Strategic Plan – Goal 3
Communication Will Play a Pivotal Role

Visions of the new biennium
Sustainability – Growing Our Organisation Together

25th November – UN VAW Day
Demonstrating Our Global Voice for Women
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 some 85,000 members in more than 3,000 clubs in 126 countries. Soroptimist International of Europe (SIE) is one of four SI federations. It has some 35,000 members in over 1,250 clubs in 59 countries. Soroptimists inspire action and create opportunities to transform the lives of women and girls through a global network of members and international partnerships. For more information about the aims, activities and projects that characterise our organisation, please visit our SIE website at www.soroptimisteurope.org.

Note from the Editor

APOLOGIES FOR THE LATE ISSUE

I sincerely apologise for the lateness of the first issue of The Link in SIE. President Ulla Madsen’s biennium is truly regrettable that the otherwise excellent start to her presidency should be marred by this delay. There are many reasons for the lateness, but in principle, it is my responsibility as editor to get the magazine out on time! So, please forgive me. Let us hope that I can get new demands in my private life sorted out so that this does not happen again.

A new biennium has begun, and all of us on the SIE Board 2013-2015 are highly motivated and enthusiastic about the changes and new focus. Working with the Strategic Model is proving very productive, and we can only hope that this excellent approach filters down through the organisation.

As I announced at the Governors’ Meeting in July 2013, I will be stepping down as Editor of The Link at the end of this biennium – at the latest. Anyone who might be interested in taking over my position is welcome to contact me for details. Although it is a lot of work, I have always considered this job an honour. And one thing is certain: it would be difficult to find a Soroptimist who is better informed about the outstanding projects and activities of our Unions and Clubs than the Editor of the Federation’s magazine!

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'SORRY...SOROP' WHAT?'

Communications and Public Relations are essential to any organisation to develop, position and sustain itself, especially at a time when media and social media are pervading everyone’s life. And yet, when the Task Force on Strategy and Structure set about to formulate the Strategic Plan of SIE in 2012-2013, the team found that up to then only few overall efforts had been made to publicise SIE’s objectives and achievements. Perhaps it is the age-old problem – also in professional life – that women believe their accomplishments will be recognised without promoting themselves! However, now that Soroptimist is competing with many other organisations for the ‘best women’ and limited resources, it is time to move forward with a clear communication strategy.

Goal 3 – Communications
SIE will be known for its efforts to help women and girls achieve social and economic empowerment.

While Soroptimist is amongst the most effective worldwide NGOs in terms of sustainability – as an independent and self-financed organisation of some 85,000 members which has improved the lives of millions of women through projects and advocacy since 1921, Soroptimists are not widely known for their efforts and work! Indeed, besides our own members and their families and friends, who really knows us! When you mention Soroptimist, how often do people ask, ‘Sorop... what!’? ‘What’s that!’ ‘Never heard of it.’ And in our frustration, how many of us respond with, ‘You know the Rotary or Lions’ Clubs!’ Well it is the same for women and we do ...

It was therefore evident to the Task Force that a greater effort and more resources had to be provided to work towards accomplishing this goal. When creating the new organisational model with the triangular structure, Communications was seen as a pivotal part, and a Task Force on Communications was set up earlier this year to define its objectives.

During a two-day brainstorming session, the three members deliberated about a communication strategy for SIE, which, by targeting both members and the wider public, could serve as a foundation for planning and organising and, at the same time, as a means to motivate, to alter attitudes and to sharpen the image of our organisation.

It is when we went back to the fundamentals of our organisation and its mission that we decided to focus on our ‘raison d’être’ and to develop messages that illustrate our Soroptimist identity. These short messages deliver important information about the issues we work on and engage the targeted audience to think, feel and act. In their simplicity, they characterise our movement since 1921:

**Position our organisation**
Who we are
- We are an organisation of and for women
- We offer a worldwide professional and social network for women
- We are the largest women’s service organisation in the world
- The efforts of our clubs and members help improve the lives of women and girls in very concrete ways.
- By taking a stand on specific issues we act as a global voice for women

**Communicate our programme and projects**
What we do
- We help educate women and girls to lead
- We empower women to get employment
- We fight violence against women and girls
- We help provide access to better health and living conditions for women and girls
- We help improve environmental sustainability

**Advocate causes for women and girls**
How we influence
- We encourage women in all walks of life to voice concerns and address injustices
- We communicate evidence-based information on women’s issues to the relevant organisations
- We lobby at all levels of society to advance women’s issues

**Attract new and retain existing members**
Who we are Soroptimists
- We offer a network of professionally, socially and culturally diverse women
- We offer opportunities to build friendship amongst like-minded women
- We provide women with a platform to serve their communities
- We offer a forum to learn and share knowledge and experience
- We show how women can be an inspiration
- We give women a voice

Club members are the best possible communicators of our organisation. These messages are meant to aid Soroptimists in their communication work. So, please translate them into your own language, learn them by heart and post them on your websites. In future, whenever you are asked about our organisation or wherever you go, use these messages to define Soroptimist. Let’s get the people talking about us!
SUSTAINABILITY – GROWING OUR ORGANISATION TOGETHER

In the following essay, SIE President Ulla Madsen maps out her vision for the 2013-2015 biennium. In short, it sees Extension and Retention, Programme and Advocacy as well as Sustainability in all its facets taking centre stage.

Dialogue is essential to drive extension

The 21st century brings with it many new challenges. Our world is facing serious economic crises and environmental disasters and undergoing major social changes. With populations ageing and people’s interests shifting, society is in turmoil, and our priorities must change. Against the backdrop of these social and economic conditions, it is not surprising that our membership is also fluctuating.

Previous biennia saw a slight decline in membership – small, but not negligible. This is why as SIE President, I have chosen retaining and increasing membership as one of my chief focuses of 2013-2015.

However, we can only grow our membership by working together. Following the same comprehensive and methodical approach recently taken in formulating our Strategic Plan and new organisational model, we intend to consult our Unions and Single Clubs in the coming months to build a constructive forum to address this issue. At the 2014 Governors’ Meeting we will seek a true ‘bottom up’ approach with an aim to make Club members our ‘drivers’ in Extension and Retention.

It is a reality that the accelerated pace of daily life obliges us to revisit the way organisations like ours operate. But it is also a reality that the leaders of our Clubs and Unions, i.e. the Presidents and Governors, as our members’ chosen representatives, are uniquely placed to bring original and constructive ideas regarding how to welcome a new generation of women to Soroptimist International of Europe.

Women for Women: Projects are our engine

The creative projects that bring members together to help improve the lives of thousands of women every year are most certainly the backbone of our organisation. Last year alone more than € 8 million were raised for projects across our Federation. The support offered by Soroptimists is truly phenomenal, and I personally believe we should make more noise about it – by using this information to be even more effective advocates for women’s causes!

This is why strengthening Programme and Advocacy will be the second major focus of my biennium. Soroptimist International of Europe must become an even stronger voice for women at local, national and international levels (in part through our engagement at the United Nations and European institutions), and an even more effective actor on the ground in the areas of Education, Economic Empowerment, Health, the Elimination of Violence against Women and Girls, and Environmental Sustainability.

Biennium theme: A Sustainable Environment

I also believe that preserving a healthy planet is directly related to securing a better future for women and children. It is our responsibility, individually and collectively, to protect our Earth. My biennium theme ‘Let’s go green – working for a healthy environment’ seeks to encourage all Soroptimists to integrate an environmentally sound approach into their projects. It asks members to make sustainability and environmental protection an underlying priority for their Soroptimist projects, for the organisations and companies they work for, and for their own lives.

I therefore encourage our Clubs to continue to support the United Nations Millennium Development Goals and ‘to address the specific needs of women and girls by improving environmental sustainability and mitigating effects of climate change and disasters’. Whether it is encouraging shoppers to buy locally grown food, fundraising for the installation of wells and pumps in remote areas, calling for improved recycling facilities or running educational campaigns about the dangers of living in the proximity of toxic waste – we can all contribute to a healthier environment and thereby improve the health, living conditions, and productivity of women and their children around the world.

For more information, please visit: www.soroptimisteurope.org/programs/lets-go-green-

Flanked by Club President Marcellina Mukekuru (right) and Secretary Lasticia Uwimbadizi, SIE President Ulla Muhanga in Rwanda as part of her drive to grow the Federation.
With SIE and SIE already accredited and SIGBi soon to be granted ECOSOC status, the United Nations clearly recognises the importance of the Soroptimist movement. The work of Unions and Clubs to improve the lives of women and children has earned our organisation this respect. Did you know that in the past year, SIE Clubs have raised over €8 million for projects throughout Europe and Africa?

It is because Soroptimists are actively helping women and girls in their own communities or, for example through Friendship Links, successfully fundraising and realising projects with other Clubs that we can understand the major challenges that women are confronted with in many countries. One of our duties as the largest service organisation of women for women is to alert the international community, via the United Nations and UN Women, of the major issues faced by women in their countries. After all, there is no more credible or independent witness of her own community issues than a Soroptimist!

Therefore at the annual meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) at the United Nations last year, Soroptimists from all over the world met in New York to share their expertise on the subject of ‘Elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls’. Of the five Soroptimist Programme Objectives, the one addressing violence affects all women around the world regardless of nationality, class, culture and religion.

Indeed many SIE Clubs have developed and implemented projects on this theme – nearly 700 in the past few years! The following is a summary of their focuses:

33% of VAW projects were on the prevention of violence against women

Initiatives included awareness raising on issues such as domestic violence, trafficking, and stalking, including:

- 2,500 Romanian and Danish Soroptimists undertook a joint initiative to fight trafficking. They developed a countrywide educational campaign in Romania targeting vulnerable age groups and communities, such as 14-15 years old girls from Roma communities.
- SI Uludağ in Turkey arranged a talk to prevent child marriages at a girls’ vocational high school, where a doctor, a lawyer, a psychologist and educators spoke about the consequences of child marriages, including the potential for violence.

40% of VAW projects dealt with prosecution/legal protection of women and children

Typical Club projects are geared towards the provision of legal help to women in need by assembling legal experts and organising Q&A sessions to inform women of the legal framework and ways they can navigate the legal systems.

- SI Italy undertook a truly exceptional national programme to protect children victims and witnesses of crimes when testifying in court. Implemented in partnership with the Italian Minister of Justice, the project resulted in almost 50 protected hearing rooms in courts across Italy which allow children to testify without having to face the accused. Immediate Past Union President Flavia Romolini edited and published a book on this subject, titled When Justice Meets the Child (see article on page 18).
- SI Cotonou Doyen in Benin partnered with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to promote the 2012 Law on Violence Against Women adopted by the Government. 60 Soroptimists trained local populations on the Law ensuring local women take ownership of it (see article on page 19).

Austrian Soroptimists tirelessly and successfully advocated the enforcement of a national law for the protection of children’s rights in the context of domestic violence.

- SI Murau in Austria has implemented a project for migrants women giving them access to language courses essential for their integration and a non-negligible tool to establish peace prevent VAW, reduce prejudice and make intercultural exchanges possible.

- SI Italy’s exceptional project has led to some 50 protected hearing rooms, allowing children to testify in court without having to face the accused, like this one in Parma where SI Parma decided to follow this national Soroptimist project.

27% of VAW projects centred on the protection of women suffering from violence

Projects mostly included the provision of materials and/or funding to existing shelters or associations that help women suffering from violence.

- SI Angoulême in France organised a lecture by the director of a local association that supports women victims of domestic violence: Osez en parler. Mettre des mots sur des maux. (‘Dare to speak out. Giving words to wounds.’)
- Turkish Soroptimists entered into a partnership with local authorities to improve services to victims of trafficking; more than 700 women and children in the city of Izmir. They funded the restoration of shelters and provided counselling and social support.

60 Soroptimists from all six clubs in Benin were trained in the VAW law with an aim to inform the wider population about the various aspects of its provisions.

3% of VAW projects were on the sexual exploitation of children

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The next CSW meeting at the United Nations will take place in New York in March. A team is currently developing SIE’s presence at the event to ensure that Soroptimist information is well disseminated and our views on ‘Challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls’ are properly addressed.

Until now Violence Against Women has not been one of the Millennium Development Goals. UN Women, SIE and SIGBi, as well as many other NGOs are uniting to ensure this pandemic is properly set on the future agenda.
PLACING GENDER EQUALITY ON THE AGENDA

It was a confluence of highly talented women from every corner of the globe at the 28th International Women Leaders’ Conference on the Post-2015 and Sustainable Development Goals Agenda. The aim was to place gender equality and women’s empowerment at the centre of the agenda for the next framework. The conference was organised by MASHAV, Israel’s Agency for International Development Cooperation, and the Golda Meir Mount Carmel International Training Centre (MCTC) in Haifa, in partnership with UN WOMEN and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). MCTC has had a long-term relationship with Soroptimist, as all women directors have entered politics around the world, such as Professor Amsatou Sow Sidibé, who is now Minister of Social Affairs and Women’s Rights in Mali; and Fannette Modeck, who is a parliamentarian in Cameroon. Mazal Renford from Rwanda was interested to learn about our long-term projects such as San Marco in Kigali, and Millie Odhiambo, a member of Parliament in Kenya who knows Soroptimist well, welcomed the many projects in Kenya and was pleased to hear we just founded a new club in Meru.

MCTC was established in 1961 to assist in the training of women engaged in community work in emerging states in Africa and Asia. Since then more than 17,500 participants from 150 countries in Asia, Africa, Europe, Central Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, Oceania and the Caribbean have attended over 560 capacity-building programmes and workshops. 55 participants from twenty-nine countries attended this year’s conference, including government ministers, parliamentarians, academics, members of the judiciary, diplomats, and high-ranking officials from UN organisations and international NGOs.

It was an honour and a privilege to represent SIE at this event. With my experience at the helm of an international network, I had much to share with other participants. For example, I mentioned our successful ‘Birthright in the Pacific’ appeal to reduce maternity and childhood mortality to Loujaya Kouza, the Minister for Community Development, Religion, Youth and Women from Papua New Guinea. Member of the Albanian Parliament, Valentina Lekaj was fascinated to hear that we have long been engaged in the fight against trafficking in Albania. The Deputy Executive Director for UN HABITAT from Rwanda was interested to learn about our long-term projects such as San Marco in Kigali, and Millie Odhiambo, a member of Parliament in Kenya who knows Soroptimist well, welcomed the many projects in Kenya and was pleased to hear we just founded a new club in Meru.

It is gratifying that more and more women have entered politics around the world, such as Professor Amsatou Sow Sidibé, who is now Minister of Social Affairs and Women’s Rights in Mali; and Fannette Modeck from Cameroon. Mazal Renford from Rwanda was interested to learn about our long-term projects such as San Marco in Kigali, and Millie Odhiambo, a member of Parliament in Kenya who knows Soroptimist well, welcomed the many projects in Kenya and was pleased to hear we just founded a new club in Meru.

Rather than stretch our long-term partnerships, we must celebrate our partnerships with UN WOMEN and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). MCTC has had a long-term relationship with Soroptimist, as all women directors have entered politics around the world, such as Professor Amsatou Sow Sidibé, who is now Minister of Social Affairs and Women’s Rights in Mali; and Fannette Modeck from Cameroon. Mazal Renford from Rwanda was interested to learn about our long-term projects such as San Marco in Kigali, and Millie Odhiambo, a member of Parliament in Kenya who knows Soroptimist well, welcomed the many projects in Kenya and was pleased to hear we just founded a new club in Meru.

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The highly informative conference culminated in the Haifa Declaration from which I quote here one core passage: ‘We, women leaders from all corners of the globe, ... hereby emphasise the centrality of gender equality, gender empowerment and girls’ rights in a new 2015 framework ... We urge the international community and governments to analyse and implement lessons learned from efforts to achieve the MDGs, taking greater steps to ensure that gender equality is mainstreamed across all sustainable development goals and that specific targets are set for women and girls.’ I encourage all Soroptimists to ask their own parliamentarians what they plan to undertake in order to ‘ensure the centrality of gender equality and women’s empowerment in the next development framework’.

Kathy Kaaf, Immediate Past SIE President

The members of the Future African Federation are happy to invite all Soroptimists to the Future African Federation Conference to be held in the beautiful city of Pretoria, South Africa from 20th-22nd March 2014. You are assured of an educative, informative and entertaining stay in Pretoria, and African hospitality will not be in short supply either. To register, please visit the conference website: www.sisan.co.za. Discreetly mentioned for the first time at the SIE Congress in Athens in 1987, the idea of adding an African Federation to the existing four Federations of Soroptimist International has been the long-awaited dream of many Soroptimists. In 2012 Soroptimists from SIE, SIGBI, SIA and SISWP greeted with great enthusiasm the election and inauguration of a Task Force in Kenya to oversee the affairs of the Future African Federation. To further facilitate the creation of this Federation, SIE and SIGBI appointed a Working Group in early 2013 to assist and monitor the progress of the Taskforce in realising this dream. The members of the Working Group are SIE President Ulla Madsen, Past SIE President and SIGBI President, Mariet Verhoef-Cohen, SIGBI President Margaret Eldrid and SIGBI Director of Organisational Development Anna Hodgson. The Conference in Pretoria, South Africa will go a long way to fine-tune the efforts of all concerned.

Several milestones have already been achieved towards establishing an African Federation. These include drafting the Constitution, role specifications, financial guidelines and the African Federation website www.sisan.co.za. These achievements were borne out of the hard work of the Task Force in partnership with the Working Group. We therefore invite you to be a part of history in Pretoria. The Conference Committee, under the able leadership of Sally Currin, promises guests an unforgettable experience. Don’t wait to hear what has happened; why not gain first-hand information. Together, we will make history.
MAKING MORE NOISE ABOUT OUR WORK

Soroptimists across SIE have received several editions of the greatly expanded and largely ‘reinvented’ Programme News and Advocacy News in their inboxes since November.

The primary goal of the revamped newsletters is to celebrate the fantastic project-based work of our members and to make as much noise as possible about it within the Soroptimist network and beyond! In each edition, the stories of SIE members’ projects, in all their diversity and originality, aim to inform the network as a whole of the great work being done from Iceland to Madagascar and children to Russia.

Programme News and Advocacy News now also have a thematic focus. Whether it is Education, Economic Empowerment, Health or other issues of importance to women and girls, we are striving to present both the issues in their local and international complexity and the different ways in which Soroptimists are taking action to tackle it. Moreover, as many of you seek to do good not only in your country or region, but also much further afield through Friendship Links and personal connections, we have introduced focus articles that give a richer insight into the challenges faced by women and children, and the work done by Soroptimists in different countries to alleviate these challenges.

We hope this expanded focus will be a source of inspiration and ideas as you develop new projects and examine ways to be even more effective advocates for women and children in your town, country, or even on the international stage!

The Programme and Advocacy Team – led by President Elect Maria Elisabetta de Franciscis (acting Programme Director) with Vice President for Advocacy Elena Savu and Assistant Programme Director Emine Erdem – and SIE HQ are always delighted to hear from you and to publish your news. You know how to reach us: programme@soroptimisteurope.org. After all, Programme News and Advocacy News truly are YOURS!

NEARLY €170,000 FOR SI PRESIDENT’S APPEAL

Birthing in the Pacific

Soroptimists throughout our Federation donated nearly €170,000 to projects focusing on the Birthing in the Pacific appeal, which SI IPP Alice Wells launched for her 2011-2013 biennium. This international project to fund equipment for and the training of midwives, clinicians, health workers and traditional birth attendants in Papua New Guinea helped save the lives of hundreds of pregnant women and their babies. Even today some 1000 women die every day due to pregnancy and childbirth complications.

The Birthing in the Pacific project was initiated by SI South West Pacific and then adopted by SI for the December 16th Appeal. SI SWP sent us a note of appreciation for our Federation’s support.

A JOURNEY THROUGH AUSTRALIA

Hello everyone :) my name is Teresa and I participated in the Soroptimist Open Heart Open Door programme. Last summer I was in Australia for two months, and it was just lovely. I lived with different host families and could see the real Australian way of life. I had the opportunity to go to school in Townsville and meet lots of good friends.

One of my highlights was scuba diving at the Great Barrier Reef. Another was seeing the opera house in Sydney. I’m a ballet dancer so I really enjoyed seeing a place where some of my role models are working.

I had many good experiences, and I learned a lot for life. It was also the first time that I was away from home for such a long time, but I was never homesick. I got to know many new and really friendly people… If we would have the opportunity to host a teenager I would do so because it is really good to go in different countries and have someone who can show you around.

I just want to say thank you to the Soroptimist club for sponsoring me and express a really big thank you to Janet Askern and Chris Knight, the two who organised my trip. It was really wonderful, and I hope I can go back to Australia one day!

Together with enthusiastic runners from Luxembourg, Soroptimist Bettina Sabbatini and Soroptimists from Rwanda initiated an International Marathon for Peace in Kigali in 2004.

With the support of the Rwandan Ministry of Sport and Youth, the first International Marathon for Peace in Kigali was organised in 2005. Since then this International Marathon for Peace has taken place every year with financial help of SIE. Each year the number of participants has increased with 500 children and 1300 athletes running in 2013.

On 18th May 2014 the 10th International Marathon with Soroptimist support will take place in Kigali for the last time. Thereafter, the Ministry of Sport and Youth will assume responsibility.

We invite clubs in our Federation to support the Soroptimists in Rwanda who will continue to organise the children’s run a day before the Marathon. All Soroptimists are welcome to participate – as runners, fun runners (5 km) or as spectators.

For more information, please contact Françoise Murebwayire, fmurebwayire@gmail.com, VP Africa of SIE or Tonny Filedt kok-Weimar, t.filedtkok@gmail.com, 1* VP Eastern Europe.

DO NOT MISS THIS EVENT!

The winners of the 2013 International Marathon for Peace celebrate their victory.
It has been two years now since I finished my Master’s at the New England Conservatory in Boston, which you generously funded. During my studies, I had a lot of professional restrictions because of my student visa so I could not perform in the United States. Since returning to Belgium, I have been able to take part in several events that have helped launch my career to a very exciting start. I play with a string quartet, large classical or contemporary ensembles and a symphonic orchestra. Our performances are mostly in Belgium and France, and include European tours with the orchestra.

I am extremely grateful for your support during my studies in the United States, without which these concerts might not have come to fruition. It would be a pleasure to give a recital if you like.

Federation News

SUPPORTING ELIANE’S CAUSES IN AFRICA

Eliane Lagasse’s husband Pierre and daughters Sophie and Stephanie would like to thank all the Soroptimists for the many kind words they received after her death. They decided to create the ‘Dr Eliane Lagasse Foundation’ in her memory to continue Soroptimist work in her name and sent the following message to SIE members:

‘Since she died in Benin during a trip with Soroptimist friends from her Southeast Flanders club after visiting the country’s different clubs, we would like to support a project in this country. As a paediatrician, Eliane devoted her life to Africa and its children. Possible projects include the completion of a maternity or paediatric ward or a primary school, which she had just visited with all her usual enthusiasm. A website is currently under construction, on which we will post photos and updates about the progression of the work. The link will be communicated as soon as possible.

Our heartfelt thanks go to the many Soroptimists and others, particularly the European Federation, for their generous donations to the Foundation to commemorate a woman, a paediatrician and a Soroptimist. Donations can still be made to the bank account: BE19 0836 0377 9212.’

Recipient Hélène Koerver says thank you

SCHOLARSHIPS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

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Hélène Koerver performed in a concert at the Maison de la Pologne in Brussels in June 2013.
SAFE WATER FROM WOMEN FOR WOMEN

More than one billion people worldwide have no access to safe water. SI Sweden initiated a project to provide non-polluted water with the help of Solvatten water-purifying units.

This successful project securing water for better health while protecting the environment from women for women won a SIE Best Practice Award in July 2013 for Programme Goal 5: ‘Address the specific needs of women and girls by improving environmental sustainability and mitigating effects of climate change and disasters’.

Solvatten uses solar energy to purify contaminated water. After a few hours in the sun, the water is free from pathogens that cause diseases such as dysentery, salmonella and cholera and is safe to drink. A unique feature with Solvatten is that it also heats the water, thus saving energy, money and time, while at the same time protecting the environment. No chemicals, spare parts or batteries are required. It is easy to use and carry. There are no maintenance costs, and the units have a long lifespan. And to top it off, they create small business opportunities for women.

Swedish clubs raise money to purchase Solvatten units sent to Nairobi by airfreight. In close cooperation with SI Kenya, local clubs distribute the Solvatten units to selected women’s groups. So far we have dispatched 36 units to SI Kakamega and SI Mumias, and 72 units are to be shared between SI Eldoret and SI Nairobi-Milimani. The remaining clubs are eagerly waiting for their allotment. From 1st October 2012 to 30th September 2013 Swedish clubs have raised €20,200.

The women are instructed in the use of Solvatten units, and also in matters concerning health, economy and environment. They pay a symbolic sum for their units and sign an agreement to record in a ‘Value Book’ their savings in water costs, energy usage, health costs, time spent fetching water, fuel per day and sick days. The results are evaluated after six and twelve months. The reduction in carbon dioxide emissions is also measurable.

On his visit to Stockholm in September, US President Barack Obama asked specifically to hear details about outstanding Swedish innovations, one of those being Solvatten. After hearing about the project, Obama said: ‘Congratulations to a wonderful achievement; it is a great story to tell!’

Of course, we agree and hope other SI Unions/Clubs might like to join us in our efforts to supply safe water to some of the one billion people who have no access. For further information, please visit www.soroptimistsweden.se.

SAFE WATER FROM WOMEN FOR WOMEN

For the last 40 years, SI Le Léman has organised an annual dinner in August to bring together Swiss and French clubs from the Lake Geneva area to St-Gingolph, a town that is both Swiss and French. Last summer, members of the club initiated an action entitled ‘Water from developed countries to feed developing countries’ in line with the then SIE biennium theme ‘Water and Food’.

Each participant in the annual dinner organised by SI Le Léman donated €5 towards the Seeds for All project, initiated by SI Madagascar.
Silvana Arbia speaks on VAW

IN PURSUIT OF THE TRUTH

At their interclub meeting in November 2013, SI Bassano del Grappa and SI Vicenza Club had the honour to host SIE Peace Prize winner Silvana Arbia to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. In July 2013 the Italian magistrate was awarded the prize in Berlin for her extraordinary achievement as Chief of Prosecutions for the United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) in re-establishing justice in that country after the atrocities of 1994.

SI Italy Vice-President Patrizia Salmoiraghi, Chair of the SIE Extension Committee Maria Luisa Frosio, Italian Governor Luisella Bellinaso, Italian Extension Committee member Genevieve Henro, SI Italy Past President Wilma Malucelli and Soroptimists from several Clubs of Northern Italy attended the event. Silvana Arbia described the nine years she spent in Africa prosecuting those that were responsible for the genocide in Rwanda that led to the massacre of one million people. Among the six accused was the former Minister of Family and Women’s Affairs, the only woman charged to date with genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes under international law as well as the first woman ever to be charged with rape as a crime against humanity and a war crime before an international tribunal. A Catholic priest was also charged with genocide and crimes against humanity. Both were sentenced to life.

As a true leader in the pursuit of truth, Silvana Arbia stressed the importance of the new Italian law and the progress made by jurisprudence as regards sexual crimes in time of war. Under certain circumstances, rape can also be considered a form of genocide and as such can be prosecuted and punished. However, the main problem is convincing victims to become active participants in prosecuting the perpetrators of the crimes they have suffered. She said that women are particularly courageous in such cases.

She concluded her speech by highlighting the role of the ICTR in the reconciliation process, noting that reconciliation is only possible if the truth is pursued. After all, genocide is never a single act of folly, but the fruit of plans whose premonitory signs dare not be overlooked.

SI Italy publishes a book

WHEN JUSTICE MEETS THE CHILD

Flavía Pozzolini, now Immediate Past President of SI Italy, initiated a project during her biênnium to establish protected hearing rooms for children throughout Italy. The idea is to provide a safe environment for children who are victims or witnesses of a crime and therefore have to provide evidence in civil or criminal proceedings. Equipped with audiovisual recording systems, these rooms allow the child to be protected from methods of interrogation and also ensure the highest degree of reliable evidence for a just and fair trial. After all, the hearings with children can involve not only prosecutors and lawyers, but also psychologists, psychiatrists and social workers. Over the course of 2011-2013, some 50 rooms were furnished in courtrooms in Italy with the support of Soroptimist clubs.

In May 2013 SI Italy organised a conference in Pesaro under the theme ‘When Justice Meets the Child’ with high-level experts on the legal and psychological aspects of interrogating children. Subsequently, the speeches were published in a book of the same title, which was edited by IPP Flavía. Minister for Justice Annamaria Cancellieri contributed the preface to the book, which also contains illustrative technical factsheets. This outstanding project will leave a lasting legacy in the Italian legal system.

SI Cotonou Doyen

STRATEGIES FOR BETTER COMMUNICATION ON VAW

Violence against women and girls is deeply embedded in cultures around Benin. Its forms are both blatant and subtle and its impact on development profound. Women and girls from all walks of life are also subject to discrimination and humiliation in the home and workplace, in classrooms and courtrooms, at worship and at play. Gender violence is also a major health and development issue, with powerful implications for coming generations as well as society in general. Eliminating this violence is essential to preserving peace at home and peace at large.

Even though Benin, as a result of the democratic process begun in 1990, ratified Law No. 2011-26 of 9th January 2012 on Violence against Women, the law is hardly known and its effects limited. This is why the Soroptimists of Benin, with funding from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)/Benin, organized a one-day training on 5th September 2013 for 60 Soroptimists from all the six clubs of Benin to understand the law and produce a training manual on how to inform the population about its various aspects. These Soroptimists then trained more than 70 participants from NGOs, women’s groups, civil servants including men, market women, law enforcement agents (men and women), fire fighters, journalists and school girls in each of the three selected localities of Cotonou, Porto-Novo and Ouidah.

The Benin Minister of Family and Social Affairs, who attended the opening of the training, has promised to partner with SI Benin for more training. Two national television stations, local radio and newspapers covered the four events. The questions and discussions which followed the trainings are an indication of the great interest shown by participants for Soroptimist and the law.

The 4-day event showcased Soroptimist International in Benin and its impact on society more visible.
Commemorating the Elysée Treaty

A PERFECT WEEKEND IN PARIS

Some 160 Soroptimists from France and Germany celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Elysée Treaty in Paris on a beautiful summer weekend in September at the invitation of SI France. Guests included SI President Ann Garvie, the then SIE President Kathy Kaaf and the then SI Germany President Roswitha Briel, who were warmly welcomed by the hosting French Union President Christine Dagain.

The festivities started with special guided tours on Saturday morning, also featuring the gardens of the Missions Etrangères de Paris, which are opened to the public only twice a year, and the courtyard of the Ile Saint Louis, which allowed insight into life in the early 17th century.

The highlight of the day was the ceremony in the Quay d’Orsay with the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In addition to all the speeches given by Soroptimists and distinguished guests, the most touching moment of all was the narrative of Andrée Caillot about her late husband Jacques Rozenberg, Kathy Kaaf was especially moved by the handwritten letter of Konrad Adenauer, the grandchild of the former German chancellor, who offered to be moderators in the debates. There are currently some 220 children in need of foster care.

The day ended with a private cruise on the river Seine, offering the opportunity for animated talks while drinking champagne, eating an excellent dinner and having a gorgeous view of the illuminated city of Paris.

Sunday morning the Soroptimist crowd gathered around the tomb of Suzanne Noel at the cemetery of Montmartre to commemorate the founder of SI in Europe. The festivities ended with a tour through the lanes of Montmartre and lunch in a picturesque restaurant. The Soroptimists present expressed their unanimous wish to establish this ‘jumelage’ as a recurrent meeting of French and German Soroptimists, alternatively in France and Germany.

Barbara Rohr, General Secretary 2011-2013, SI Germany

SI Lisboa Caravela

NATIONAL CONFERENCE RAISES VISIBILITY

SI Lisboa Caravela, the most recently chartered Club in Lisbon, organised a national conference under the theme a New Vision for Adolescents Requiring Foster Care in October. It was held in the 17th century monastery of Santoso Noso in partnership with the Institution CrescerSer and attended by the Chief Public Attorney of Portugal, as well as judges and prosecutors of several courts, professionals from the educational sector, social workers, psychologists and representatives from other Institutions.

CrescerSer is a private institution of Social Solidarity that aims to promote the education and organisation of young children and adolescents taken from their families by court orders or reported by the National Commission of Child Protection for danger within family homes. It also conducts advanced and specialised training in the areas of protection, care and supervision as well as training in the technical issues related to children and youth at risk. The experts discussed the ideal frameworks to promote and disseminate best practices in the field of fostering adolescents to ensure they have access to a safer life, are free from domestic violence and negligence and offered better education standards. Providing the basis for these young people to lead a balanced life, ideally through placement in families, was also part of debate. There are currently some 220 children in need of foster care.

The high-level of speakers and the journalists who offered to be moderators in the debates clearly enhanced the Soroptimist image in Portugal, giving more visibility to our work.

Sonia Carrilho produces a monograph about Portuguese Soroptimist Maria de Lourdes’s life.

Education Foundation of SI Norway

APPLY FOR A GRANT NOW!

SI Norway once again invites Soroptimists to submit candidature applications for grants offered by its Education Foundation for the school year 2014/15. This Foundation was established to support the professional training of women in developing countries. Preference will be given to applications for basic professional training at secondary school level in their home country. The idea is to promote the education and training of women who would not otherwise have the financial resources.

More details and the grant application form, which must be completed by the candidate and her club or union no later than 1st March 2014, are offered on the SIE website. Please submit applications to Kristin Ruder, Barlindv. 2, N-3118 Tonsberg, Norway tel +47 932 17 240, email: ruder@online.no

Kristin Ruder, Chairman of the Nordic Soroptimists section singLet for Reinzer Elver

News from Unions and Clubs

SI Portugal

A TRIBUTE TO AN EXCEPTIONAL WOMAN

At the Union gala dinner of SI Portugal in October 2013, participants paid tribute to an exceptional woman and Soroptimist, Maria de Lourdes Almeida Campos Tedeschi de Bettencourt. A video was shown of an interview she gave to Sonia Carrilho, a member of SI Lisboa 7 Colinas Club, who also summarised Maria de Lourdes’s life in a short monograph.

Born in 1919, Maria de Lourdes has had a remarkable professional and Soroptimist career. Since a very early age her strong personality, self-reliance, curiosity about human nature and pronounced cheerfulness were evident. As a 25-year-old psychologist, she was part of the team around Dr Egas Moniz, who was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1949. She authored several works, as well as writing journal articles, reports and a well-known book, titled A Vida de Meu Filho (My Son’s Life).

She has been a very active Soroptimist since 1985, when she, as President, and 20 other women founded the first Portuguese Club, Fundador, in Lisbon. Today, at the age of 95 she still has a very strong voice in the Soroptimist organisation.

Maria Teresa Carrilho, President of SI Portugal 2013-15
In an interview SIE African Liaison Mariet Verhoef-Cohen interviewed

MARIE STELLA MARIS’S WATER BY SHARING

When one drinks Marie-Stella-Maris water, the bottled water company creates sources of clean water for everyone, everywhere. Water is essential for our existence. That’s why Marie Stella-Maris has declared access to clean drinking water a basic human right. The Dutch bottled water company supports clean drinking water projects by donating a percentage of the price of every bottle sold to worthy causes.

In Amsterdam’s Botanical Gardens Marie Stella-Maris interviewed SIE African Liaison Mariet Verhoef-Cohen a few months ago to hear what SIE sees as the strength of women and the importance of clean drinking water for the growth and development of rural communities in Africa. Mariet, a SIE Past President who hosted the 2009 SIE Congress focusing on water issues, explained that Soroptimists’ strength are their international network and mutual goodwill and understanding. Any Soroptimist club can initiate projects throughout Africa, while local Soroptimists accompany and support the activities. Local women and girls receive practical aid, capacity-building, and even financial training. At the same time Soroptimists listen and address grassroots needs because it is the locals who know what is required and manageable in that particular area and culture. And that makes Soroptimists strong and makes our projects successful.

Water is a means to fight poverty,’ said Mariet. ‘Access to clean water, pumps, toilets and showers promotes hygiene and reduces absenteeism and illness. Women can pursue their education and eventually earn an income, which alleviates poverty. This allows their children to go to school. It’s a snowball effect which starts with water.’

‘Like the philosophy of Marie-Stella-Maris, sharing is the basis for everything Soroptimists do,’ Mariet stressed. ‘It’s about sharing the possibilities you have in your own life with the people around you. That is why Soroptimists inspire action and create opportunities to improve the lives of women and girls through our global network of members and international partnerships.”

7th Satin Season Tour

AN INVITATION TO THE CRIMEA

SI Dnepropetrovsk of the Ukraine invites you to take part in their 7th Satin Season in Crimea from 6th-13th September 2014. For those who wish to visit the capital city of Kiev first, we have prepared special cultural programme.

Detailed information on the programme as well as the application form are available on the SIE website www.soroptimist-europe.org and will also be published on our website soroptimist.dp.ua (currently under construction). The tour also offers the opportunity to help the Club raise funds for its project ‘Give the Child a Chance’, which supports physically and mentally disabled children from the city orphanage.

The deadline for registration is 20th May 2014. The contact is Natalya Necbukhaeva, pereulok Furmanova 2 apt 1, 49005, Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine, e-mail: neta2000@yandex.ru.

Support for Single Club in Albania

SI GREECE TWINS WITH SI TIRANA

On the occasion of a visit by the then SIE President Kathy Kaaf and the then SIE Vice President Leena Viitaniemi, SI Greece marked the official start of its Twinning Programme with Single Club Tirana of Albania, under the auspices of the General Secretariat for Gender Equality of Greece in August 2013 in Athens. Participants in the event included the Secretary General for Gender Equality Vasso Kolla, the President of SI Greece Maria Pyrgaki, the President of SI Tirana Elda Halilaj and the Past President Marjeta Zajmi, as well as many Greek Soroptimists and representatives of other Greek NGOS.

Maria Pyrgaki, President of SI Greece

ITALIAN SOROPTIMISTS TOUR THE UKRAINE

Ten Soroptimists from seven Italian clubs went on tour in the Ukraine – a pleasant way to get to know the countryside and visit Ukrainian Soroptimist clubs. The occasion was the 20th Anniversary of SI Kiev on 14th September, which was celebrated in the elegant Marien Palace. At the gala dinner guests were cheered by the presentation of the club’s new ‘Talented children of Kiev’ project. SI Kiev plans to organise a concert tour for the children, who are very talented, as was demonstrated by their folk songs and dances.

On Sunday we visited a school for visually impaired children in Boyarka, which is also helped by the club. We then planted trees at the ‘Soroptimist Parkway’ as part of School Garden Project.

Our tour continued to Crimea peninsula, a region full of history and natural beauties, where we met the President of SI Simferopol. It was here in Crimea that the courageous English nurse Florence Nightingale helped wounded soldiers during the war of 1854 and improved the conditions of the military hospitals.

Italian Soroptimists from Italy shared an unforgettable experience in the Ukraine, thanks to their Soroptimist hostesses.

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NEW SIE CLUB TO BE CHARTERED

26th April 2014
Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic)
Charter to be presented by To be announced
Club President Carline Vitale
Calle 5ta, No 6, Marbella 2da
Aut. Km 14 de las Américas
Phone: +1 809 925 38 29
E-mail: odemihf@gmail.com

FORTHCOMING EVENTS FOR SIE

12th January 2014
50th Anniversary
SI Wolfsburg (Germany)

14th January 2014
25th Anniversary
SI Ankara-Gaziosmanpasa (Turkey)

18th February 2014
25th Anniversary
SI Cotonou Doyen (Benin)

3rd March 2014
25th Anniversary
SI Nakuru (Kenya)

4th March 2014
25th Anniversary
SI Komotini (Greece)

11th March 2014
50th Anniversary
SI Mendrisiotto (Switzerland)

18th March 2014
25th Anniversary
SI Charleroi-Soleilmont (Belgium)

20th-22nd March 2014
SI Future African Federation Conference
Pretoria (South Africa)

1st April 2014
25th Anniversary
SI San Marino (San Marino)

22nd April 2014
25th Anniversary
SI Chienni (Italy)

18th May 2014
10th International Peace Marathon
Kigali (Rwanda)

12th-13th July 2014
Governors’ Meeting
Copenhagen (Denmark)

9th-12th July 2015
20th SI Convention
Istanbul (Turkey)

INTERNATIONAL AWARENESS DAYS AND EVENTS

8th March
International Women’s Day

22nd March
World Water Day