeyli, President of Club Karsiyaka (seated left), welcomed Katrien Wayenberg (seated next to Ilgün) to the Club meeting. Below left: Katrien presents the SI pin to new Club member Çigdem Önsal, who happens to have been born in Germany, while Club President Ilgün looks on.

Former Union Presidents honoured

NATIONAL RECOGNITION FOR SERVICE

Rina Dupriet, Vice President of SI/E and Immediate Past President of the French Union, and Ulrike Schnell, Past President of the German Union (2001-2003), were honoured by their respective countries for extraordinary service this autumn.

In recognition of her enormous efforts for the community, Ulrike received the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany from Roland Koch, the State Premier of Hesse, on 2nd October 2009. Koch also specifically mentioned Ulrike's engagement for Soroptimist International in his laudatory speech. Among other things he mentioned her work in the fight against Female Genital Mutilation in Africa, in organising donations and relief supplies for the hospital run by Karla Schefter in Afghanistan and in initiating the German Union's highly successful Mentoring Programme. German Union President Sibylle Lindenberg, who also attended the award ceremony, said afterwards, 'We are extremely proud of Ulrike, and I congratulate her on behalf of all German Soroptimists.'

At a ceremony in Buc on 23rd November, Rina Dupriet was decorated with the insignia of Officer of the Legion of Honour in France. Rina, who is also Deputy Mayor of Buc, was recognised for her professional work as Head of Social Affairs in towns and counties for over 30 years and as an elected member of her local council for almost 20 years. She was also honoured for her 25-year commitment to professional and humanitarian organisations. In his speech, the Mayor praised the values which have guided her personal, professional, community and political life – especially the rigour, excellence and high standards which characterise the way in which she carries out her various duties. In her own words, Rina said she has always lived by the motto 'Helping to build a better world'.

'Both Ulrike and Rina are role models for all Soroptimists,' commented SI/E President Eliane Lagasse.



Top: German Union President Sibylle Lindenberg (right) congratulates Ulrike Schnell on the Order of Merit of the FRG.

Above: Rina Dupriet thanks the Mayor for his words of praise at the official awards ceremony.



Participants in the last Youth Croisière in Austria in 2006 enjoyed making new friends and seeing the sights.

Austrian Union

2010 INTERNATIONAL YOUTH CROISIÈRE

The Austrian Union is pleased to announce the 2010 International Youth Croisière from 3rd-17th July. This SI/E event gives 12 young people between the ages of 16 and 20 the opportunity to tour parts of Austria and enjoy true Soroptimist hospitality and friendship. Participants can be children, nieces and nephews or just friends of Soroptimists.

The hosting Clubs will cover accommodation, board, admission fees as well as travels between clubs. However, travel expenses to and from Austria (Vienna is the point of arrival/departure) will be at the expense of participants. They also will be responsible for any medical/dental expenses during the visit. Spoken English is required.

Applications should be in English and include the applicant's background and affiliation with Soroptimists, as well as occupation (if applicable), interests and favourite leisure activities. Please also mention reasons for wishing to visit Austria and whether the applicant has already received a friendship grant.

Apart from postal and emails addresses and the home telephone number, please also submit a recent photograph. Deadline for receipt of applications is 31st March 2010. Preference will be given to first-time applicants. For more information and/or applications, please contact Angelika Harsant, IGU Coordinator, Austrian Union, Schiedermayrweg 4, A-4020 Linz/Austria. Her email address is jaharsant@aon.at

'Cartable Soroptimist' project

THE FUTURE LIES IN EDUCATION

'Cartable Soroptimist' is an educational project for girls in Mali which started in October 2000. Its purpose is to enable girls in rural areas to continue school for at least three years (after six years of compulsory education). Subsequently, they may choose to attend high school or a professional school.

During schooling, the girls are looked after by Soroptimists who cooperate with national and regional authorities and the respective village elders. The girls are chosen according to their intellectual capacities. They are provided with teaching materials, clothing, educational assistance and medical

care at annual cost of € 220 per girl. The project does not only provide the girls with better education, thus offering better job opportunities, it also prevents rural exodus, early marriage and a high birth rate. So far more than 600 scholarships for some € 130,000 have been granted. Several former students are already at university or have a job.

It is the sincere intent of our African Soroptimist sisters to fight poverty through education. The project 'Cartable Soroptimist' ensures foreign aid without corruption, because the money from Europe goes directly to the girls. Club Lumière of Bamako initiated the project according to the SI/E slogan "With Youth into the 21st Century" and has overseen it from the onset. The Austrian Club Bregenz/Rheintal offered co-operation and financed it together with other Austrian and European clubs. In October 2009 25 German clubs joined this project.

Soroptimists who share the opinion that education is 'a key to progress' are invited to join this project. For further information, please contact in Mali: Adama Sidibè, Club Lumière, Bamako, e-mail adamadede@yahoo.fr; in Austria: Helga Haemmerle, Club Bregenz/Rheintal, e-mail: haemmerle.helga@aon.at; and in Germany: Winifred Hoerst, Club Weinheim/Bergstrasse, e-mail w.hoerst@t-online.de. They can also provide account details for donations.



Besides educational assistance and medical care, each child receives teaching materials and clothing for her year at school



Ayshwerya charmed the guests with her Indian dance of love.

Support for a project in southern India

SANITATION FOR FAMILY HEALTH

A touch of romantic exoticism reached the somber walls of Liestal's town hall on a moist Saturday this autumn. Club Liestal hosted a fundraising event on 24th October focusing on its project 'Toilets for the Lambani village' in India. Three presentations informed the audience about various issues related to water and SI/E. Dr Anne-Marie Schweingruber, a member of Club Bern-Arcadia who lives and works in southern India for four months every year and thus acts as a go-between for the Club project, reported on the status of the project: who is behind it, what are the next steps, how are donations being used, how is the project supported. Suba Parthiban, Programme Officer at SI/E headquarters in Geneva, then explained the tasks of SI/E, reported on 'Soroptimists go for water' and the specific cultural aspects to be considered in India. Suba has Sri Lankan roots. Subsequently, Hans Faust, a professional with WHO and UNICEF,

SI/E Programme Officer Suba Parthiban, who has Sri Lankan roots, explained the responsibilities of SI/E.



reported on his experience in various countries. Finally, Mayor Regula Gysin surprised the audience by announcing a two-year contribution from the city of Liestal to support this project! The lively discussions continued during a beautifully presented Euro-Asian aperitif. Three towers of toilet paper rolls, each tower representing a toilet, were sold in no time in support of the project.

Sanitary facilities and potable water, taken for granted by most of us, are unattainable luxuries for many. Some 2.6 billion people worldwide, one billion of whom are children, are without toilets and without access to clean drinking water. Every 20 seconds a child dies as a result. Since women and girls usually perform the time-consuming task of supplying water for the community, they often have no time for education and school. On the other hand, it has been shown that specifically women are able to break the vicious circle of poverty with a minimum of training and microcredits.



Club President Marianne Schweizer Strübin introduces guest speaker Dr Anne-Marie Schwein-gruber, who oversees the project in Lambani village on behalf of Club Liestal.

The worldwide SI network proved to be a stroke of luck with the project 'Toilets for the Lambani village: Sanitation for Family Health'. The Soroptimists of Club Bangalore have done an excellent job, which includes provisioning a large part of the basic supplies. In cooperation with Club Bangalore and local professionals, Anne-Marie was able to provide a toilet facility in line with the local culture and ideas of morality.

With their magnificent silk saris, the Indian and Sri Lankan guests at the event in Liestal contributed to the atmosphere. Some of them prepared delicious Asian appetizers and the young Ayshwerya charmed everyone with her Indian dance of love. Cheerful faces were a good indication that this was indeed a successful and informative event!

Marianne Schweizer Strübin
President, Club Liestal

A royal time for Belgian Soroptimists

AN AUDIENCE WITH PRINCESS MATHILDE

The Belgian Union recently felt highly honoured, when the Belgian Princess Mathilde invited a delegation to join her for lunch in October. Since most of us had never met the princess before, we did not know what to expect, although we had heard she is usually well informed and expertly



briefed by her staff. However, it did not take long for the 30 selected 'younger' Soroptimists to be charmed when our Union President Marie-Jeanne Devriendt escorted the Princess into the room under the fire of camera flashes! Clearly used to the spotlight, Princess Mathilde seemed very at ease and vivacious. During Marie Jeanne's words of welcome, she showed an excellent sense of humour, and it was obvious that she had done her homework on Soroptimism.

To meet as many Soroptimists as possible, the Princess switched tables during lunch. She had the starter at the table headed by Yseult Kaplan, Belgian Soroptimist representing SI at UNESCO. For the main course she joined SI/E President Eliane Lagasse, herself a Belgian Soroptimist, at her table. And finally, Marie-Jeanne's table entertained the Princess during desert. The Princess easily engaged in conversation with the nine young Soroptimists at each table. Her questions were very direct, and she showed a sincere interest in the projects we presented. We all had the feeling she really wanted to learn more about SI and even gave us tips and contacts to aid our progress. She also commented how impressed she was by our commitment.

Of course, we knew the Princess was going to be very elegant, but we were even more impressed by her professionalism and engagement! Several times she asked her secretary, herself a highly educated diplomat, to follow up on some of the points discussed. It was a truly unforgettable experience. We felt honoured, charmed and ultimately highly impressed by a very aware, professional and modern woman. Indeed, she would make a perfect Soroptimist !

Belgian Union President Marie-Jeanne Devriendt (centre) introduces SI/E President Eliane Lagasse to Princess Mathilde (left).

Carolien Demey,
Belgian Union Coordinator IGU

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The worldwide SI network proved to be a stroke of luck with the project 'Toilets for the Lambani village: Sanitation for Family Health'. The Soroptimists of Club Bangalore have done an excellent job, which includes provisioning a large part of the basic supplies. In cooperation with Club Bangalore and local professionals, Anne-Marie was able to provide a toilet facility in line with the local culture and ideas of morality.

With their magnificent silk saris, the Indian and Sri Lankan guests at the event in Liestal contributed to the atmosphere. Some of them prepared delicious Asian appetizers and the young Ayshwerya charmed everyone with her Indian dance of love. Cheerful faces were a good indication that this was indeed a successful and informative event!

Marianne Schweizer Strübin
President, Club Liestal

A royal time for Belgian Soroptimists

AN AUDIENCE WITH PRINCESS MATHILDE

The Belgian Union recently felt highly honoured, when the Belgian Princess Mathilde invited a delegation to join her for lunch in October. Since most of us had never met the princess before, we did not know what to expect, although we had heard she is usually well informed and expertly



briefed by her staff. However, it did not take long for the 30 selected 'younger' Soroptimists to be charmed when our Union President Marie-Jeanne Devriendt escorted the Princess into the room under the fire of camera flashes! Clearly used to the spotlight, Princess Mathilde seemed very at ease and vivacious. During Marie Jeanne's words of welcome, she showed an excellent sense of humour, and it was obvious that she had done her homework on Soroptimism.

To meet as many Soroptimists as possible, the Princess switched tables during lunch. She had the starter at the table headed by Yseult Kaplan, Belgian Soroptimist representing SI at UNESCO. For the main course she joined SI/E President Eliane Lagasse, herself a Belgian Soroptimist, at her table. And finally, Marie-Jeanne's table entertained the Princess during desert. The Princess easily engaged in conversation with the nine young Soroptimists at each table. Her questions were very direct, and she showed a sincere interest in the projects we presented. We all had the feeling she really wanted to learn more about SI and even gave us tips and contacts to aid our progress. She also commented how impressed she was by our commitment.

Of course, we knew the Princess was going to be very elegant, but we were even more impressed by her professionalism and engagement! Several times she asked her secretary, herself a highly educated diplomat, to follow up on some of the points discussed. It was a truly unforgettable experience. We felt honoured, charmed and ultimately highly impressed by a very aware, professional and modern woman. Indeed, she would make a perfect Soroptimist !

Belgian Union President Marie-Jeanne Devriendt (centre) introduces SI/E President Eliane Lagasse to Princess Mathilde (left).

Carolien Demey,
Belgian Union Coordinator IGU

A SHARED EUROPEAN EXPERIENCE

On the eve of national Peace Day in France, Club Strasbourg celebrated its 70th Anniversary at a very unique venue on 19th September 2009. In her opening speech at the European Court of Human Rights, Club President H el ene Philippid es heartily welcomed French Union President Rapha ella M elon and SI/E Vice President Rina Dupriet, together with many other French Soroptimists and representatives from Clubs in Germany, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland and the USA. President H el ene reminded the audience of the European Court's role in securing personal freedoms and fighting discrimination. Club Strasbourg's celebration took place in the very year in which the Council of Europe and the Universal

part played by the Court with its 47 judges representing each member state (17 of which are women) to bring together all European citizens, to defend democracy and the rule of law and to protect fundamental freedoms. Their speeches in French are available in full on the SI/E website.

After watching a video on the history of the European Court and its development in Strasbourg, participants headed to the European Parliament, where they shared lunch before attending a conference on the workings of this important institution.

This memorable day ended with the gala dinner at the Hostellerie du Rosenmeer in Rosheim where the guests enjoyed light and tasty Alsatian specialties and shared the unforgettable soprano and harpist duet performance.

The next day, Saturday, was dedicated to the discovery of historical Strasbourg with a boat trip followed by a leisurely walk along the old streets of la



President H el ene Philippid es welcomes fellow Soroptimists and guests at the Club's official 70th anniversary celebration held at the European Court of Human Rights.

Declaration of Human Rights commemorated their 60th anniversaries.

In light of these important events, the Club celebration honoured the efforts of the European Court in pursuit of peace, human rights and especially the rights of women and children. The guests were deeply aware of the symbolical meaning of celebrating this event at the European Institutions whose beautiful modern architecture stands out against historical Strasbourg cityscape.

President H el ene thus warmly thanked the two European Court judges and fellow Soroptimists, Renate Jaeger from Germany and Isabelle Berro-Lef evre from Monaco for arranging to meet in 'their house'. Both in turn explained the major

Petite France to the Museum of Modern Art. After an afternoon spent visiting the cathedral, strolling in the local markets and along the embankments of the river Ill or shopping for local wines and delicacies, the Soroptimists and their friends sat down to a relaxed farewell supper at the Vino Strada barge restaurant on Fishermen's Wharf.

The intensity of this shared European experience and the warmth of the international Soroptimist friendship that prevailed during these two days truly illustrates what being a Soroptimist means and what unites us in our causes.

*Fran oise Ferey, Club Strasbourg and
SI/E Representative to the Council of Europe*



Club Crans-Montana

A RACE FOR WATER!

Club Crans-Montana organised a race on the banks of Lake Grenon on 13th September to raise funds to supply the Abala region of Nigeria with drinking water.

The race was in support of SWISSAID, which brings drinking water to 53,000 people in 72 villages of the Abala region. Except during the rainy season, women and children have to walk for several hours each day to fetch water many miles from their homes.

We would like to express our thanks and gratitude to all those who helped us achieve our very ambitious goal. The event was a success thanks to all those who participated, who sponsored them and who donated money. We are also very grateful to the Haut-Plateau school and especially the Crans-Montana town authorities (ACCM). The ACCM had faith in our project right from the start, and offered to double the amount of money the event raised. Thanks to everyone's commitment, the ACCM and our Club through the Solidarit'eau project will be able to hand over a cheque worth more than € 66,000 to SWISSAID.

Our satisfaction at having carried out such a successful race in support of the Nigerian people is equalled only by the gratification of being able to contribute to improving their everyday lives. For further details, please visit our site www.soroptimist-cransmontana.ch.

Swiss participants of all ages enjoyed running for a good cause!

Monique Jaquemin, Club Crans-Montana

Floodwater and flood control

AN INFORMATIVE WEEKEND IN COLOGNE

Club Cologne invited its three Friendship Link clubs to a late September weekend in the city of the famous Cathedral. More than a dozen Soroptimists from Chalon-sur-Saône, Nimwegen and Liverpool took up the offer. The hosts chose 'floodwater and flood control' as the motto for the varied programme in line with SI/E's water theme, 'Soroptimists go for Water'. A highly relevant subject since each one of the Link cities is situated on a river: Chalon on the Saône, Liverpool on the Mersey and Nimwegen and Cologne on the Rhine.

A highlight on Saturday was the guided tour on the Flood Control Programme of the City of Cologne, including sightseeing and crossing the Rhine River via two bridges. The director of the Floodwater Centre welcomed the group in the Stadthaus. His talk on flood prevention illustrated the importance of precautionary measures for a river metropolis like Cologne. The city's regular dialogue with Sweden, France and the Netherlands underlines that flood control is an international challenge. Cologne's leading role in flood control is based on technical achievements, e.g. a system of

mobile protection walls, which are easily and quickly handled, as we proved by assembling a small part ourselves!

Sadly, on Sunday it was time to say goodbye, but the Cologne Soroptimists are already looking forward to the next friendship meeting bringing them to the Mersey, the Saône or downstream on the Rhine!

Gabriele Dafft, Club Cologne

The whole group poses for a photo in the Stadthaus after an interesting talk on flood control.



• SOROPTIMISTS INTERNATIONAL • EUROPE •

10th April 2010

Schwyz (Switzerland)

Charter to be presented by
Governor, Union of Germany
Irene Jacobi
Club President
Monica Müller
Sunnmatt 6b
CH - 6410 Goldau
E-mail:
monica.mueller@schwyz.net

29th May 2010

Rohrbacher Land (Austria)

Charter to be presented by
SI/E Vice President
Daniela Stern
Club President
Wilbirg Mitterlehner
Bräustrasse 20
AT - 4113 St. Martin i.M.
Phone: +43 7289 8851-69300
E-mail:
wilbirg.mitterlehner@ooe.gv.at

20th February 2010

50th Anniversary

Club Rauma (Finland)

6th-7th March 2010

25th Anniversary

Club Spa (Belgium)

19th-21st March 2010

25th Anniversary

Club Visé (Belgium)

19th-21st March 2010

50th Anniversary

Club Modena (Italy)

5th April 2010

50th Anniversary

Club Nyborg (Denmark)

6th April 2010

50th Anniversary

Club Skanderborg
(Denmark)

23rd May 2010

6th International Peace Marathon

Club Kigali (Rwanda)

3rd-4th July 2010

SI/E Governors' Meeting

Ghent (Belgium)

8th March

International Women's Day

22nd March

World Water Day

5th June

World Environment Day

21st September

International Day of Peace

25th November

International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

10th December

Human Rights Day

(celebrated by Soroptimists
worldwide)

NEW SI/E CLUBS
TO BE
CHARTERED

INTERNATIONAL
AWARENESS DAYS

FORTHCOMING
EVENTS FOR SI/E

 Please submit your texts to the
Editor for the next issue of
The Link by 31st January 2010!