



# The Link

A global voice for women

2/2011-2012 N° 225



20<sup>th</sup> SIE Congress in Berlin  
A 'Vision of Paradise'  
in Every Respect

An Interview with Anne Simon  
'Time to Engage in  
Social Responsibility'

Soroptimist Work at the UN  
Our Representatives Help  
Give Women a Voice

**S**oroptimist 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 58 countries. Soroptimists inspire action and create opportunities to transform the lives of women and girls through a global network of members and international partnerships. Consult our website at [www.soroptimisteurope.org](http://www.soroptimisteurope.org) for more information about the aims, activities and projects that characterise our organisation.

## Note from the Editor

# HOW TO AVOID DISAPPOINTMENT

I hate to disappoint you. It is hard to tell contributors that an article is too late or too long. It is not something done lightly, but the simple fact is *The Link* has become so popular that we have no choice if we aim to have as many Soroptimists as possible see their articles published.

However, every magazine does have to adhere to a set structure. After the introductory section, the focus is on topics of general interest to our members, whereby these articles are about 700 words in length and usually written by Board members or SIE HQ staff. Many subjects are reoccurring, such as Soroptimist Project Matching, Scholarship Fund, Disaster Fund, Programme or follow-up reports on fund-raising efforts. If available, we also try to devote one double-page to SI and another to the biennium theme. The

Federation News pages are reserved for shorter articles of SIE interest or for announcements.

But most crucial of all are the pages for Union and Club news. This is where we have the greatest difficulty accommodating all the articles because most are far too long. Please try to keep your contributions to about 300 words. We understand you want to include every detail, but you will appreciate that there are many clubs and unions that would like to report on a successful event or project. And please also remember to submit high-quality photos – 75 KB is not good enough! – because that is how you catch the eye of readers. After all, it is its diversity that makes *The Link* so attractive and readable!

Christine Cromwell-Ahrens, Editor, *The Link*

## Contents

20 <sup>th</sup> SIE Congress in Berlin	4
Interview with the SIE Executive Director	6
SI Work at the UN	8
SIE Roswitha Ott Fund	10
Quadrennial Project Sierra	10
Soroptimist Project Matching	11
Strengthening SIE in Eastern Europe	12
Biennium Theme 2011-2013	14
Federation News	16
News from Unions and Clubs	18



Page 4-5



Page 6-7



Page 10



Page 15



Page 22

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## Cover page

Clubs in Switzerland and Madagascar organised a special Christmas for children in Antananarivo.

(Photo:

Fara Ratsimanohatra)



Dear Soroptimist Friends

Just imagine: During the last six months I have had to be at our Headquarters in Geneva six times. So you will understand when I say that I have got a good insight into how the work at HQ functions. Of course, this was due to the fact that our former Executive Director had resigned and therefore I had to find a replacement as soon as possible. We are happy to introduce our new **Executive Director (ED) Anne Simon** in an interview on pages 6-7.

At the Restricted Board Meeting in January, Anne repeatedly pointed out how impressed she is by the **wide variety of our projects**. Yes, we, Soroptimists, should be proud of all these great efforts – put together they are indeed striking! Wherever I have been recently, whether attending the Annual Meetings of Unions (e.g. of the Italian Union in Ascoli Piceno), the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of SI St Petersburg or the charter of SI Hanegev in Be'er Sheva, Israel, I have always been tremendously inspired and touched by the projects Soroptimists initiate and carry out for the benefit of women and girls.

Somebody who fights for women's rights and against violence on the highest level is the 2011 Nobel Peace Laureate Yemeni **Tawakul Kerman**. She was a guest speaker at the recent Munich Security Conference. Kerman heavily criticised 'Russia's and China's excessive use of the veto' in the UN Security Council. Bravo, this courageous woman even dared to say, 'the international community has to reconsider this mechanism of decision-taking'. It is great to hear women throughout the world raise their voices against human rights violations and injustice. We cannot overestimate the value of our involvement at the UN. I encourage you to read Roswitha Benesch's article on pages 6-7 on our long experience at the United Nations. It also illustrates how we definitely are 'a global voice for women'.

This international commitment to women and girls will surely also be felt at the **SIE Congress 2013** in Berlin. It is a pleasure to work with the Congress Committee Chair Heide Ibach and her team. To find out more about the programme and venue, please see Heide's article on pages 4-5. Although we are planning to have simultaneous translation in English, French and German (SI Germany will pay for the German translation), I strongly recommend all of you to make an effort to **brush up your foreign language knowledge**. It is one of the best workouts possible in the 'Mind Gym'.

I am enthusiastic about the implementation of the theme 'Water and Food' in form of a **school garden competition in Kenya**. I hope to see it in March, when many Soroptimists from Africa and Europe will meet in Nairobi for the **SIE Conference on the Future African Federation**. How much Soroptimists are estimated is evident by the fact that the Prime Min-



ister of Kenya, **Raila Odinga**, will be present at this meeting. And **SI President Alice Wells** will represent the global voice of our organisation.

I appreciate that it is unusual to single out one initiative, but I would like to commend SI Antananarivo Mandrosoa of Madagascar for its remarkable visio-conference on the **Urgency of Reforestation in Madagascar**. These Soroptimists are also very much committed to their **Seeds for All** project, which especially targets the cultivation of rice. They are working together with the Swiss-Madagascan association ADES on **solar kitchen**. And they are promoting new efforts regarding **waste management**. Details of these projects will be in the next issue of The Link.

Water is the focus of the **6<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum in Marseille** from 12<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> March, an outstanding event also involving SIE, together with **Women for Water Partnership** and the French Union, and specifically SI Marseille. Here, our Federation is reinforcing its dedication to advocacy at a global level and is co-organising the **Women's Preparatory Conference** on 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> March.

I invite you to be inspired by one of my biennium mottos: **Let us enjoy the successes of our Soroptimist colleagues!** The achievements of others are our own as well, their importance is our importance, and their influence will be the influence of our whole organisation.

I hope you will all get involved in the **International Women's Day** on 8<sup>th</sup> March. Let us dare to speak up whenever a clear statement is needed. Who – if not us – will commit themselves to women's rights?

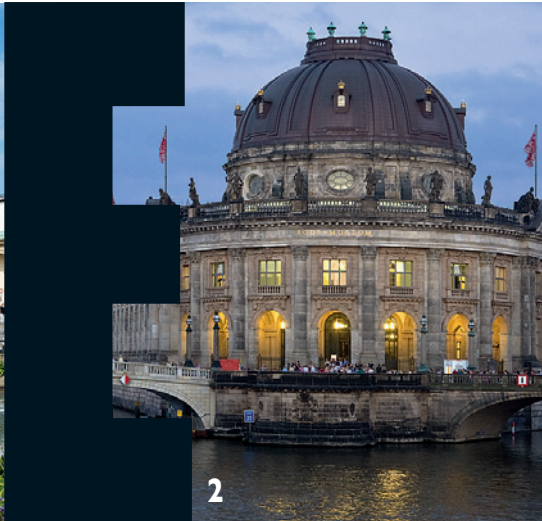
Have a good time and take care,

Kathy Kaaf, SIE President 2011-2013

While in Israel for the charter of SI Hanegev, SIE President Kathy Kaaf spoke at the inauguration of a square in Be'er Sheva honouring women's organisations.



# A 'VISION OF PARADISE' IN EVERY RESPECT



**1** The Brandenburg Gate is the famous symbol of the German capital.

(Wolfgang Scholvien)

**2** Berlin's Museum Island on the Spree offers a unique cultural experience, including the recently renovated Bode Museum.

(Wolfgang Scholvien)

**3** The conference hotel is just a few minutes away from the Tiergarten Park.

(visitBerlin.de-Koch)



As the Chair of the Congress Committee, it is my pleasure to present the colourful and eclectic cultural programme of the 20<sup>th</sup> SIE Congress in 2013. This element of the Congress will provide an excellent, and no doubt inspiring backdrop for the intensive business side of the Congress focusing on the 'Water and Food' theme of SIE President Kathy Kaaf's biennium. As the organisers, we hope it will bolster our motivation to work together as an organisation to drive change. The accompanying programme aims to spark renewed enthusiasm for Soroptimist friendship and cross-cultural exchanges. But it will also offer time for reflection so that the Congress promises to be a well-rounded and memorable event with a long-term impact.

The Congress Committee, consisting of Soroptimists with a wide range of competencies, talents and experience, is working with enormous commitment to prepare and organise an interesting and inspiring European Congress for all participants. We sincerely hope Soroptimists will return to their respective countries with many stimulating ideas and practical solutions. One additional objective is to conduct an environmentally neutral Congress to

demonstrate that we as Soroptimists take our social and environmental responsibilities seriously. So, the ecological footprint of this conference will be kept as small as possible.

## The perfect setting

An outstanding conference venue in the city centre, the four-star superior Maritim Hotel Berlin is the first step to a successful event. Situated in the diplomat quarter just a short distance from the Potsdam Square, the Brandenburg Gate and the Tiergarten Park and a five-minute walk to the Berlin Philharmonie Concert Hall and several museums, the Maritim is an ideal starting point for a wealth of cultural experiences, informal meetings in cafes and excellent restaurants, not to mention the tempting shopping possibilities.

But that is not all! Soroptimists from the clubs of Berlin and Potsdam will personally guide us around their city. Under the motto 'Time to Make Friends' and with lots of ideas and great commitment, they want to turn Friday evening into an unforgettably special experience for their guests. The diverse ven-



An exceptional conference focusing on an important topic needs the right setting, which the fascinating and vibrant city of Berlin clearly offers. With the rivers Spree and Havel as well as the nearby lakes, you are never far from water in the German capital. Indeed, water will constantly be in our sights during the SIE Congress from 12<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> July 2013.



Photos: visitBerlin

ues hosting the events on the other days will show participants further interesting sides of Berlin.

The Congress begins with a very special concert in the glass-roofed courtyard of the Jewish Museum. Combining violin and accordion music with songs and lyrics, 'Voices from the Princess Garden' promises to be a rousing start symbolising the two millennia of German-Jewish history against the background of the expressive extension built by architect Daniel Libeskind.

The gala dinner will take place at the 'Palais am Funkturm', another of Berlin's well-known landmarks from recent history. The 'palace', now a listed building with the particular charm of the reconstruction period after the war, exudes the typical atmosphere of the 1950s. Here, SI Germany will host a reception for guests, which will be followed by the dinner and a special summer programme based on the motto 'Sounds, Dance, Temperament' with an African flavour.

### Tours with a local flair

Our local Soroptimists have arranged three blocks of unique city tours with different focuses so

**4** With countless bridges and canals, Berlin offers many charming vistas and culturally diverse quarters.

(Wolfgang Scholvien)

**5** The mascot of Berlin is the bear, so it was particularly apt for the United Buddy Bears to visit the city in 2011.

(Wolfgang Scholvien)



that guests will be able to get to know Berlin from many new perspectives.

Following the Congress programme, seven SI Clubs located in the Bundesländern Brandenburg, Saxony and Saxony-Anhalt are inviting participants to one-to-three-day excursions that highlight their regions. Individually inspired and organised by the Club members, these tours provide the opportunity to see the historically interesting and the beautiful countryside of former East Germany.

### Help us make a difference

So, reserve the dates 12<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> July 2013! Register early to save money (registration opens July 2012). Share with us an unforgettable weekend of friendship and discussions focusing on topics with enormous significance for the future of the world. Through your participation, help us set an example of how important 'Water and Food' are for Soroptimists. Awareness and Advocacy are the first steps to achieve sustainable action and change. We look forward to seeing you in Berlin!

Heide Ibach, Chair Congress Committee 2013

# 'TIME TO ENGAGE IN SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY'



**Anne Simon joined SIE HQ as Executive Director in January 2012. The following interview will give members the opportunity to discover the woman behind the name and title.**

## **Interview** with Anne Simon

**After so many years in consultancy work, what prompted you to move to a service organisation for women?**

Working in a very large international consulting firm offered me unique opportunities to grow and develop in different professional domains and geographical areas. I had the chance to discover how organisations and governments sought to understand the fast-changing world and the environments in which they operate and actively looked for solutions. But over the years, my desire

to serve a women's organisation increased. I asked to be relocated from New York to an emerging region facing challenges such as economic development, education, gender issues, etc. I specialised in socio-economic work and research, especially dealing with broader women's issues and the barriers they face. As part of a large programme on Arab Women Leadership, I interviewed over 100 women leaders, ranging from ministers and academics to business leaders. Seeing their determination to lead by example spurred my passion and stimulated my eagerness to further support women. After studying public policy and management, I looked for a women's organisation that aspires to make a difference, but most importantly is structured to make a real impact. I felt it was time to engage in social responsibility; it is my way to give something back to society and help those less fortunate than I am.





### **How do your considerable qualifications help you in your new position as Executive Director of SIE?**

More than any single qualification, the combination of professional experience, personal investment and passion for the cause will help me deliver a good job. In my previous jobs, I have learned to work with different cultures, religions and perhaps most importantly, to respect and appreciate people with other values and sensitivities. Women around the globe face a myriad of challenges and address them in different ways, as is evident in our own Federation. I am eager to assist officers at Federation, Union and Club levels to deliver a well-articulated strategic vision and mission and to contribute to the core objective of being 'A Global Voice for Women'. At the same time, having worked in organisational management, I will ensure that HQ offers optimum service to members, while keeping operational costs to a minimum so that the members' work and financial resources are dedicated to the Soroptimist cause.

### **Have you got a particular 'vision' for the work at SIE HQ?**



I spent my first weeks at HQ studying files to learn about the work of the two past biennia. Reading emails, screening minutes and listening to the tapes of the Governors' Meeting gave me a fairly good understanding of the status quo and of my main tasks. As stated in the Constitution,

my primary responsibility is 'To assure continuity of work throughout all changes of presidential terms and to support the routine work of the officers'. Some tools can be further developed to improve service to members, such as the website and internal communications. But in the long run, I fear that Soroptimist will not escape the current socioeconomic turmoil and the fierce competition of organisations with similar goals. We will have to anticipate the global challenges. I hope to participate in the strategic debate that we will need to engage in – and modestly contribute to a sustainable development of SI as a whole.



### **Is there any way we, as Soroptimists, can help you better settle into your new position?**

The SIE President, Board members and HQ staff have all been very supportive, and I am slowly getting to know more and more Soroptimists. I have always been inspired by professional women who invest their time in volunteer work. And after just two months at HQ, the dedication of your volunteers to make a real impact strikes me even more! From Clubs to Unions, from Restricted Board Members to other officers at SIE, Soroptimists truly work very hard. Since I am a newcomer with fresh eyes and ears, please share with me your thoughts, wishes, concerns and suggestions for improvement. And do not hesitate to remind us at HQ that you are busy working women!

Incidentally, in the spirit of transparency, I am not a total stranger to the Soroptimist Family! My mother was an active member of a Club in Geneva for many years. I was always impressed by her commitment to and passion for the Club and the Swiss Union.

Roswitha Benesch is SI UN Liaison for Europe and author of this article.



SI work at the UN

## GIVING WOMEN A VOICE

Austrian Roswitha Benesch is the SI Representative to the UN Vienna and SI UN Liaison for Europe. In the following article, she explains what SI representatives do at the UN, what responsibilities we have as a non-governmental organisation and how this work is important for all Soroptimists.



**T**he UN Charter of 1945 invited non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to express their views on certain issues and to provide their special expertise. Since then, the NGOs have been increasingly seen as partners in helping achieve the objectives of the Charter. More and more NGOs – like SI – are taking up this responsibility. Indeed, the fact that SI projects are compatible with the aims of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations is the basis of accreditation (see article in *The Link* No. 221, page 15).

Although NGOs have no voice in the official sessions of the Commissions, we have the right to submit written statements on the matters to be discussed by governments at the relevant Commissions convening in one of the UN Centres, i.e. Vienna, Geneva, Paris, Rome, New York or Nairobi. Sometimes these statements can also be presented orally to the Plenary.

### Side events play an important role

NGOs can, however, be heard at the side events at the Commissions, which are often organised by NGO Committees. SI experts speak on conference themes such as gender equality, the rights of rural women, human rights, prevention of drug abuse and trafficking and subsequent victim support.

As a non-governmental organisation, we are not bound by an official political opinion. We are fast in identifying problems, and we are also quick to find solutions. And we are volunteers. We can and should be critical and ask unpleasant questions in our respective countries.

NGOs form Committees based on the themes of the ECOSOC Commissions and Agencies – i.e. Status of Women, Narcotic Drugs, Crime Prevention, Sustainable Development, Human Rights, etc. The committees consist of at least 23 representatives of NGOs (with ECOSOC Status I). They act within the system of the UN: Once an organisation – like SI and SIE – is accredited at ECOSOC, its representatives can apply to become members of a committee. Located at the respective UN Centre, these committees contribute to and influence high-level policy discussions by sharing their position and experience.

SI representatives do not only carry the opinion of their organisation into the UN, but also inform the organisation of the actions taken by the UN. The representatives write reports on the Commissions or other important events at the UN and also make available the respective Conventions and/or government agreements and commitments that support the work of Soroptimists but also asks for their action.

### Communication goes both ways

One example is the UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime with the Protocols thereto: to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children. An additional objective of the Protocol is to protect and assist the victims of trafficking in persons. Since it was opened for signature in 2000, 147 Member States have ratified the Convention, out of a possible 192. Although the implementation of the Convention into binding law is the responsibility of Governments, it is up to NGOs to push for ratification. We SI representatives to the UN can assist you in this lobbying effort with the respective background material. In fact, I would encourage Union Presidents to invite SI representative to their General Meetings in order provide Soroptimists with first-hand details of what we do and how you could support our work.

All the information regarding the UN and its work can be found at [www.un.org](http://www.un.org). But the SI website – [www.soroptimistinternational.org](http://www.soroptimistinternational.org) – also provides substantial information. The 'Global Voice' features the latest news, and you can read the UN reports online. This is a very positive development, as it makes our work at the UN more visible!

Soroptimists are among the representatives from civil society that attend the annual sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women.

UN Photo/Devra Berkowitz



Secretary General Ban Ki-moon addresses the organisational meeting of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in January 2012.

UN Photo/Paulo Filgueiras

# HELPING CHILDREN IN NEED



Quinter Adongo Odhiambo (left) and Jane Wasike (far left) are receiving support towards their schooling from the SIE Roswitha Ott Fund.

The Roswitha Ott Fund of SIE was set up in 2011 with the objective to provide health care and education to children with special requirements and to children in need in Africa. It offers financial assistance to projects implemented in African countries inside and outside of the Federation.

Soon after the Fund was officially established in October 2011, the first projects were submitted for support. By December 2011, three had received financial help. One project in Ethiopia aimed to reduce the unacceptably high level of cancer-related morbidity among children. 30 children are currently benefiting from this project. Projects in Kenya and Madagascar are assisting handicapped children in school.

Two of the many girls receiving aid are Jane and Quinter from Joyland Special Secondary School in Kisumu in Kenya. Of its 184 pupils, 112 have various types of physical disabilities. Paralysed below the waist from polio, Jane is a full orphan. The shy,

soft-spoken girl in the 4<sup>th</sup> Form wants to be a lawyer. Her best subjects are Kiswahili and English.

Talkative and cheerful, Quinter is also in the 4<sup>th</sup> Form and was orphaned a young age. She lives with an aunt who pays her fees, but she needs help for personal effects. Although her ambition is to be a lawyer, Quinter also composes songs and sings. So far she has composed 22 songs in English and Kiswahili. Her favorite subjects are religion, English and history.

As early as 2007, SI Kisumu recognised the need to encourage the handicapped girls at Joyland Special Secondary School to study hard and complete their secondary education. Most of the learners with physical disabilities are from poor families and some are orphans. With no proper social support or guardians, they are unable to provide for their basic needs and sometimes taken advantage of by others.

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Roswitha Ott, Manager of the SIE Roswitha Ott Fund

## Quadrennial Project Sierra

# A BIG THANK YOU!

As the SIE Liaison of Project Sierra, I would like to extend my personal thanks to you for all you have done to help the women and girls in Sierra Leone. I am particularly grateful to IPP SIE Eliane Lagasse who gave me the task to promote this former quadrennial project 2007-2011. It has been such a pleasure to work for the project and with you all. SI Europe can be proud of the support that helped reach the goal of more than £ 1,000,000 = € 1,200,000. Among other things, 129 young mothers have completed their education or vocational training; 200 families have been stabilised; and 48



Project Sierra – A Family and A Future targeted disadvantaged women and children in Sierra Leone.

former street children have been reconciled with their families.

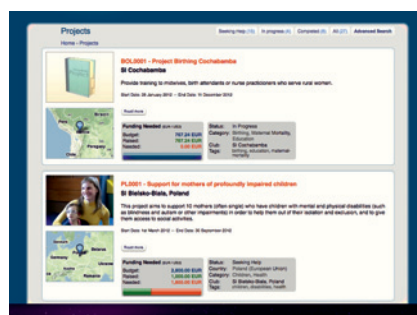
International Project Liaison Alison Sutherland recently wrote: 'I just heard from SI that SI Europe sent a magnificent amount recently – over € 24,000. Thank you so much to Soroptimists in



# CHECK OUT THE REDESIGNED WEBSITE

The Sorooptimist Project Matching programme has successfully completed its first year. Sorooptimists around the world have been instrumental in providing constructive feedback about the new programme. In order to accommodate some of these changes and improve the service, the website has been redesigned. Log onto [www.sorooptimistprojects.org](http://www.sorooptimistprojects.org) to see the new look. It is now easier to navigate with completely revamped buttons, tags, and search functions. The redesigned site offers a new logo, a completely new section 'Water and Food' to promote SIE biennium theme projects,

the club's name asking for support prominently featured, the donors/supporting clubs are listed under Resources Needed, a quick change between the visualisation of currencies EUR and USD, and the possibility to pledge support to a project through the contact page.



the Europe Federation for the generosity and support for our SI Project.' In fact, the total amount donated by SIE was nearly € 240,000! The Sorooptimist partnership with Hope and Homes for Children and Help a Needy Child in Sierra Leone (HANCISL) has led to a real sustainability of the programmes in Sierra Leone because the organisation SI assisted is now strong enough to engage further partners and support more beneficiaries.

As Alison said, we can all be very proud of the impact of Project Sierra – the young lives transformed, communities and social care provision strengthened with women and girls becoming role models, and the wonderful ways in which Sorooptimists around the world engaged with the project, members commitment to service, advocacy and friendship.

*Lisbeth Hass, SI Esbjerg, Denmark*

Recently, SI Aachen, Germany, partially funded the project 'PL0001 – support for mothers of profoundly impaired children'. Club member Gwenda Webster explains why they chose Project Matching and effectively summarises the essentials of the programme:

'First of all, it contained a good deal of detailed information that was easily communicable, even to the most cautious and critical members of our club. A further advantage was that SIE dealt with the financial side, so we were not faced with the problem of how to transfer our donation and our club incurred no extra bank charges. As the first communications between our two clubs also went through our Federation office, the benefits of SIE's monitoring of the Project Matching scheme have been evident from the start. Of course we were also proud to see our contribution publicised on the Project Matching site, and hope that this will encourage other clubs to join us.'

The following is a basic summary of the Sorooptimist Project Matching procedures:

- **Project Proposal** – Clubs/regions/unions seeking support submit project proposals to SIE programme department ([programme@sorooptimisteurope.org](mailto:programme@sorooptimisteurope.org)).

- **Match Finding** – Once on the site, there are a number of tools to enable a club/region/union to find a project to support. The main categories are projects seeking help, projects in progress and projects completed. When you first click on a project and enter the page, the following items are summarised: description, goals, resources needed and contact. If a club/region/union wishes to donate to a project, they enter the contact section. Through the contact form, the club can request for more information on the project and ultimately support it. The SIE programme department ensures that supporting clubs receive all additional information needed.

- **Transfer of Funds** – The payments are made through the appropriate headquarters.

- **Agreement** – An agreement is signed between the headquarters and the supported (aid-receiving) club.

- **Reporting** – Six months after the money has been transferred, the club/union conducting the project must submit an initial report on the progress of the project and the use of the funds to SIE HQ.

Please keep supporting our projects!

*Suba Parthiban, SIE HQ Programme Executive*



# STRATEGIES MUST BE ADAPTED TO LOCAL LEVELS

The concept of 'twinning' – i.e. when mature Unions are assigned to help younger ones – is clearly beneficial, but experience shows that Eastern Europe also needs support from the Federation. The Netherlands has been twinned with Georgia since 2008. The following article describes the commitment of Dutch Soroptimists and how they are actively helping Clubs in Georgia.

Last October the Dutch Union organised a study tour to Georgia within the framework of the twinning program. Apart from sightseeing in this wonderful country, the tour had two other goals: to draw up an inventory of the Soroptimist clubs in Georgia, and to promote the project for the 'Internally Displaced Persons' (IDP) that they want to execute. IDPs are Georgian refugees coming from Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

SI Tbilisi, our first stop, warmly welcomed the 16 Soroptimists and three Soroptimisters. The Dutch ambassador, Pieter Jan Langenberg, and his wife invited the Dutch and Tbilisi Soroptimists for a drink. He gave us a good insight into Georgia. Much has improved since the Rose Revolution seven years ago. But even though progress has been made, there is still a great deal to do – especially to help the IDPs resulting from various conflicts.

The next visit was to SI Batumi. While enjoying their hospitality, we learned a lot about current situation. The clubs in Georgia are widely spread over the country and face different problems. They are very different and relations between clubs hardly exist, which makes the union work very difficult. (In fact, since the new rule that SIE unions must have at least seven clubs, the future of the Georgian Union is at risk, since there are now only four active clubs.)

## Support for club projects

In any case, one project for all Georgian clubs appears less practicable. The clubs prefer to have their own local project. So, for example, SI Batumi wants to help a daycare centre for men-



This orthodox church is just one of the memorable sights the Dutch delegation visited during its study tour.



Cleaning the water tanks used to supply the IDPs living in former sanatoria is a project planned by SI Tskhaltubo.



A girl from the IDP shelter in Georgia taps water from one of the tanks.



tally handicapped children, set up by a club member and supported by UNICEF.

The last two clubs visited were SI Kutaisi and SI Tskhaltubo. Situated near to each other, they were the architects of the project Clean Water for IDPs, which they continue to support because many IDPs live in this region in poor circumstances. Some are housed in sanatoria from Soviet times; others are lodged in old apartment buildings with many families sharing one room. In the sanatoria water is provided in big tanks of several thousand litres. These tanks have to be cleaned and new pumps installed. The people living in apartment buildings have water only some hours during the day, which means they need to store water in reservoirs. While SI Tskhaltubo hopes to clean several tanks, SI Kutaisi is striving to realise the reservoirs.

The Dutch Union has found a donor willing to help finance this project, the Eurekaachmea foundation. Dutch clubs have also contributed, so that both Georgian clubs can start. Information that the Dutch delegation obtained from the Georgian Minister for IDPs showed it is necessary to adapt the project plan, which was then reviewed with the two clubs. The result has been confirmed in a 'memorandum of understanding'.

### More investment is necessary

Our visit to Georgia also made clear that Soroptimist clubs need:

- *Training in Soroptimist affairs, setting up projects, fund-raising and Extension work – not only at union level but also at club level. Strong clubs are a condition for a functioning union. And clubs have to be convinced of the added value of a union.*
- *Language training – Many Georgian members would like to communicate with other Soroptimists but do not speak enough English.*
- *Sustainable links with clubs in Western Europe to execute together projects, to get information about Soroptimism etc.*

If we want to have active clubs in Eastern Europe, more investment is necessary. A Twinning programme is important, but not sufficient on its own. In our opinion, SIE must develop a workable plan that can be adapted at local level and that includes training and language courses

Nelleke Fonteijn, Dutch Union contact person for Georgia  
Tonny Filedt Kok, SIE Extension Committee  
Akke Timmermans, Governor, Dutch Union

Thanks to the good cooperation of SI Bad Ragaz and SI Luzerne in Switzerland and SI Club Antananarivo Mandrosoa in Madagascar, Christmas has become a truly festive event for many children from the very poor Akorondrano district of Antananarivo.

It is early morning of 23rd December in the Akany Fitahiana Centre, a place where former street children go to school and get clothing and warm food once a day. But Alex Herivelona, the head of the Centre, the teachers and especially the members of SI Antananarivo Mandrosoa are already very busy preparing a special Christmas meal of rice and chicken for all the many children of the centre.

The children, 335 in all, come in swarms, wondering what Father Christmas will bring them. And then he arrives bearing gifts for the boys and girls: toy cars, watches, and dolls. The wonderful smell of roasted chicken is in the air. Soon, all the happy children are enjoying a plate of delicious food, holding a precious toy in their little hands.

But not only the children are happy. Their 'fairy godmothers' in Bad Ragaz and Luzern have merry Christmas feelings too, knowing that in far away Madagascar, their 'adopted' children are not forgotten.

The twinning relationship between the Swiss Union and the Union of Madagascar is very close. Many members of Swiss Clubs have travelled to the island in recent years and visited the active clubs there. The Akany Fitahiana Centre is one of their joint projects. It is a refuge for children, getting them off the streets. The Clubs Mandrosoa, Bad Ragaz and Luzern support the centre with many activities. Once a street child himself, Centre manager Alex made the promise to found a school for street children to enable them to start a better life. The Akany Fitahiana is the result.

### Switzerland and Madagascar

## CHRISTMAS FOR STREET CHILDREN



Twinned Unions of Switzerland and Madagascar cooperate to spread joy at Christmas with toys and a festive meal.

Roswitha Ott, Manager Roswitha Ott Fund



School Garden Contest of SI Milimani

## GROWING VEGETABLES FOR FUN AND PROFIT!



Above: Caring for the fishponds helps the girls learn a useful skill.

Right: The girls prepared so-called Gunia sacks for growing plants, and the progress is impressive so far.

SI Milimani has initiated an original project by organising a contest for girls between the ages of 14 and 20 years from Embakasi Boarding School to grow vegetables.

Established in March 1998, the Embakasi Girls' Secondary School is situated in the Mukuru Kwa Njenga slums in Nairobi. Its students mostly come from slums areas, including Kwa Njenga, Kwa Rueben and Sinai. The main focus of this community school is to provide secondary education to girls from extremely low-income families. In 2011 Embakasi counted 388 students.

The Kenyan Soroptimists are providing the material and the management that is necessary to create the school gardens. While the short-term objective is to grow vegetables, the long-term goal is to create an income-generating project for the girls. In the future the garden will be maintained by the girls who wish to continue. The individual girls who harvest the vegetables can sell them to the school so as to create a small income to pay school fees. Besides the training gained in gardening, this effort will help improve the girls' nutritional habits and increase their awareness of healthy food. It will also promote their ability to work in a team and develop project management skills.

### Three prizes will be awarded

Participants can win three different trophies: most creative garden, the best-kept garden and the garden producing the largest quantity of vegetables. The latter will be awarded to the most successful team, whereby a school staff member will keep track of the results. Club Millimani will be the judge of the contest and decide on the awards.

The students will build teams of four to five participants. Each team will receive four m<sup>2</sup> of land. The contest will last four months. Each team will receive the same quantity of seeds. There will be a maximum of 10 gardens at the school, thus involving a maximum of 50 girls.

A first training day provided an opportunity to introduce the SIE theme 'Soroptimist goes for water and food'. Soroptimists spoke about malnutrition due to a lack of food and junk food. The second day will be devoted to announcing the prizes and summarising the lessons learned.

### Collecting rainwater for a fishpond

The Women and Climate Change project, implemented by SI Kenya and SI Denmark, donated rainwater-harvesting tanks and gutters to the school through SI Milimani. The school is currently using the rainwater for a fishpond built for them by the Kenyan Government Ministry of Fisheries, which also provided fingerlings. In the meantime, SIE President Kathy Kaaf has donated € 450 to the school project. This money is being used for the school garden and fish food

*Jocelyn Prélaz and Programme Director Rufina Achieng,  
SI Milimani*





# IMPORTANT ISSUES THAT DESERVE THE SPOTLIGHT



Women can grow their own food in special gardens, which also allows them to earn a small income.



Providing better access to clean water gives women and children more time to devote to education.

Despite its modest scale, the action plan to bring water closer to homes, equip corrugated iron roofs to collect rainwater and connect tanks to a skimmer to decontaminate water contributes to vastly improving the quality of life for poor families. These crucial measures free up hours every day that women and children would otherwise spend collecting water when they could be doing something more educational or profitable.

Soroptimists are very aware of the importance of these issues and have been promoting the theme 'Go for water' since 2007. Many SI clubs have contributed to projects in Africa and elsewhere by digging wells, installing water tanks and setting up water purification systems. Water, especially clean drinking water is now, more than ever, in the spotlight of global policies, which is why the 'Soroptimists go for water and food' theme is a particularly topical focus.

The Italian Union has been active in supporting a number of projects related to the 2011-2013 biennium theme in Rwanda. A water tank to store meteoric water, i.e. water taken from the depths of the earth and therefore clean, has been set up to serve one or two homes at a cost of € 500. This project required guttering, canalisa-

tion and putting into operation. In addition, a Naiade water purifier using UV rays has been financed to supply over 400 people in Gisenyi with drinking water at a cost of some € 4,200. This included equipment, transport, customs and installation.

In terms of food projects, the Italian Union and its clubs have helped provide economical ovens at a cost of around € 35 a piece, including installation. They enable both culinary and sanitary improvements and use 50 percent less fuel (wood or coal). In addition, a two-day intensive cookery and food safety course was introduced at a cost of some € 40. Educational gardens are being set up in schools and for Aids sufferers who can thus grow their own food and sometimes earn money towards their medical care.



This Naiade water purifier will help supply 400 people with clean drinking water every day.

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*Geneviève Henrot Sòstero,*  
Italian National Extension Committee 2011-2013 and Coordinator of the Rwanda Group (Italy)



## EXPERIENCING PROJECTS FIRST-HAND!

Fixing a flat tire, witnessing a pregnant woman being rushed into the operation theatre during a hospital visit, speed dating with African youth, an encounter with lions, home hospitality the African way, a warm reception by singing and dancing locals, an African dance workshop – these are just a few adventures Swiss and Canadian university students experienced during a Study Trip to Kenya, organised by Suba Parthiban for the Initiative for Intercultural

Learning (IFIL), a Swiss non-profit organisation. During an unforgettable ride from eastern to western Kenya, the visitors experienced Kenyan culture first-hand, interacting with local youth, villagers, journalists, activists, constitutional lawyers, as well as Soroptimists. Some of the highlights of the trip included a visit to one of the largest slums in Africa, spending the night with Soroptimist families, dancing with villagers and listening to their moving stories.

Soroptimists from Nairobi, Nakuru and Kisumu contributed to the success of this trip. The Swiss and Canadian students witnessed the different Soroptimist activities, including rainwater harvesting in an Mwioko village, a water and sanitation project in the Murumba primary school, and the project involving small grants for women entrepreneurs who were victims of the post-election violence. A Dutch donor is funding the water projects, through the facilitation of SIE HQ, while SIE Disaster Grants funded the latter project.

The students were very impressed by the projects and overwhelmed by Soroptimist hospitality – also during a visit to Kisumu. It was hard to separate them from their guest families at departure time! After a media briefing about the tour, at which the SI activities were also presented, the trip ended with a visit to the Swiss embassy and the United Nations offices in Nairobi. On their return, the students even raised some funds to support girls' education in Nakuru!

### SAVE THE DATES!

Dates of important events in the SIE calendar are normally announced on the back page of *The Link*, but there are some exceptional celebrations or invitations that warrant special mentioning:

- The so-called French-Language Days, 'Journées d'Expression Française', will take place from 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> May in Montreux on Lake Geneva. The Swiss Union will sponsor this year's event, which will focus on the culture of the French-speaking regions of the country. Also included are a folklore evening, a wine-tasting experience and a gala dinner.
  - In the presence of SIE President Kathy Kaaf the German Union and SI Frankfurt am Main will both celebrate their 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary in Frankfurt on the weekend of 22<sup>nd</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> June 2012.
  - Please also make a note of the Danish Union's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2013 at Hotel Nyborg Strand in Nyborg on the island of Funen.
- For more detailed information and/or registration details, please consult the SIE website at [www.soroptimisteurope.org](http://www.soroptimisteurope.org).



# MAKING A DIFFERENCE WITH STUDENTS

Empowering women and girls is at the heart of the Soroptimist mission. Following this principle, SIE HQ offers internships and hosts university students who want to learn more about Soroptimist work as well as to develop their potential and prepare them for their future jobs. Here are a few testimonials from some students and their teachers:

'I recently turned 20, but as a female wishing to pursue a career, it was truly inspirational to see women actively working in an international environment... I now realise that education is a key factor in raising awareness and boosting self-esteem in young girls and women across the globe. I was truly shocked to be informed about Female Genital Mutilation.. '

Mei Hayakawa,  
Law student at  
Chuo University  
Japan

'I could learn it is important to communicate with locals when planning projects to tackle certain issues. Everyone has a different culture, tradition and customs. Even if some customs seem difficult to understand, it is best to accept the decisions of the locals.'

Yuki Ohashi, Japanese student

'Meeting with you was very helpful for us. During that time, I learned how an international NGO works. I found many differences between NGOs in Japan and your organisation... I felt that Soroptimist is approaching the women's issues from many ways and so realistically...'

Chika Miyagi, Japanese student



University of Michigan student Rachael Hancock enjoyed her internship with SIE HQ Programme Executive Suba Parthiban.

'For the last three years, the students have been fortunate enough to visit SIE each year and have an in-depth, highly informative and thought-provoking briefing from Suba Parthiban on the work of SIE.. By learning first-hand about different Soroptimist projects in the developing world, the students' horizons are not only changed, but stretched far beyond where they started from ... I am convinced that the partnership between SIE and the Chuo University/the ILO IWEP is one of the high points for the students each year.'

Dr Andy Barfield,  
Faculty of Law, Chuo University, Tokyo

'In summer 2011 the Soroptimist offices welcomed one of our undergraduate students from the University of Michigan as interns... The International Summer Internship Program, supported by the Center for Business International Education at the Ross Business School, is proud to count the Soroptimist office in Geneva as one of their esteemed international employers for summer interns. We very much hope to maintain this partnership in the years to come.'

Rachael Criso,  
Lecturer, University of Michigan

## INTERNATIONAL YOUTH CROISIÈRE

# ENJOY DUTCH CULTURE AND HOSPITALITY



The Youth Croisière in the Netherlands in 2006.

The SI Union of the Netherlands, Surinam and Curaçao is honoured to invite 12 young people to a Youth Croisière from the 6<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> July 2012. The 2012 Youth Croisière will enable young people to experience Dutch culture, enjoy Dutch hospitality, visit different parts of the Netherlands and interact with young people of different nationalities. The invitation covers accommodation as well as a diverse and exciting programme. Candidates should be between the ages of 17-20 and a relative or friend of a European Soroptimist. Applicants must speak English and be able to correspond by e-mail. Travel expenses to and from the Netherlands, pocket money, health and accident insurance as well as coverage for luggage loss are also the responsibility of applicants.

The closing date for applications is 12<sup>th</sup> May 2012. Application forms can be obtained from Dineke van As, SI Hoeksche Waard/IJsselmonde, Phone +31(0)186-640196, email: dineke@vanas.nl. Forms can also be downloaded from [www.soroptimist.nl/hoekschewaard](http://www.soroptimist.nl/hoekschewaard).

## EMPOWERING WOMEN IN TUNISIA

In Palermo and Montreal, Tunisian, Egyptian and Dutch Soroptimists met to discuss opportunities for women after the Arab Spring. At about the same time, Dutch Soroptimists heard that the Dutch Government was examining ways to enhance the influence of women. So, they submitted a project proposal to the Foreign Ministry on 'leadership, empowerment and economic independence for and by women' with an aim to aid the development of women in new democratic countries, such as Tunisia and Egypt. Sadly, the proposal was rejected, but there is an opportunity to try again.

Nevertheless, Dutch Soroptimists decided to pursue this project and three visited Tunisia in November 2011 to discuss with SI Tunis Fondateur and SI Ariana the many difficulties facing women. On this occasion the Dutch Soroptimists also participated in the press conference in Tunis organised by the 'Association Tunisienne des Femmes Démocrates', an NGO acting to improve women's role and to fight against all kind of discrimination in the Tunisian society. The main topics were 'violence against women' and particularly 'verbal violence'. Various women gave first-hand accounts of their experience, for example, as teachers being intimidated by male students.

Tunisian women describe their experience with discrimination at a press conference in Tunis.



The Dutch delegation also joined a seminar on 'Human Rights, Democracy and Civil Society in Tunisia' organised by Euro - Mediterranean Human Rights Network 'to review the situation of human rights and fundamental freedom ten months after the revolution and to focus on the civil society in Tunisia'. It became clear that although Tunisia is proud of its equality in the work force, nowadays, it is feared that the rise of Islamism after the revolution may deprive women



Soroptimists discuss ways to realise the project to enhance the influence of women in Tunisia.

of their freedom. The situation in rural areas is worse because of poverty and illiteracy of women. 50% of the women between 18 and 30 years participated to the assembly election, while fewer older women (20%) could be mobilised.

In a meeting with the Dutch Embassy, the representatives expressed their interest in the project proposal. The suggestion to involve men in improving the situation for women and to encourage a dialogue about reforms was widely applauded. There is real concern about increasing unemployment among the highly educated, especially women. 'Working on work' in close cooperation with Soroptimists is therefore particularly welcome.

More than 40 women, Soroptimists and others from their network were informed about the proposal. In the meantime a project team of Tunisian and Dutch Soroptimists has been set up to raise the necessary funds and draw up concrete details.

The project is now on a solid basis, but although some clubs have committed to help, we still need more financial and immaterial support, e.g. (French-speaking) e-coaches and more funding, to realise a truly sustainable empowerment for Tunisian women.

*Helma Nijssen and Akke Timmermans with Tonny Filedt Kok and Koos Kingma, Dutch Union*



## A CELEBRATION TO REMEMBER

SI Athens Kifissia-Ekali celebrated its 25th anniversary in November 2011. Over the years, it has distinguished itself as a very active Club within the Greek Union. Its overall contributions and work, not only in Greece but in other countries as well, has gained the Club two awards from the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), Geneva, for the refugees in Greece and a Best Practice Award from SI for its 10 years project for education in the Ukraine.

For its anniversary celebration, the Club selected the theme 'Women - Education - Leadership' and organised an event in the local Town Hall with 150 attendees (mostly young women) and featuring two prominent speakers. The first speaker was Dr. Thanos Veremis, Professor of the Universities of Athens, Boston and Oxford, who elaborated on the necessity of Education. CEO of Saatchi & Saatchi in Greece Katerina Tsemperlidou spoke on the importance of 'Leadership' for the women in order to pursue their careers and obtain positions for decision-makers in their professional lives. Following the speeches and discussion, the audience enjoyed a piano recital performed by the accomplished pianist and Club member Efi Vourliotis.

Soroptimists Naama Alsana and Sibylle Lindenberg from Israel and Germany, respectively, celebrate the inauguration of the square in Be'er Sheva.



SI Athens Kifissia-Ekali proudly celebrated 25 years of outstanding club work.

Considering the difficult financial situation currently in Greece, the Club celebration was tasteful and discreet. By saving money, the Soroptimists were able instead to donate foodstuff to a Food Bank in Greece, which comes to the aid of unemployed people suffering from hunger. In this specific case, the Club provided some 1000 kilos of food at a value of € 4500 to a nearby 'Safe House', in which 25 women and 45 children are offered housing and food, while the mothers are trained in computers and English to help them find jobs.

Popi Athanassiou, Governor of the Greek Union

## CELEBRATING SOLIDARITY SI Hanegev



The charter of the very special SI Hanegev at the edge of the Negev desert near Be'er Sheva was unique in many ways. The Club members are Israelis and Arab Bedouins from different cultures and different living conditions. But now they are Soroptimists and thus united to realise projects for the benefit of women and girls.

A special highlight of the weekend of activities with 200 guests was the dedication of a monument in a square of Be'er Sheva in recognition of the world's top six women's organisations. SIE President Kathy Kaaf had the honour to inaugurate this monument in the

presence of local representatives of the city. It was an impressive visit during which we enjoyed wonderful hospitality and friendship. We heard the stories of Bedouin women who struggled against tradition to realise their dreams. Now they have their own businesses selling cosmetics, natural medicines and beautifully embroidered bags.

Club President Lizette Peretz and her club members welcomed us with an open heart. We got to know not only very special women but also the beauty of the desert and the Dead Sea.

We wish this extraordinary club much success. They have the chance to be a role model by working together in peace and encouraging other women and girls to improve their life situation.

Christine Peer, SIE 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President

## 'LEARNING BY DOING'

SI Schwäbisch Gmünd in Germany has established a long-term cooperation project under the motto 'Part-Time Vocational Training' with an organisation specialised in education and job placement called a.l.s.o. e.V. The part-time apprenticeship programme allows young mothers to train for



jobs. Baden Württemberg's Ministry for Work and Social Affairs is also supporting this project with resources from the European Social Fund.

Club members have volunteered to work as mentors for the young women. With this practical advice the mentees are able to increase their chances of finding subsequent employment, and

their network is widened. Companies can tap this pool of young, motivated and qualified employees.

It makes sense that the professional ambition of the mentee is similar to the work of mentor so that she can activate her network. Professional project management ensures that technical matters concerning the training are dealt with effectively. The mentors from SI Schwäbisch Gmünd help the mentees orient their ideas to the job market, for example, to find internships. They also provide moral support to continue in case an application is rejected. In addition, the older mentors are experienced in the problems of work/family balance.

The programme started with five mentors from the Club and five mentees. A year later four of the mentees had been placed in apprenticeships, while the last mentee chose to postpone her training. Soroptimist mentor and businesswoman Annette Assfalg confirms that part-time apprentices are not only highly motivated, but also more mature and experienced. The self-confident demeanour that her mentee Melanie Blum developed during the programme helped her secure an apprenticeship.

In line with the slogan 'learning by doing', SI Schwäbisch Gmünd intends to further develop its mentoring project. The Club plans to help more mentees and look for additional companies that are willing to offer part-time apprenticeships.

SI Schwäbisch Gmünd

Mentees participating in the mentoring programme are photographed with their children.

## RELIEF FOR DETAINEES

SI Dakar

SI Dakar brought a little relief to detainees at the Liberté VI Women's Remand Centre by providing them with rice, sugar, sanitary towels and other useful items. The gesture warmed the hearts of the detainees and those who run the Centre alike. Club President Josephine Yekpe headed the delegation, which also included the Secretary, Treasurer and many club members. SI Dakar was chartered in 1969 and has carried out many projects including constructing latrines and digging wells, and is now focusing on service to the suburbs of Dakar.

The SI Dakar delegation headed by President Josephine Yekpe presented the women detainees in Senegal with useful items.





SI Madrid

## SUCCESSFUL FUND-RAISING CONCERT

SI Madrid ([www.si-es.org](http://www.si-es.org)) ended the year 2011 successfully with a fund-raising concert performed by the prestigious musical group Duo Sonidos, for the support of AENILCE (Association for children with brain damage) [www.aenilce.com](http://www.aenilce.com). The event took place on 20<sup>th</sup> December 2011 at the historic Palacio de Cañete, which was kindly offered by Sefarad Israel ([www.sefarad-israel.es](http://www.sefarad-israel.es)).

For the past 25 years, AENILCE has been caring for seriously disabled children providing multidisciplinary treatment which encompasses physiotherapy, speech therapy, therapeutic pedagogy, sensory stimulation and psychotherapy.

Duo Sonidos combines the talents of violinist William Knuth and guitarist Adam Levin. The



two are accomplished chamber musicians and solo artists, who have already won several prizes for their work. Levin and Knuth have performed throughout the United States and Europe and have been honoured as, among other things, US Fulbright Scholars ([www.duosonidos.com](http://www.duosonidos.com)).

SI Madrid is now preparing to host the 2012 Spanish interclub meeting to be held on 20<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> April 2012.

Members of SI Madrid are photographed with the Duo Sonidos and representatives from AENILCE.



SI St Petersburg

## THEATRE TRAINING FOR CHILDREN

During the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of SI St Petersburg, Russia, in December, more than 100 guests had the opportunity to visit the Children's 'Charity Home', which the club has supported for 19 years. It was very moving to see the children from two to 15 years old perform in a play, forgetting completely the world around them. Divided into two groups, the visitors were fascinated by the lively theatrical production prepared with little means and yet performed with great enthusiasm. Each child conveyed the impression that she or he

was a valuable part of the cast. Far more than just a charitable effort, the club's theatre project has gained an excellent reputation. The instructors educate the youngsters through this theatre work, offering the children the kind of training which helps them overcome their individual problems and those stemming from their home environments, to which, it is hoped, they will later return. But the effort goes even further than that: through this 'training to lead' the children become more motivated and better equipped to function in a world with others who have similar or more severe problems. They also learn how to interact without quarreling and violence.

*Kathy Kaaf, SIE President*

Twenty Italian Soroptimists, including the IPPs of the Italian Union and of SI Rome, Wilma Malucelli and Simonetta Saffiotti respectively, attended the anniversary celebrations in St Petersburg. It was SI Rome that helped found this club and SI Moscow 20 years ago.

SI Basel

## BENEFIT CONCERT FOR KOSOVO SCHOOL

# BASEL



On a foggy November day, Soroptimists from SI Basel organised a benefit concert in the wonderful Bird's Eye Jazz Club. At the request of Club President Manca Abt, the proceeds went to the Music and Painting School Gjakova in Kosovo, as the school's patron is an acquaintance of hers in Basel. Kosovo psychologist Yllka Kugi and her husband manage the school and help the children and teenagers traumatised by war cope with the tragedy they have experienced in Kosovo.

The organisers offered a diverse programme in two sold-out concert sessions. After the words of welcome from President Manca and Yllka Kugi, the audience heard Albanian folksongs, sung by the music school heads themselves – music that was impressive and profoundly moving to the point of deeply sad, only to become lively again. The 'Ladybirds' then performed their gig. The vocal trio, one of whom is our own Club member Gina Günthard, entertained us with their extraordinary wit, cheerful variety and powerful voices. The repertoire was perfectly geared to the occasion and highly praised by our audience.

The guests were served a wide variety of home-made finger-food, which our own Soroptimists lovingly prepared with particular creativity – from sweet and salty pastry creations, tiny rolls and

The 'Ladybirds' with Soroptimist Gina Günthard perform at the concert in Basel.

cheese brochettes to cakes and tarts. A well-stocked bar completed the service.

The greatest pleasure of all came when we calculated the proceeds: nearly € 5,200 will be donated to the school to finance the supervision of and materials for a full year of drawing therapy.

Special thanks go to our guests for their kind donations, our helpful Soroptimists and, of course, the performers who made the concert possible for next to nothing. We are also extremely grateful to the Bird's Eye team. Without their generosity the proceeds would have been far more modest. We are proud to say that the event was a complete success – also because each Club member contributed in her own way, which is exactly how it should be!

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Christl Hösch, SI Basel

SI Vicenza

## CONFERENCE OFFERS FORUM ON VIOLENCE

'Violence against Women – Stalking in Families, at Work and in Society' was the subject of a conference, organised by SI Vicenza at the Vicenza Fair in November 2011. Speakers included European Parliamentarian Elisabetta Gardini, medical examiner Andrea Galassi, Assistant Public Prosecutor Antonella Toniolo and psychotherapist Roberta Luberti. President of SI Italy Flavia Pozzolini, the deputy mayor of Vicenza Alessandra Moretti, many Soroptimists from our region, numerous local women and pupils also attended the event. After



Marina Bertazzoni, President of SI Vicenza, Flavia Pozzolini, President of SI Italy and Genevière Henrot, member of the Union Extension Committee at the conference on violence against women.



greetings by SI Vicenza President Marina Bertazzoni, Union President Flavia Pozzolini spoke on 'Women's Rights and Dignity'. Elisabetta Gardini then reported on violence against women as the most widely violated human right in the world and the principal cause of death for women between the ages of 16 and 44. Stalking is widespread in Europe and on the rise. Dr Galassi maintained that in order to curb violence against women a DNA bank should be considered.

Dr Toniolo's report about victims was particularly touching. No more than 7% of victims denounce the partner, 4% a stranger. Shame, fear of not being believed, dread of the offender and mistrust in institutions are the reasons for silence.

Roberta Luberti concentrated on violence witnessed by children. Speaking to the students present, she said that it is important to seek help, speak, share and not lose hope for the future.

After the speeches, members of the audience asked questions about problems such as the violation of the dignity of women in the media. In this connection President Flavia urged the audience to report such violations to the IAP (*Istituto di Autoregolamentazione della Pubblicità*) through the online form on the IAP website.

Responding to a teacher's question, Union Extension Committee Member Geneviève Henrot mentioned some initiatives of clubs in Veneto to combat violence against women. For example, SI Belluno worked with the 'Giustina Venier' school on the 'Is Little Red Riding Hood still up-to-date?' project, and two students showed a short video on the results of sociological research on violence against women.

Margheirita Bellé from SI Rovigo reported on a service dealing with victims of Domestic Violence, which was positively received by the local public. Annamaria Egidi, Past-President of SI Verona mentioned a conference held after the law against stalking was approved in 2009. During and after the conference victims summoned the courage to speak and became aware of those who could help them. According to Luciana Laino Grillo, the same happened as a result of a similar initiative of SI Trento.

In her closing remarks, Geneviève Henrot noted with satisfaction how the actions of the SI clubs of Veneto were helping to fight violence against women, and thanked Marina Bertazzoni for organising the conference to address this important issue.

Anna Miotti, SI Vicenza Club

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## SI Zürich

# PRACTICAL HELP FOR FUKUSHIMA

SI Zürich has donated a bus for the specific purpose of transporting women and children who have been living in shelters since the earthquake and tsunami in Fukushima to hospitals, authorities, etc. These particular shelters service as temporary accommodations for victims and especially mothers and children. The idea for this donation came from SI Kyoto, which has been a Friendship Link of SI Zürich for 15 years.

Two Soroptimists from Zürich travelled to Japan in order to personally present the cheque for the equivalent of nearly € 12,500. The special ceremony took place in the presence of the mayor of Kyoto. In her speech, given in Japanese (!), Swiss Soroptimist Yvonne Lang stressed that faith in the good of the world moves mountains.

The fact that people in a country like Switzerland on the other side of the world care about Japan and its affected population and are willing to help them deeply impressed the Japanese Soroptimists, who expressed their sincere gratitude for this generosity.

Anne-Lise Nater, SI Zürich



Club President Yvonne Lang and Anne-Lise Nater from SI Zürich travelled to Kyoto to present SI Kyoto the donation towards a bus that will help tsunami victims in Fukushima.

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Please submit your contributions to the next issue of *The Link* by 30<sup>th</sup> April 2012!

## NEW SI/E CLUBS TO BE CHARTERED

### 5<sup>th</sup> May 2012

Tolagnaro (Madagascar)  
Charter to be presented by  
Tonny Filedt Kok-Weimar,  
SIE Extension Committee  
Club President  
Lydia Raholinirina  
RDR Anosy, Boite postale 6  
MG – 614 Fort Dauphin  
Phone: +261 34 01 244 19  
E-mail: eraholinirina@yahoo.fr

### 1<sup>st</sup> December 2012

Aalst (Belgium)  
Charter to be presented by  
Maria Luisa Frosio, Chair  
SIE Extension Committee  
Club President  
Anne Marie Vandenstorme  
Kapellestraat 87  
BE – 9473 Welle  
Phone: +32 494 57 37 92  
E-mail: avandenstorme@hotmail.com

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS FOR SIE

### 24<sup>th</sup> March 2012

50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
SI Menton (France)

### 25<sup>th</sup> March 2012

50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
SI Liestal (Switzerland)

### 14<sup>th</sup> April 2012

50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
SI Ferrara (Italy)

### 1<sup>st</sup> May 2012

50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
SI Ragusa (Italy)

### 4<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> May 2012

17<sup>e</sup> Journées d'Expression Française  
Montreux (Switzerland)

### 12<sup>th</sup> May 2012

25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
SI Antwerpen (Belgium)

### 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2012

International Peace Marathon  
Kigali (Rwanda)

### 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2012

25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
SI Nürnberg (Germany)

### 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2012

25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
SI La Gruyère (Switzerland)

### 26<sup>th</sup> May 2012

50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
SI Hoorn e.o. (The Netherlands)

### 20<sup>th</sup> June 2012

25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
SI Ulm/Neu-Ulm (Germany)

### 30<sup>th</sup> June–8<sup>th</sup> July 2012

Icelandic Soroptimist Week

### 14<sup>th</sup>–15<sup>th</sup> July 2012

Governors' Meeting  
Budapest (Hungary)

### 28<sup>th</sup> September – 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2012

9<sup>th</sup> European Friendship Days  
SI Nicosia & SI Paphos (Cyprus)

### 12<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> July 2013

SI/E Congress  
Berlin (Germany)

## INTERNATIONAL AWARENESS DAYS AND EVENTS

### 22<sup>nd</sup> March

World Water Day

### 5<sup>th</sup> June

World Environment Day

