



The Link

A global voice for women

2/2009-2010 N° 217



*Earthquake in Haiti
Concerted Efforts
to Provide Relief*

*Long-Term Project for SI
Explanation of the
Voting Procedure*

*Projects in Suriname
Safe Water
for a Safe Life*

*'Haiti
Needs
Our
Help!'*

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

ALWAYS TRYING TO IMPROVE!

To produce an attractive and informative magazine, we need your help. The increasing number of contributions is very satisfying, and we try to include all your articles, although many are submitted long after the deadline (see back page of the preceding issue). Faced by so much material, we are often forced to shorten the texts. I know this can be disappointing, but the answer is to keep the articles as short as possible from the beginning. A length of around 300 words is preferable, unless the story is planned as a major feature.

Please also remember that photographs are crucial. Every survey will tell you that photographs and headlines catch the reader's eye. If you want people to notice your article, choose photos showing action and try to avoid groups with too many people. Please do not forget to adjust your camera to produce pictures in high resolution. Many of the photos I receive are less than 100 KB or smaller than five centimetres, which limits the possibility to enlarge them. Ideally, they should have a resolution of at least 150 dpi and a size of at least one MB.

Of course, there is nothing more disappointing than printing a good magazine and then having it arrive damaged or extremely late. I am aware that some of you have experienced these problems, but sadly, they are not

easily resolved. We have used better packaging for this issue, but this comes at a price. Every increase in weight raises the postage, but does not necessarily ensure better postal service. Let us know if you experience difficulties, but please understand there are cost restrictions.

Christine Cromwell-Ahrens, Editor, The Link

Contents

Relief after the Earthquake in Haiti	4
Study Tours to Africa and India	6
Selecting a Long-Term Project for SI	7
COP 15 in Copenhagen	8
SI/E Mentoring Programme Begins	10
Women Have the Courage to Lead!	11
Biennium Theme and other projects	12
Federation News	14
News from Unions and Clubs	18

Cover page



We all have seen photos of the devastation in Haiti. The desperation of the women has especially touched Soroptimists, who have donated generously. (Photo: Erik Rescheleit, arche noVa e.V.)



p. 6



p. 12



p. 17



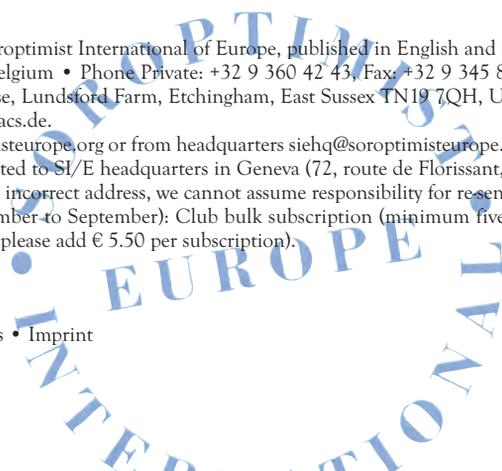
p. 20

The Link

2/2009-2010, N° 217. Quarterly magazine of Soroptimist International of Europe, published in English and French
 President: Dr Eliane Lagasse, Meerlaan 21, BE-9620 Zottegem, Belgium • Phone Private: +32 9 360 42 43, Fax: +32 9 345 85 46 • Email: elianelagasse@hotmail.com. Editor: Christine Cromwell-Ahrens, Lundsford House, Lundsford Farm, Etchingham, East Sussex TN19 7QH, United Kingdom • Phone: +44 1580 819 319, Fax +44 1580 819 077 • Email: ccromwell-ahrens@cacs.de.

Subscription forms are available on the SI/E website www.soroptimisteurope.org or from headquarters siehq@soroptimisteurope.org. A reminder to subscribers (individuals or clubs): any change of address should be communicated to SI/E headquarters in Geneva (72, route de Florissant, CH - 1206 Geneva, Fax: +41 22 789 04 43). If undelivered magazines are returned because of an incorrect address, we cannot assume responsibility for re-sending.

Subscription rates (four issues per Soroptimist year starting December to September): Club bulk subscription (minimum five) €10.00 per subscription per language. Individual subscription per language € 12.50 (for airmail please add € 5.50 per subscription).



Dear Soroptimist Friends,

The eyes of the world are focused on Haiti after the horrific earthquake devastated the island in January. Already one of the poorest countries in the Western Hemisphere, Haiti is struggling in the aftermath of this disaster and will need help for years to come. Thankfully, all members of Club Port-au-Prince survived. In addition to the appeals initiated by Unions and individual Clubs, SI/E set up a PayPal account on our website for direct donations. I would like to thank all Soroptimists for your support. SI/E is working with Club Port-au-Prince and other NGOs that are active in Haiti to provide aid to victims. For details, please see the articles on pages 4-5. It is clear that this relief effort will have to be long term, and we should choose our partnerships very carefully to ensure the best results for our main target group, women and girls, and to achieve the recognition your generosity deserves!

Working to transform lives

Our SI Mission says, 'Soroptimists inspire action and create opportunities to transform the lives of women and girls through a global network of members and international partnerships.' According to our SI Programme Goal, 'Soroptimist will ensure that women and girls enjoy equality, live in safe and healthy environments, have access to education and have leadership and practical skills.' Our primary task as a service organisation is therefore to work through programme and projects to improve the lives of women and girls. You, our members and our clubs, drive this work by helping the women in your communities and raising funds for projects in collaboration with other clubs.

In the years I have been on the Federation Board, I have visited many clubs in very different countries. Almost on every occasion I have been impressed by the projects realised by local Soroptimists through their dedication to the causes of women and girls. These projects were adapted to the needs of the respective communities in Europe as well as in different regions of Africa. It goes without saying that these needs are extremely diverse. I acknowledge that you know best where and how to help in your communities and that sometimes the projects and themes suggested by SI, SI/E or your Union may not always inspire the same interest. In addition, the various appeals can be confusing, and I have often heard members complain about the ever-changing international projects.

At European Federation level we have already changed this approach, and the theme

Club President Thérèse Fumey and Eliane de Souza from Club Lomé Aurore show SI/E President Eliane and Kathleen De Batselier a Benin project.



'Soroptimists go for Water' continues not only for the two years of my term of office, but also for the biennium of my successor, President elect Kathy Kaaf, each time with a slightly different focus.

Selecting a worldwide LTP

In line with the Strategic Plan of SI, it has been decided to introduce a worldwide Long-Term Project (LTP) for a ten-year period. Choosing a topic for this LTP is crucial, as it should appeal to as many clubs as possible in all four Federations. The SI Board would thus like to involve all members in the decision-making process and receive feedback about their topic preference. It took about one year to prepare a shortlist of six topics. Background papers were formulated for each subject and discussed during SI and SI/E Board meetings. At the last SI Officers meeting in February it was decided to keep two broad themes and let the Clubs decide which one they prefer. For the details of the procedure, please see the article on page 7.

It is the first time that an SI project will be chosen by the clubs. Each of our 3,158 clubs in four Federations will have one vote. The SI Voting Members have agreed to accept the choice of the clubs, and the SI Board will confirm this choice at its meeting in August. It is a unique opportunity for members to make their voice heard and to decide on a worldwide theme. As both topics are broad, they will allow each club to find projects adapted to the needs of their own community, but, at the same time, the entire SI organisation will be unified by a common theme, which will become our 'image de marque'. So, I urge you all to cast your vote for a project that will help secure a viable and successful profile for Soroptimist International!

In friendship

Eliane Lagasse, SI/E President



The scale of the devastation in Haiti is horrific, and the people are in

Earthquake aid in Haiti

SECURING WATER AND SANITATION IN A

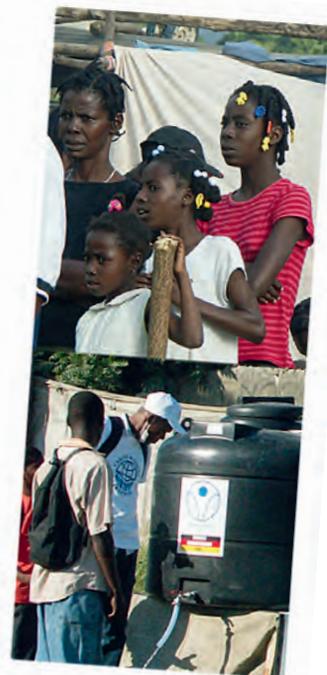
Many Soroptimists have reacted to the call to help Haiti. Other Federations, Unions and indeed individual Clubs have given financial support or collected donations. Sadly, there is no way of determining the total amount of aid or to illustrate the full impact of our generosity, but illustrative of all these efforts, we would like to report here on the exemplary work of one Club: Bad Schandau in Germany.

**'Haiti
Needs
Our
Help!'**

Thanks largely to the enormous commitment and energetic fund-raising efforts of Heidemarie Conrad, Club Bad Schandau alone has collected more than €12,000 towards a project in Haiti. Just days after the earthquake struck, Heidi had established contact with the aid organisation arche noVa - Initiative for People in Need, who had already sent a team to Haiti. This non-profit, non-governmental organisation works primarily to provide rapid and unbureaucratic sustainable aid to victims of war, suppression or natural dis-

asters. It carries the German DZI certification, which recognises organisations for exemplary transparency and efficiency in the application of donations.

After much research and consultations with the UN and other NGOs on site, arche noVa drew up a detailed plan for a project in Petit Goave, near the epicentre of the earthquake. The objectives of this project are to reduce disease and fatalities due to a lack of water and unhygienic conditions, secure potable and service water supplies and provide the population with sanitary and hygienic facilities. To meet these aims arche noVa plans to construct two washrooms and six sanitary installations, set up and install two water systems, offer hygiene education, distribute hygienic articles (soap, toothbrushes, towels, etc.) and perform tests to check the water quality. The project proposal is highly professional and also addresses gender-specific issues, avoidance of corruption and misuse, monitoring and budgeting. Total costs are estimated at € 25,000. arche noVa will also employ and train local people as part of the project. The designated site is under the control of a Czech humanitarian organisation called People in Need and has the status of a so-called



urgent need of clean drinking water and adequate sanitary facilities. SI/E is working with organisations like arche noVa e.V. to help provide much needed relief.

Photos: Erik Rescheleit of arche noVa

DEVASTATED COUNTRY

Child Friendly Space. It is also near a field clinic and a camp for internally displaced people, both of which will benefit from the project. The partnership with People in Need has the advantage to guarantee the long-term sustainability of the facility long work the engineers and staff of arche noVa have moved on to their next help for self-help endeavour.

Heidemarie Conrad has worked closely with the German headquarters of arche noVa in putting together this project and will personally oversee its realisation. The enormous benefit here is that all expenditures will be accounted for. After consultation with Club Port-au-Prince, the SI/E Board will allot some of the SI/E donations for Haiti to the arche noVa project. If you would like to help or are interested in more information, please contact Heidemarie Conrad at hc@condres.de or see the link www.soroptimist-badschandau.de/index.php?id=59. With every extra euro donated, more help can be provided.

The exemplary character of this aid effort is that while we have partnered with other specialist organisations, the impact and generosity of our Soroptimists will receive the recognition they deserve!

Club Port-au-Prince

A MESSAGE OF GRATITUDE

Club Port-au-Prince would like to warmly thank our sister SI clubs for their support after the terrible earthquake that hit Haiti on 12th January, completely destroying Port-au-Prince and causing extensive damage in Leogane and Petit Goaves. According to the latest reports, the disaster has left over 220,000 dead, thousands injured and a million homeless in a country already suffering from widespread poverty. Fortunately, none of our Club members perished, but some lost homes and/or businesses.

With such widespread devastation, there are many avenues we can take to offer relief to our tragedy-torn country. Of course, we are in contact with arche noVa. On a smaller scale we plan to assemble hygiene kits (sanitary towels, soap, disinfectant, toothpaste, etc.) to distribute to women in need because the lack of privacy and hygiene can lead to diseases that particularly affect women and their children. Another project is to provide food on a regular basis to an orphanage near Port-au-Prince. There is so much to do that relief efforts will no doubt continue over a long term.

We would like to thank those of you who have donated to the SI/E Haiti Fund or your Union or Clubs to help us realise these projects.

Nadège Bance Jacques, President
Club Port-au-Prince

SEEING HOW PROJECTS CHANGE LIVES

Study Tours to
Africa and India



Wilma Malucelli was moved by the gratitude of the children helped by Project Sierra.

SI organises Study Tours so that Soroptimists can see firsthand how our projects are improving the lives of women and girls. Italian Union President Wilma Malucelli writes about her experience in Africa, while Betty Meyboom of Club Friesland Zuid reports on the Study Tour in India.

SI and HANCI cooperate in Sierra Leone

My first SI Study Tour has been an interesting and exciting experience. In these few days, I gained a better understanding of the meaning and the value of our Quadrennial Project Sierra. It is difficult to convey my emotions after meeting the adults and children who thanked us for our support.

In my experience, international cooperation cannot succeed without collaboration with the local community. SI has chosen to work with HANCI (Help a Needy Child International) in Sierra Leone, and the results are successful! Supporting families and women's businesses and offering education are crucial factors in achieving social and economic development, and HANCI does this. The organisation is helping people take responsibility for their future, and this is making the difference: not to give a fish but to give the fishing rod...

In the eight years since the war, Sierra Leone has taken positive steps to improve aid, education and empowerment of women with the help of NGOs like SI and HANCI. The country's First Lady, Sia Koroma, and the officials from the Ministry of Welfare and Gender have confirmed this.

Tonny Filedt Kok, who helped organise the Study Tour to India, receives a bindi, the Indian forehead decoration.

Both HANCI and SI share the same vision and the same passion for helping women and children. It is not easy to choose an international project for SI, but I am sure that the best investment to improve the future of children is to offer them hope and opportunities for a better life.

A diversity of SI projects in India

Accompanied by SI President Hanne Jensbo, 13 Dutch and 12 Danish Soroptimists made a Study Tour to India earlier this year. Besides getting to know Soroptimists from India, the purpose was to visit and support their projects and to attend the charters of Clubs Bombay Gateway and Puna Metro East India.

India has 14 Soroptimist clubs in a country with 1.148 billion people. This compares to 100 clubs in the Netherlands with a population of 16 million, and 70 clubs in Denmark with 5 million people! However, these relatively few clubs have initiated a multitude of worthwhile projects to improve the lives of women and girls. Club North Bombay alone has realised a Toy Library at the Pali Chimai Municipal School where schoolchildren can play during breaks, a crèche in Nirwala Niwas where children from slums aged from six months to three years are cared for while their parents work, a nutrition programme and daily lunches for children at the St Franciscus Xavier School and a joint project with other NGOs at the Jyotis AIDS centre in Kamaboli where nuns care for outcast AIDS patients.

Three Clubs in Chennai have initiated a relief project for needy children where they receive meals, school uniforms and education, a home for abused women and their children in Ashraya and a programme to support schools by providing toys for the playpen, school uniforms and meals. Club Chennai Magna's latest project is to promote cleanliness among schoolchildren.

I could go on and on describing my impressions and all the interesting aspects of India we learned about. Indian Soroptimists deserve our support, not only with money, but also with recognition and appreciation.

Wilma Malucelli, President, Italian Union 2009-2011
Betty Meyboom, Club Friesland Zuid



Until now, every four years SI has introduced a new Quadrennial Project that has been realised in collaboration with other partner organisations. Sadly, our input and generosity have not always been recognised by the wider public. In connection with discussions on the Strategic Plan for SI, it was suggested that SI should consider a Long-Term Project (LTP) to be conceived, directed and implemented by Soroptimists specifically for women and girls in line with our SI Mission. In order to gain as widespread support as possible from clubs, the SI Board decided that the final shortlist of two LTPs would be communicated to all 3,158 clubs around the world so that each club can participate in the voting process. The SI Board has combined and reduced the original topics to two themes with the working titles: (1) Violence against Women and Girls including Human Trafficking (2) Empowering Women and Girls through Education and Leadership. In April every Union and Sin-

SELECTING A LONG-TERM PROJECT

gle Club will receive information to be distributed to clubs and members. This will comprise a summary of each topic – with the unabridged text appearing on the SI/E website – and voting instructions. In the following weeks, the Federations will initiate campaigns at Federation, Region, Union and National meetings as well as on the web and in print publications to encourage clubs to participate in the LTP voting process. From its headquar-

ters in Cambridge SI will promote the process on its website through the SI Programme Blog and in the new online TIS. The deadline for returning the ballot form with the club choice to their respective Federation is 1st July 2010. SI/E will then forward the tabulation to SI HQ with a courtesy copy to each Federation. The official results of the Club preference votes compiled by SI HQ will be presented at the SI Board Meeting in August. This outcome will then be communicated to members around the world, and work will begin on materials and a timeline for project component development. This is the first time that members will be able to choose a Long-Term Project. Please take the time to discuss the topics in your club and to vote for the topic you prefer. With the one club one vote system, every ballot counts. If you want the voice of SI/E to be heard, please submit your vote by 1st July and help us select a project theme that will give SI the profile we deserve!

Information from SI

TIS GOES ONLINE

The International Soroptimist, the magazine for all members of Soroptimist International across the four Federations, will be re-launched as a digital magazine on 15th March. The new editor is Sheila Manchester, who is also the editor of Soroptimist News, SIGBI's Federation magazine.

The International Soroptimist – or TIS, as it is known by many Soroptimists, will bring news of SI activities, successes, visits, events, campaigns and more. The editorial will be concise, sharp and interesting – no overlong features, no rambling reports, just a very readable selection of news, information and inspiration.

Online TIS will look just like a printed magazine. You will be able to turn the pages just as you would with a hard copy, zoom in to pieces that you want to read more closely or flick through to see what catches your eye. It will be easily accessed from a link on the Soroptimist International web-

site: www.soroptimistinternational.org and there will also be a link from the SI/E website to the magazine. In addition, members will be able to send the link to anyone who is interested in seeing the magazine; a great way of promoting Soroptimism.

A full PDF version will also be available to download from the website. This is a better option if you are planning to print off any or all of the pages.

Contributions from SI/E to TIS should be sent to the editor of The Link, Christine Cromwell-Ahrens at ccromwell-ahrens@cacs.de, who will help coordinate the input from our Federation. Any comments on the magazine can be directed to editor@soroptimistinternational.org.



The new online TIS is available via the SI website.

SOROPTIMISTS IN ACTION

UN Conference on Climate Change 2009



Above: The TV journalist wanted to know what our organisation is doing to raise climate consciousness.

Below right: Danish Soroptimists took turns manning the stand and answering questions about our activities.

All eyes were on Copenhagen during the two weeks in December when the Danish Government hosted the COP15 (the 15th Conference of Parties). Copenhagen, soon nicknamed 'Hopenhagen', was bustling with activities.

At the Bella Center, political leaders, invited NGOs and press from all over the world held high-level meetings and negotiations. Our official representatives to the Conference were SI President Hanne Jensbo, SI/E President elect Kathy Kaaf and SI Representative to FAO Else Larsen. The main Exhibition Hall was where NGOs exhibited their projects and ideas on dealing with climate change. Over 50 Danish Soroptimists took turns managing the SI stand here.

Networking on Gender and Climate Issues

The Conference programme was varied and full. UN Secretary Ban Ki-moon awarded the 'UN Messenger of Peace' medal to Kenyan Professor Wangari Maathai, who is also the first African woman to earn the Nobel Peace prize for her struggle for democracy, human rights and environmental conservation. We also attended a press conference with Barbara Stocking, Director of Oxfam, a side event on Climate Change and Food Security, which is very relevant to the SI

activities at FAO and joined in the NGO network on gender and climate change. In this network, particularly the Nordic countries are working to ensure that the new Climate Treaty will reflect that climate change affects women and men differently. Our impressions and highlights are available in SI blog archives at <http://siprogramme.blogspot.com>. We networked with many NGOs at the Conference - not least our partners, Oxfam and WAGGGS, who had kindly waived three of their seats to us.

Some 45 NGOs representing farmers, youth, indigenous people and different faiths had displays at the Exhibition Hall. Our SI stand was sandwiched between the 'Friends of the Earth' and a very active indigenous group from the Amazon region calling for the preservation of their local community. The Hall offered many side events including, speeches, debates, film and theatre shows on the effects of climate change, adaptation and mitigation.

SI stand attracted many visitors

More than 3000 people, politicians, government officials, NGOs, students and activists from all over the globe visited the SI stand in those two weeks. It was a real eye catcher with blue and yellow balloons, informative posters on the theme 'Women and Climate Change' and a video presentation showing Soroptimists in action, inspiring people to make climate-conscious decisions at home, work, school and public places. Four to



five Soroptimists ‘manned’ the stand each day to explain who we are, where we are and what we do and to share the results of their club activities on ‘Women and Climate Change’ funded by People’s Climate Action (www.peoplesclimate-action.dk). See also article on the Countdown to Copenhagen in The Link No 216.



agreed to cap temperature rise, reduce emissions and raise funds. The challenge is to come up with something legally binding at COP16 in December this year in Mexico. As Soroptimists, we will continue to inspire action and create opportunities to enable women influence decision making on those issues of climate change that affect women and girls the most. After all, it is very important to remember that WE ARE ALL PART OF THE SOLUTION.

This poster illustrates the challenges behind the ‘People’s Climate Action’.

Results achieved were only modest

While the outcome did not live up to the high hopes set for the Conference, it did result in the ‘Copenhagen Accord’ a political, but not a binding agreement. A number of countries also

Else Larson,
SI Representative to FAO

Statistics as per 30th June 2009

SI/E GAINS BOTH CLUBS AND MEMBERS

Overall SI/E membership in the period from 2008-2009 rose by 155 members. While 1,884 members left (reasons are not given so this can also mean by death), 2,039 new women joined our organisation.

Germany saw the largest growth with 316 new members, followed by Italy with 236 and the Netherlands with 198. In terms of membership, Italy is the European ‘Numero Uno’ with 5,614 members followed by Germany with 5,536 and the Netherlands with 3,300. If figures are analysed in relation to the population, our Soroptimists in Iceland (with a population of about 320,000) are especially successful. They enjoy 16 clubs and increased membership from 503 to 518 women.

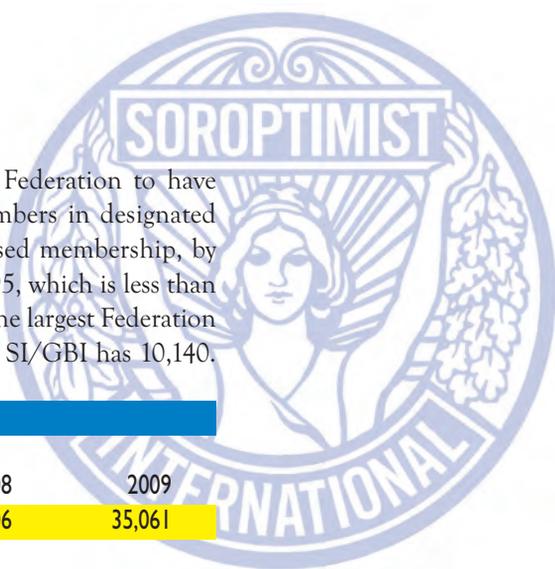
Kudos to SI/E extension in Africa, where membership is steadily increasing: the Federation gained 91 new Soroptimists there.

Fortunately, the economic crisis has not diminished our numbers, but we must still work very hard at retention and extension. SI as a whole has lost nearly 1,200 members and now counts 86,851

members. SI/E is the only Federation to have gained both Clubs and members in designated period. SI/SWP also increased membership, by 50, but their total is just 2,595, which is less than many of our Unions. SIA is the largest Federation with 39,055 members, while SI/GBI has 10,140.

SI/E at a Glance

	2008	2009
Membership total:	34,906	35,061
No. of Unions:	26	26
Unions Europe/Africa	33,297	33,403
Clubs in Unions:	1,148	1,159
Single Clubs Europe:	53	54
Membership:	1,044	1,036
Single Clubs Africa:	9	31
Membership:	565	622



SI/E Mentoring Programme begins

MENTORING POWER SUCCESS

After four successful runs, the Mentoring Programme first introduced in Germany in 2003 to promote young women in management positions will now be expanded to include more European countries. With a call for applicants, the pilot project of the SI/E Mentoring Programme 2010-2011 begins in April 2010 for mentors and mentees from Germany, Sweden, Belgium and Luxembourg. The selection process will finish in early summer, and the kick-off meeting will take place in Germany in September 2010. The programme will extend until July 2011 and will include two additional events for all participants.

To qualify the young women should already have several years of experience and aspire to further professional and personal development. Up to now, the average age of the mentees has been 32 years. Although the Programme is not restricted to a particular profession or sector, business careers have been the main focus in the past. Most mentees in Germany had a university degree, and some already had a family. English is a prerequisite for the SI/E Mentoring Programme. In addition to the initiator, Ulrike Schnell, Marita Hensel will coordinate the SI/E

Mentoring Programme. The Soroptimists involved in the new Programme in Germany and representatives from the partner organisation in the Mentoring Programme, EAF

Berlin, met with Daniela Stern, SI/E VP who is responsible for the new Mentoring Programme on the SI/E Board, at the 'Mentoring.Power.Success' Conference, held in Duesseldorf on 20th February. Some 300 women participated in the event jointly organised by the Ministry for Women's Affairs of Northrhine Westphalia and the German Union.

The aim of the event was to show the benefits of women mentoring women and of networking among women. Most of the participants were either mentors or mentees who had graduated from the Ministry's programme, titled KIM (the German acronym for 'Competence in Management'), or the German Union's Mentoring Programme. After speeches by the sponsors, including IPP of the German Union Hanne Schumann-Werder, Phoenix TV Anchor and Conference Moderator Conny Czymoch interviewed four pairs who had taken part in the respective programmes. It was clear from their remarks that the mentoring process offers tangible benefits for

Conference Moderator Conny Czymoch asked two mentor-mentee pairs about their experience with the programme.
(Photo: www.Atelier-fuerfotografie.de)



career and personal development as well as for networking.

The conference programme concluded with an inspiring speech by one of Germany's well-known coaches, Sabine Asgedom. Under the theme 'Reach for the Stars' the former journalist encouraged participants to pursue their professional dreams and goals. In addition to professional competence, women must believe in their own ability to excel and learn to make themselves and their qualities more visible at work.

Christel Lisa Dillmann, Club Mainz
Coordinator of the German Mentoring Programme



President elect Kathy Kaaf (left) and SI/EVP Daniela Stern (fourth from the right) met with those involved in the Soroptimist and KIM Mentoring Programmes at the Conference in Duesseldorf. (Photo: www.Atelierfuerfotografie.de)

Human Rights Summit

WOMEN HAVE THE COURAGE TO LEAD !

It was a fascinating experience to take part in the Human Rights Summit for Women Leaders under the motto 'The Courage to Lead', held in Geneva, Switzerland from 8th-10th December 2009. Hosted by the US-based organisations Vital Voices and the Eleanor Roosevelt Project, the international Summit was divided into three areas: access to adequate food and shelter, access to education and political empowerment and the protection from violence against women and human trafficking.

Every panel featured experts in the field, including UN Special Rapporteurs, lawyers, prosecutors, professors, and activists, who all demonstrated their courage to lead. The emphasis on education and empowerment was overwhelming, as education allows women to dream and articulate and also helps them to be strong citizens. Indeed, knowledge is power! The lack of political will on the part of the government was often cited as the main obstacle to achieving full rights for women. VitalVoices has also initiated the Global Women's Mentoring Partnership, which matches successful women to mentor young women who have shown promise in their respective area. This project is very similar to the German Union's Mentoring Programme, which SI/E



hopes to expand to a European scale. The Summit organisers invited world-renowned women and emerging leaders from the Mentoring Partnership to take part in the Geneva summit in order to share their knowledge and experiences. There may be a possibility for SI members join forces with VitalVoices to mentor some of their mentees or vice versa.

The Geneva Summit was an incredible opportunity for networking and making contacts among the 40 women participating from 27 different countries, many of whom showed interest in Soroptimist work and were intrigued to hear that Soroptimist International is a network of professional women. Some of them are now even considering joining local Soroptimist clubs in their countries!

The conference culminated in an interesting satellite interactive dialogue with US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

The content of the Summit was both rich and exhilarating, especially since the objectives are completely in line with our own. After all, Soroptimists around the globe are also giving women and girls the courage to lead!!!



Suba Parthiban
SI/E Programme Officer



Megan Billings, Programme Intern (above), Sina Stiffler, SI Representative to the UN Geneva (left) and the author Suba Parthiban, SI/E Programme Officer (below), participated in the inspiring Summit programme.

A COUNTRY FULL OF SURPRISES



Left: Improving the lives of children is one of the main aims of projects in Suriname. Below: Sewing provides local women with a livelihood for themselves and their families.

The National Women's Movement (NVB) of Suriname is a member organisation of Women for Water Partnership (WfWP) along with Soroptimist International of Europe. Through this network, we were invited to a visit to Suriname from 5th-14th February to study projects on water and sanitation, education, health, and agriculture. This exchange was also a great opportunity to discover the smallest South American country with an incredibly diverse population of just half a million and wonderful nature, including an unspoilt rainforest. Suriname is part of the Dutch Union.

NVB was established in 1982 and has developed into an organisation with the capacity to undertake major national projects. It designs, develops and improves projects with local women's organisations. We were very interested to observe how NVB encourages women to be leaders in their communities and take the ownership of the projects. NVB's gender approach in the strategic management of their projects is of vital interest for us.

Our visit was an exchange of experience, a sharing of knowledge and a building of network between NVB and SI/E. NVB's Founding Director and WfWP's Steering Committee member Siegmien Staphorst and her staff explained their respective responsibilities and the work done in various areas: training, coaching and capacity building of women and their organisations, women entrepreneurship, vocational training, change for children, small credit system, agronomy projects and housing programme.

One highlight of the visit was our trip to the villages of Asidonhopo, Djumu, Godo, Masiakriki, Heikununu and Pikin Slee

along the Upper Suriname River where we saw grassroots projects involving soap making, handicrafts made out of rainforest seeds, school garden programmes, childcare centres, vegetable planting with technical help of NVB, micro-credit system and the construction of ecosan toilets and water installations. It was impressive to witness the passion and dedication of the NVB staff.

Our discussion with the Ilse Henar foundation for women's rights was also fascinating. They provide legal aid to the local population and create awareness about legal rights. Although equal rights are guaranteed in Suriname law, women still need assistance and guidance with regards to family law, sexual harassment, domestic violence and employment. The office offers legal advice through information sessions, radio, video productions and mobile units. The Foundation also lobbies for legislation on women's and children's rights.

Last but not least, we visited a Soroptimist water project in Dantapu. Members of Club Paramaribo work in cooperation with Pater Ahlbrinck Stichting (PAS) to provide water tanks that collect rainwater and thus supply safe and clean water to the village. PAS also trains inhabitants in the proper use and maintenance of the tanks.

We offer special thanks to WfWP and Eugenia Velland-Uiterloo, Coordinator Watsan-NVB, for making this exchange possible. The visit to Suriname was an experience of a lifetime. We learned a lot about local projects, created strong friendships and gained a lasting impression of a magical country.



Roswitha Ott, SI/E Project Manager Africa
Suba Parthiban, SI/E Programme Officer

Club Cotonou Gazelle

PARTNERING IN WATER PROJECTS

Since its charter in 2002, Club Cotonou Gazelle has initiated many projects to help the people of Benin, also thanks to the diverse material and financial support of many Soroptimists and their clubs. When I became President of Club Cotonou Gazelle in October 2008, I chose to continue with the great efforts and projects already launched by my Club's Past Presidents. So, my theme has been to provide access to drinking water to our country's poorest people.

The first wide-diameter well of my term was officially inaugurated in June 2009 in the village of Dangbo in the Sailaga region with support from Italian sponsors and partners, to whom we are eternally grateful. The most recent accomplishment was to construct a wide-diameter well at the Wété Centre in the Bonou district, which was inaugurated in January 2010. This well was sponsored by Claudio & Guisseppina Vita.

A third well will be completed in the village of Italebe in the district of Saketé. The German Club Lippstadt has kindly financed this project,



and the well will be inaugurated in March 2010. The village of Gnamako in the district of Houéyogbé will benefit from a fourth well.

A project to build a water tower in Abomey in the village of Agnangnan Gbècon-Xwegbo will also be initiated in 2010. In addition, the Icelandic Club Hafnarfjordur and Gardabaer will finance the building of latrines in Agbohoue. Club President Margret Helgadóttir made a special personal contribution of € 1620.

Italian Soroptimist Guisseppina Vita and Club President Moubaraka unveil the new well at the Wété Centre while the other Club members look on.

Moubaraka Adjao Akinotcho
 President, Club Cotonou Gazelle

ATTRACTIVE



PLAQUE FOR PROJECTS

Advertising our good deeds SI/E President Eliane has seen a lot of projects during her years on the Federation Board, many of which were not recognisable as facilities funded by SI/E or were only marked with makeshift signs. So, she had the idea to produce sturdy laminated plaques, which can be used to identify Soroptimist projects, such as a well or sanitary facilities. The attractive sign with Soroptimist International of Europe and the logo will not only advertise our name, but also withstand wind and weather for years to come.

To order one of the plaques, which will cost about € 22, please contact SI/E headquarters in Geneva.

Let the local community know that a well, school or other project has been funded by SI/E with this sturdy plaque available from SI/E HQ.

KNOWING YOU HAVE FRIENDS

The two terrible earthquakes were separated by less than nine months: the town of L'Aquila in the region of Abruzzo, Italy was hit in April 2009, followed by disaster in Haiti in January 2010. Thankfully, in both cases, all Soroptimists survived the catastrophe, but many had friends and family who were affected. As the world watches in horror after such events, people quickly ask what can we do? How can we help the people? It is often difficult to find the best answer and to determine where is the biggest need.

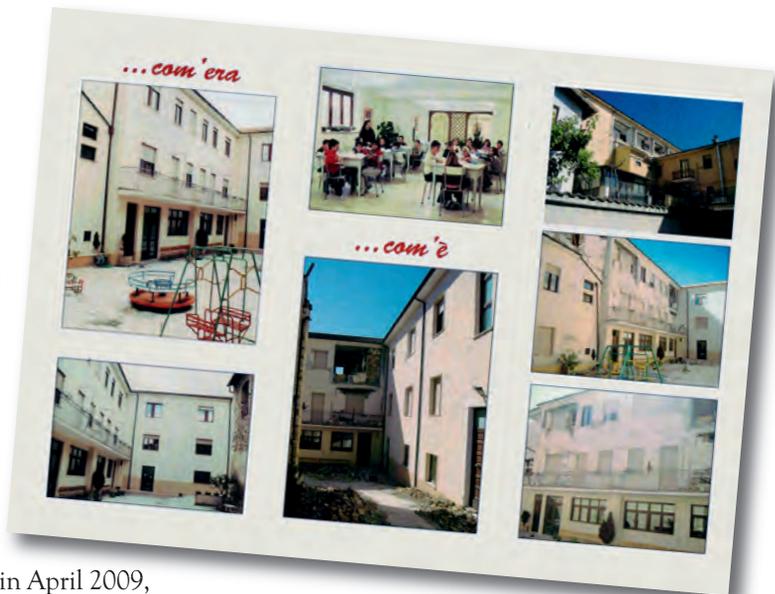
We Italian Soroptimists – also thanks to the support of many Soroptimist friends all over the world – have collected and are collecting money to support Club L'Aquila. It took several months before choosing the project from the suggestions made by the local club. At the Annual Meeting in November, the Delegates of the Italian Union approved the proposal to restore a boarding school for girls studying in L'Aquila. Helping girls

The money donated by Soroptimists after the earthquake in L'Aquila will go to rebuilding a girls' boarding school.

with their education is helping to rebuild the city and the society. We feel this project is well suited to our mission and vision.

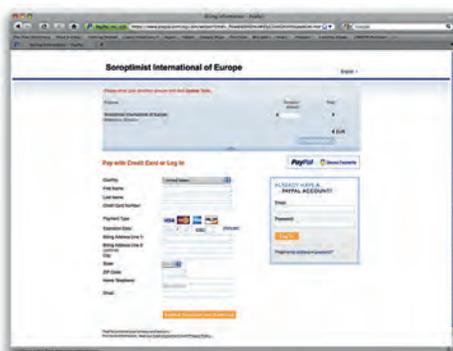
Soroptimist support for the people of Haiti will perhaps be just a drop, but I know well that many drops make an ocean! The most important thing, in such situations of deep sorrow, is to know that you have many friends all over the world. Whether in L'Aquila or in Haiti, you will find the same suffering, the same tears and the same need for help!

Wilma Malucelli, President, Italian Union 2009-2011



PayPal on the SI/E website

The PayPal section of the SI/E website facilitates the donation process.



MAKING DONATIONS EASIER!

SI/E headquarters has recently installed PayPal on the SI/E website. This system is a widely recognised secure payment method, in which our members may donate to their preferred humanitarian causes. Eventually, the SI/E website will host an online shop, featuring a variety of items that also can be purchased with the help of the PayPal system. Members just need to introduce their credit card information to donate or to purchase an item, once our online shop is functional. We urge you to regularly visit our website since it is updated on a regular basis with vital information concerning our Federation and Soroptimists worldwide. See you at www.soroptimisteurope.org !

8th European Friendship Days in Costa del Sol

THE POWER OF OPTIMISM

The five Spanish Clubs working together have great pleasure in inviting all our Soroptimist sisters to participate in the 8th European Meeting and Friendship Days in Mijas from 15th-17th October 2010. Mijas is a typical white village set in the hills above the blue Mediterranean. This land of the Alhambra in Granada and Pablo Picasso's birthplace in Malaga promises warm weather and an even warmer Andalusian welcome.

The venue is the wonderful four-star Hotel Mijas (www.hotel-trhmijas.com), where we have been offered exceptional rates for all Soroptimists and their guests. The programme starts with a welcome session on the Friday evening and a full day conference on Saturday exploring the power of optimism with guest speakers and round table discussions. Simultaneous interpretation will be offered in three languages; English, French and of course Spanish. There will even be the opportunity to appreciate and learn about the 'tastes of Spain'. Saturday's programme will culminate in a Gala Dinner. An optional excursion to Malaga is planned for Sunday, and additional excursions are being organised for Monday and Tuesday.

So, come and make new friends, meet up with old acquaintances, discuss Soroptimist business and enjoy! Bring your partner and stay for a few extra days – once here you will find it difficult to leave.

Please visit our website www.si-es.org for more details and to register. And remember airlines have wonderful deals if you book your flights early!

We look forward to your company and being able to say, **BIENVENIDA A ESPAÑA!**



Top: Come see the hilltop village of Mijas during the Friendship Days in Spain!

Above: Sign up for one of the excursions and enjoy the Spanish beaches.

Stop impunity for sexual crimes

SI/E TAKES
A STAND

In a statement published earlier this year, Thomas Hammarberg, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, urged governments and parliaments to take sexual assault crimes more seriously and suggested that more has to be done to prevent and punish sexual violence and rape crimes. On behalf of SI/E, President Eliane and Françoise Ferey, our representative to the Council of Europe, quickly showed our support for Hammarberg's comments by submitting the following statement, which appears on the Council of Europe website:

'As members of Soroptimist International, a worldwide organisation that has been acting as a global voice for women in striving to advance the status of women and to promote human rights for nearly 90 years, we are deeply concerned by any form of sexual violence against women and therefore subscribe to the necessity of respecting the integrity of persons as expressed by the Commissioner for Human Rights, Thomas Hammarberg. We completely agree that governments and parliaments must do everything in their power to both prevent and punish these crimes. We therefore fully support the Human Rights Commissioner's demand that sexual assault crimes be prosecuted more efficiently so as to put an end to their impunity. We commit ourselves to this effort and urge all relevant authorities to consider this issue a priority and act as quickly as possible to remedy the situation for the dignity of all women in the world.'

To read the Commissioner's statement in full, please see: www.coe.int/t/commissioner/Viewpoints/100111_en.asp.

Dutch Union helps its twin

CLEAN WATER FOR IDPS IN GEORGIA

The Georgian Union will organise tours through their beautiful country to raise money to improve the water supplies to thousands of displaced persons in camps.

In the last 15 years the SI of Europe has grown considerably thanks to its effective extension work, especially in Eastern Europe. It is understandable that many of these new Clubs and Unions need some guidance in their early years. So, Immediate Past SI/E President Mariet Verhoef-Cohen initiated the 'Twinning Programme' to match longer standing, and thus more experienced Unions with relatively new ones to help them in the Soroptimist world.

SI/E invited the Dutch Union to twin with the Georgian Union, and I was appointed contact person. Georgia has five Soroptimist clubs. Formerly, this was the minimum requirement for a Union, but at the Governors' Meeting in Warsaw in 2008, it was decided to raise this number to seven to create a sounder basis for the future. With only five clubs the Union of Georgia has a



big responsibility to continue to fulfil the expectations of a Union.

After e-mail contact and a personal visit in 2008, the Governors and President of the Dutch Union met their Georgian sisters during the Governors' Meeting in Amsterdam and agreed to keep up regular contact. I visited Georgia in early September for a meeting with all the clubs in Tbilisi. We discussed improving internal communication, news from Clubs or from the Federation, a national umbrella project and how to coordinate the activities of such a national project. An editorial committee will be set up for a newsletter and a project committee will be

Asian Working Conference

PARTNERING WITH WFWP IN SRI LANKA

Marina van Koten discusses the Kandy water project.



As a member of Club Wassenaar, Netherlands, and the representative of the Dutch Council of Women to the Women for Water Partnership (WfWP), I participated in the Asian Working Conference of the WfWP in Sri Lanka in November 2009. During my stay I also visited two hospitals, where a project will be implemented by NetWater, WfWP's Sri Lankan partner. The WfWP is a federation of twenty-two women's organisations, mostly focused on water issues, on four continents. These NGOs are fighting poverty through water and sanitation projects, involving local women's groups. One of WfWP's most important tools is to organise regional working conferences in Eastern Europe, Africa, the Caribbean and Asia. Experts give lectures on such topics as water and gender, water and sanitation. Furthermore, workshops are organised on new projects and attended by experts, government representatives, and sponsors, including the UN and private or service organizations.

At the Asian Working Conference I attended, initiatives were devised in workshops for six coun-

appointed to organise the national project at the different locations in Georgia.

Eventually, the Georgian Union decided on a national project to improve the situation of the hundreds of thousands of internal displaced persons (IDPs) emerging after the war in August 2008. Despite government housing and support, there is a shortage of almost everything, including jobs. As the primary carers, the women often suffer the greatest. Hygiene and potable water are among the biggest problems, so the Soroptimists are concentrating on improving this situation. In Tskaltubo existing water reservoirs have to be cleaned, and filters installed. In other four cities water reservoirs also have to be build. The Soroptimists intend to raise funds themselves by, for instance, organising a tour through Georgia. However, they will need help through further donations because € 18,000 will be needed. So, besides our own assistance, the Dutch Union hopes that clubs outside the Netherlands will feel inspired to contribute too. If so, please contact the Dutch Union info@soroptimist.nl, or myself (n.fontein@planet.nl).

Nelleke Fontein, Contact Person for Twinning with Georgia in the Dutch Union

tries in Asia. My workshop dealt with a rainwater project in Nepal that will supply water badly needed in the dry period. Several women from the NGO superbly prepared the project, before it was ready to take on a more definitive form. We hope this will lead to financing and implementation in the short term.

In addition, I visited a district hospital in Kandy and a maternity clinic on the coast at Negombo. Both projects are supported by my Club Wassenaar in line with the SI/E theme water and sanitation. Kandy had already started a pilot project to see whether rainwater could be used for toilets, laundry and vegetables/herb cultivation as well as if it is possible to collect water during the wet spells. Currently, the Water Board in Negombo only supplies the small maternity clinic supporting 45,000 people with drinking water for two hours each day. Storage of water is extremely urgent, especially during dry spells.

Marina van Koten, Club Wassenaar

Seminar in Bucharest

TRAINING THE TRAINERS



The first 'Train the Trainers' seminar of the Soroptimist year took place in Bucharest in November with participants from seven countries. I organised the event with Romanian Union President Elena Savu, Club Bucharest, and IPP Rodica Maciucă, Club Brasov. Kirsten Sveder from Sweden (former 1st SI/E VP) is the special consultant for the Training Seminars in Europe, and she kindly takes care of all invitations, locations, follow up etc.

I first informed participants about SI/E. This included our structure and responsibilities, projects and on-line reporting, different kind of tools to use



The Train the Trainers event prepares Soroptimists for mini-seminars in their own countries.

on the SI/E website, how to start a project and raise money in this difficult time. I also covered how to run a Union compared to running Single Clubs, how to obtain new members (extension/retention) and what it means to be a Soroptimist with all the positive sides and difficult

aspects. Another important point of this seminar is to prepare attendees for their own 'mini-seminars' to educate as many members as possible in their respective home countries. Ideally, these follow-up seminars should be organised within six months after the Train the Trainers event.

Although I handled the SI/E matters, the participants made all the other presentations. This seminar gives Soroptimists a chance to meet cross borders and expand their own network and friendship, which helps strengthen our organisation and is delightful for all involved.

According to subsequent evaluation, the seminar seems to have been a success. For the first time ever, participants were obliged to commit to educating their members at home before taking part in the seminar. We are looking forward to receiving their reports on the results by 1st May 2010. The next seminar will take place in Prague in April 2010.

Ulla Madsen, SI/E 1st Vice President

A STANDING OVATION IN SOLOTHURN



From right: Solothurn Club President Claudia Pfluger and Club VP Dr Jutta Thellaman presented Dr Monika Hauser with a cheque for *medica mondiale*.

More than 500 Soroptimists and their guests followed the invitation of Club Solothurn to hear Dr Monika Hauser, winner of the Right Livelihood Award in 2008 and founder of '*medica mondiale*', deliver a heartfelt speech on her work with traumatised women victims of war-related sexual violence on 2nd February.

In her written message read to the audience, Micheline Calmy-Rey, a member of the Swiss Federal Council, underlined that combating violence against women is still not accepted as an important task of international human rights and stressed the importance of Monika Hauser's commitment. Deputy Mayor Barbara Streit-Kofmel greeted participants on behalf of the city and paid tribute to Dr Hauser's work. Romy Teutsch-Martin, Governor of the Swiss Union, gave a short summary of the goals and organisation of Soroptimist International.

With enormous charisma and clear words Monika Hauser explained the various areas of

activities of *medica mondiale* and the challenges of their projects. She vividly conveyed the scope of their aid to women victims of violence. The audience showed their appreciation for this work through a long standing ovation. The event was widely supported by a number of sponsors, benefactors and guests from the Swiss cantons of Aargau, Solothurn and Bern. Soroptimists from the Clubs Biel, Bern, Burgdorf, Emmenthal, Langenthal, Liestal, Neuchâtel, Zürich, and even Locarno especially showed their solidarity.

Finally, President of Club Solothurn, Claudia Pfluger, surprised the winner of the Alternative Nobel Prize with a cheque for the equivalent of nearly € 18,000 (the donation eventually reached almost € 20,000) for the Swiss *medica mondiale* foundation and collected through the sale of admission tickets and donations.

Claudia Pfluger,
President Club Solothurn

Swiss Union's French-speaking clubs

RAISING AWARENESS OF WATER ISSUES

In November 2009, six French-speaking Swiss clubs (Lausanne, Lavaux, Montreux, Rolle, Vevey and Yverdon-les-Bains) organised a public conference to raise awareness about worldwide water shortages. Professor Alexander J.B. Zehnder, an eminent specialist in environmental matters and former president of the Ecoles Polytechniques Fédérales, presented the ecological, political and social issues at stake regarding our planet's water. Around 300 people attended the conference to learn more about the huge task facing us in the coming years.

Two water-related projects undertaken by Clubs Lausanne and Rolle were beneficiaries of the funds raised during the conference and from club donations; one involves water facilities in Lausanne itself to help those in difficult situations by providing them with sanitation and washing facilities, and the other, in Guinkouma, Burkina Faso, where the school complex urgently needs a solar-powered installation to pump water automatically from the existing borehole. Nearly



In her address, Swiss Union President Emma Brugnoli pointed out that although the right to water is in the Federal Constitution, its use is not effectively regulated.

€ 8,000 were raised and divided between the two projects.

Thanks to the efforts made by each club to inform the media and political, ecological and social affairs stakeholders, the Soroptimists managed to pull off a major public relations operation, enhancing the organisation's profile and achieving their aim to increase awareness on various different levels.

Germaine Grobet,
Club Lavaux

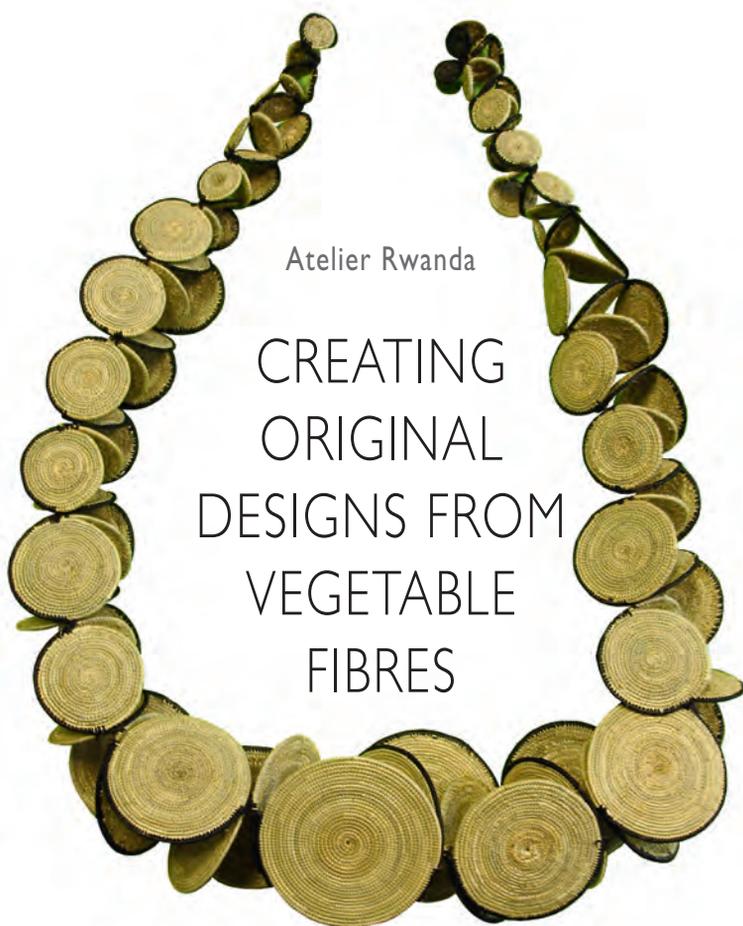
16th French-Speaking Days in Luxembourg

CELEBRATING A BEAUTIFUL LANGUAGE



The lovely town of Clervaux in Luxembourg is the venue of the 16th 'French-Speaking Days', which takes place from 7th-9th May 2010. The Clubs Diekirch, Eisléck and Mosaik will host the event under the motto, 'Women, Cultures and Initiatives'. The programme will feature speakers from the social sector, science, culture and politics each of whom will approach this theme from his or her own point of view and experience. Visits to cultural sights and one of the central hydroelectric plants are also planned for the weekend. The Hôtel International in Clervaux is the location of the meeting. For more information, please see: www.soroptimist.lu.

Clervaux is a medieval market town set in the narrow valley of the river Klierf in northern Luxembourg.



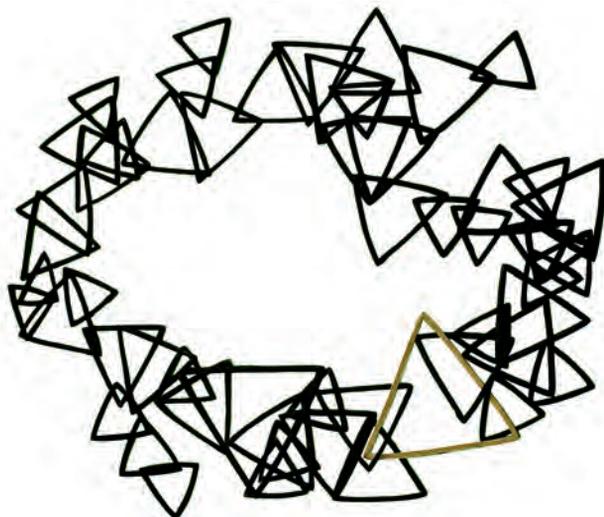
Atelier Rwanda

CREATING
ORIGINAL
DESIGNS FROM
VEGETABLE
FIBRES

The 26 students attending the workshop experimented to create lovely jewellery.

Giving value to traditional vegetable fibre designs was the aim of the first workshop in Rwanda last autumn, organised as a part of the Atelier Rwanda programme.

The Atelier Rewards Programme is sponsored by the Fondazione Claudio Buziol of Venice under the scientific guidance of Professor Gaddo Morpurgo of the Iuav University in Venice. Partnering with the Foundation in the programme, in addition to the University and the Kigali Institute of Science and Technology (KIST), are several Italian Clubs, Club San Marino and the Kigali Clubs of Soroptimist International. The organisers were pleased to welcome visitors to the



workshop, Charles Murigande, Education Minister of Rwanda and Abraham Atta Ogwu, Rector of KIST, who had come to learn more about the programme.

The aim of the programme is to increase cultural exchange between Europe and Africa in the fields of architecture and design in order to give greater value to the resources and working practices that exist in Africa. Attended by 26 students from both the KIST and Iuav, workers from Kigali and Butaré as well as 10 teachers and assistants from the two universities, the first workshop also had the financial support of the Cassa di Risparmio di San Marino.

Participants were able to experiment with the application of traditional Rwandan techniques such as Agaseks K'uruhindu to create highly valu-



Participants in the workshop created unique jewellery and designs typical of Rwanda. (Photos: Fondazione Claudio Buziol)

able jewellery and make building materials from leaves, bark and banana.

The second workshop in Kigali will deal with the development and the application of banana tree, and other vegetable fibres, in building design. The laboratory will be held at the Centre d'accueil et de formation San Marco in Kigali, headquarters of the Atelier Rwanda, from 10th May to 24th September 2010, and it will be divided in ten learning units of two weeks each, in order to properly follow the construction on the site. The results from these workshops will be presented at the Made in Rwanda Exhibition showing traditional and innovative designs in vegetable fibres, which will be held at the headquarters of the Fondazione Claudio Buziol in September 2010 during the 12th International Exhibition of Architecture at the Venice Biennale.

For further information, please see www.fondazioneclaudiobuziol.org or <http://atelierwanda.wordpress.com>.



After your excursion through the countryside, you will enjoy a relaxing dinner and more sights on board the Noorderzon.

Club Gouda

ENJOY A BOAT AND BIKE TRIP

Want to see the Netherlands from a different perspective? Club Gouda is organising a boating and cycling trip through the beautiful Western Dutch countryside from 11th-18th September 2010. The eight-day excursion begins in Amsterdam and ends in Gouda, while

taking you through such historical cities as Leiden, Delft and The Hague. The trip also includes daily cycling adventures offering the typical scenery of canals, windmills and farms. You will also have the chance to meet plenty of Soroptimists and enjoy Dutch hospitality with Clubs along the way. For details, see www.soroptimist.nl/html/index.php?clubID=45 or contact Elly Hoogveld at veldhoog@xs4all.nl for a reservation form.



French lessons will be given at the well-known CAVILAM audiovisual centre.

ing to improve their French. The course is provided by the highly specialised CAVILAM (audiovisual centre of modern languages) and lasts two weeks from 6th to 17th September 2010. Club Vichy will fund the French course, while the participant is asked to pay for her own travel and lodging. The cost of lodging with a French family, which includes breakfast and one other meal, is € 24.50 per day. During their stay the students will have the chance to meet the members of Club Vichy. Please send applications to the following address before 30th April 2010: **Club de Vichy, Hotel Pavillon D'Enghien, Rue Callou, 03200 Vichy** or per email to Club President Marie Françoise Butey at butey.jean-claude@neuf.fr.

Fundraising in Madrid

MUSIC FOR SIERRA LEONE

The Irish tin whistle, Greek dances, sweet Habaneras and cabaret were some of the pieces that entertained the audience at Club Madrid's musical evening in November 2009. Add an English-

man and a Scot singing Irish songs, a storyteller from Córdoba, Argentina, zarzuela from Madrid and international attendees, and you have a varied and lively programme, thoroughly enjoyed by all. Ultimately, the entire audience ended up on their feet, dancing 'La Cucuracha'. We all went home (or to party) in a good mood, and in the knowledge that we had raised € 800 for the SI Quadrennial Project Sierra helping families out of poverty. Members of the audience asked us to repeat it, and maybe we will. It was a fun experience for a great cause.



A variety show in the true sense of the word entertained the audience.

Club Vichy scholarships

IMPROVE YOUR FRENCH!

An invitation from Club Plovdiv

A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE

Top right: Club Plovdiv set up eight drinking fountains as part of its 'Water is Life' project.

Below: Betül Elmasoglu welcomed the chance to meet Soroptimists in Bulgaria.



Club Plovdiv invited Soroptimists to a special weekend in December to learn more about their 'Let's Play Together' project. I decided to travel to Bulgaria, following the good advice of our Turkish Union President Emine Erdem, who always encourages us to visit Soroptimist clubs in other countries to see their projects and exchange ideas.

The project involved establishing a playground to allow handicapped children to play with other children. They also provided fitness equipment that can be used by handicapped children. Another objective of the project was to help fight obesity in children.

Some 170 Club members and guests took part in the first dinner, featuring Bulgarian folk dances and two pop singers. In my honour, the General Consulate of Turkey, Cuneyt Yavuzcan, was also invited to the event. A touching speech by a handicapped child who thanked the Club for its generosity brought tears to our eyes!

The next day we visited Plovdiv's Old Town and saw the



eight drinking fountains built by the Club in the town centre as part of the 'Water is Life' project. The touristic programme included the Roman amphitheater, the St. Constantine and Elena Churches and an Art Gallery. We then drove to the village of Brestovica, where we enjoyed a wine tasting and had dinner in the restaurant of the Todoroff wine cellar.

On Sunday we went to Sofia and saw many of the famous sights. Because of my Turkish coffee 'crisis', we lunched in a Turkish restaurant and had a Turkish coffee with 'baklava'. Afterwards we said good-bye to our new friends from Club Plovdiv with the hope that we will meet again.

Many thanks to Club President Dilyana Vitcheva and the other Club members, but especially Olga Petrova, Penka Petleshkova, Evgenia Popivanova, Antonia Borisova and Nikola Toromanov for their hospitality and friendship.

*Betül Elmasoglu, Club Karsiyaka/Izmir
IGU Coordinator of Turkish Union*

Register now

JOIN THE THRACIAN TREASURES TOUR

This colourful Thracian tomb is just one highlight of the fascinating programme in Bulgaria.

One of the benefits of being a Soroptimist is the frequent chance to travel to other countries, meet new friends and enjoy wonderful cultural and touristic programmes organised by the local Clubs. This year, for example, Club Sofia II Boyana Club of Bulgaria is once again inviting Soroptimists, their families and friends to take part in the Thracian Treasures Tour from 29th May to 4th June. The tour will take you through Sofia, Starosel, Hissar, Pavel Banya, Kazanlak, Perperikon, the Rodopi Mountains and Plovdiv to see the sights and learn about the many Thracian treasures. For more details and to register, please see the website www.thracian-treasure-tour.hit.bg or contact Rosina Makedonska at rmakedonska@abv.bg.



Club Carcassonne's 60th anniversary

SHOWING SOLIDARITY FOR L'AQUILA

Club Carcassonne celebrated its 60th anniversary on 16th-18th October 2009. It could have been a festive reunion like any other, but this exceptional long weekend was particularly marked with emotion and sensitivity. The club offered the trip and their hospitality to their 'Friendship Link', Club L'Aquila. The town of L'Aquila had been severely hit by an earthquake on 7th April.

On Thursday evening, Giovanna Giammaria Colangelo, President of Club L'Aquila, along with eight members and four 'Soroptimisters' were warmly received by the Carcassonne Club President Claude Chabert and all the club members.

Over 60 people – including French Union President Raphaëlla Melon, the regional Vice President Maguy Normandin, SI/E PP Monique Rivière and Soroptimists from 15 French clubs as well as from the UK, Belgium and Italy – gathered together for a convivial buffet on Friday night.

Over the weekend, the guests and their hosts visited several sights in the area, and Paola Ardizzola presented a film showing the city of L'Aquila before and after the earthquake. Almost 130 people attended the dinner that night. At the farewell meal on Sunday, Claude Chabert presented Giovanna Colangelo with money raised by various French and international clubs to help rebuild the city. Participants agreed that the weekend was a symbol of generosity and international solidarity.

Claude Chabert, President of Club Carcassonne (left), looks on as Giovanna Colangelo, President of Club L'Aquila lights the Soroptimist candle.



By ordering Soroptimist dirndls, you are helping to employ Austrian women and financing the training of women in South Africa.

SI Dirndls from Austria

FASHION AND MORE...

The ubiquitous slogan 'Think globally – act locally' has been perfectly put into action with the Dirndl initiative by the Austrian Club Spittal/Millstaettersee.

The dirndl, the traditional costume of southern Germany and Austria, is still worn by many women of the Alpine region, especially at local events. In support of their project the members of Club Spittal/Millstaettersee in beautiful Carinthia came up with the idea to add the specific 'SI touch' and offer dirndls in the typical colors as well as embroidered accessories.

The benefits of this campaign are multifold: Austrian women who lost their jobs in the local textile industry have been given the task of producing the dirndls. The proceeds of the SI Dirndls will be donated to the project 'Khukhusa' in South Africa, where the women will be trained in producing local textiles and traditional pottery in order to have a steady source of income and become independent. And of course equally important: The PR factor of these attractive traditional dresses.

For more details please visit the website <http://www.soroptimist.at/spittal> where you'll find all the info regarding colors, sizes and how to order. Thank you for supporting this creative cause!

INTERNATIONAL SOROPTIMISTS EUROPEAN

29th May 2010

Yerevan (Armenia)

Charter to be presented by
SI/E President Eliane Lagasse

Club President

Tamara Sarkisian
10/1 Zarobyan Str., apt. 11
AM - Yerevan
Phone: +374 10 544365 /
91 411877
E-mail: tamsar@sci.am

19th June 2010

Trabzon (Turkey)

Charter to be presented by
SI/E President Eliane Lagasse

Club President

Nuray Dizdar
Gold Comp. & Elek.
TR - Yenimahalle/Trabzon
Phone: +90 532 253 69 79
E-mail:
nuray@nuraydizdar.com.tr

26th June 2010

Acqui Terme (Italy)

Charter to be presented by
SI/E Assistant Programme

Director Stina Söderlund

Club President

Cristina Brugnone
Via Scozia 13
IT - 15011 Acqui Terme (AL)
Phone: +39 347 263 6076
E-mail: info@etat.it

20th April 2010

25th Anniversary

Club Zutphen
(The Netherlands)

7th-9th May 2010

50th Anniversary

Club La Spezia (Italy)

8th-9th May 2010

25th Anniversary

Club Geneva-Rhone
(Switzerland)

8th May 2010

25th Anniversary

Club Soignies (Belgium)

18th May 2010

25th Anniversary

Club Mosaik-Limburg
(The Netherlands)

23rd May 2010

6th International Peace Marathon

Club Kigali (Rwanda)

28th-30th May 2010

50th Anniversary

Club Coire (Switzerland)

3rd-4th July 2010

SI/E Governors' Meeting

Ghent (Belgium)

2nd-3rd July 2010

50th Anniversary

Club Vevey (Switzerland)

15th-17th October 2010

8th European Friendship Days

Mijas (Spain)

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)

INTERNATIONAL AWARENESS DAYS

 Please submit your texts to the
Editor for the next issue of
The Link by 30th April 2010!

NEW SI/E CLUBS
TO BE
CHARTERED

FORTHCOMING
EVENTS FOR SI/E