



# The Link

A global voice for women

3/2008-2009 N° 214



*World Water Forum  
Bridging Divides  
for Water*

*Training at Governors' Meeting  
Sustainable Leadership in a  
Volunteer Organisation*

*SI/E Water Awards  
Announcing the  
Eight Nominees*

*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 over 34,000 members in some 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](http://www.soroptimisteurope.org) for more information about the aims, activities and projects that characterise our organisation.*

Note from the Editorial Staff

# CAMPAIGNING FOR SUBSCRIBERS!

The Working Group for The Link and the SI/E Board had hoped to provide each member of the European Federation with a copy of The Link, but the reality of the postage costs has sadly dampened our aspirations. So, instead we have decided to initiate a campaign with this issue to encourage more Soroptimists to subscribe to the SI/E magazine. With the help of a survey, we would also like to hear from our readers how The Link can more specifically meet your needs as the Federation magazine.

Of course, we fully realise that language may be a barrier for some, but there is perhaps one person in your club who would be able to give a short summary of the contents at a club meeting. With its wide variety of topics, helpful tips and interesting news, The Link is extremely useful and informative. But most importantly, it conveys a sense of how each and every one of us is part of an international organisation that is truly empowering women and improving the lives of women and children. For this reason, we can and should use The Link for PR purposes. Why not order extra copies to give to local politicians or other organisations in your area? Imagine how

impressed potential donors will be when they read about our role at the World Water Forum or see the quality of our projects and the programme at the SI/E Congress? The Link is truly an excellent tool to more actively spread the word about Soroptimism. The modest subscription fee is a good investment and well worth the money!

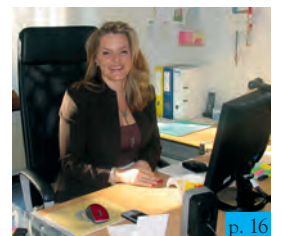
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## Cover page



In Africa, women often have to walk long distances to fetch water supplies for their families. With the help of WfWP, a project in Mali was developed and realised to build a local well for potable water.



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While attending the 5<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum in Istanbul, SI/E President Mariet Verhoef-Cohen visited the 'Imagine Life Without Water' photo exhibition, organised by the Turkish Union.

## Dear Soroptimists,

Many of you will be preparing to attend the SI/E Congress, and I will be delighted to welcome you in Amsterdam. We think you will be proud of the professional quality of this Federation event. In fact, with the SI/E online branding campaign, the new website with video clips and the facelift of The Link, SI/E is making enormous strides in modernising our image. This Soroptimist year alone, we will gain 24 new clubs and 600 members in SI/E, bringing our total membership to well over 35,000. Considering this number of Soroptimists in 57 countries, it is sad that only 2% of members have chosen to participate in the Congress. After all, it is held just once every four years!

## Heading towards one million euros

SI/E is currently engaged in scores of water-related and other projects to empower and transform the lives of women and children. The 'Soroptimists go for Water' theme has already inspired donations of some € 700,000 in water and sanitation projects, and we have only just begun! I am amazed by and grateful for your commitment. At the Congress the winner of the SI/E Water Best Practice Award will be announced. With so many interesting projects, it was very difficult to select the shortlist of candidates.

## Violations of women's rights

SI/E is very concerned about the increasing number of violations of women's rights in recent months, most notably the proposed legislation in Afghanistan that would, among other things, legalise rape within marriage. This prompted our Board to write to the different heads of State involved and to leaders in positions of influence to prevent this law from coming into effect.

Our SI/E constitution demands strict neutrality in party politics and in conflicts between nations. However, almost all our objectives are sociopolitical – whether trafficking, water or the elimination of landmines. Our neutrality must not silence our protests

against violations of basic human rights. The very purpose of collaborating in an international organisation and acting as a 'global voice for women through Awareness, Advocacy and Action' would be undermined and our credibility questioned.

## Many topics and a subscription campaign

This issue of The Link also contains an article about the leadership training to be offered at the Governors' Meeting in Amsterdam. Interactive discussions support modern and sustainable leadership. It is important to recognise and acknowledge the need to perform professionally within an organisation of women volunteers. Your Governors, Union Presidents and Single Club Presidents will be asked to inform you about this valuable leadership training.

Indeed, this issue includes so many interesting topics, it is a shame it reaches so few of you. Currently, less than one third of our Federation subscribes to The Link. We hope to increase this number by initiating a subscription campaign and a survey with this issue. Please take the time to discuss the many subjects covered in and the uses of The Link with your Club members and send us your completed survey.

In the meantime I wish you all a wonderful summertime and hope you will become re-energised for the new Soroptimist year!

In friendship

Mariet Verhoef-Cohen  
SI/E President



5<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum

# BRIDGING DIVIDES FOR WATER

In the presence of numerous heads of state, UN representatives, water experts, activists, journalists and nearly 5,000 organisations, SI/E was the voice of women at the 5<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum in Istanbul, Turkey. SI/E President Mariet Verhoef-Cohen, Turkish Union President Emine Erdem and other Soroptimists were among the 33,058 participants from 192 countries in the world's largest water event ever held. Here is the report by SI/E Programme Officer Suba Parthiban.



One of two events organised by the Turkish Union was a 'Women and Water' discussion.



The very first special session of the Forum was dedicated to 'Health, Dignity and Economic Progress: The Way Forward for Gender Equity' where the debate was dominated by water and sanitation concerns. Uschi Eid, session co-chair and member of the UN Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation, stressed how sanitation is vital to a woman's well being. Indeed, it is imperative for girls to have separate toilets in schools in

order to avoid sexual harassment and rape as well as to have their privacy. In addition, the session called for gender-disaggregated (i.e. separated according to gender) data in the water and sanitation sectors, the creation and use of gender indicators, and funding for water and sanitation. For more information, please see [www.unwater.org/downloads/EGM\\_report.pdf](http://www.unwater.org/downloads/EGM_report.pdf).

## Soroptimists Create Awareness

Turkish Union President Emine Erdem welcomed the guests to the 'Women and Water' event, one of two organised by the Turkish Union. Speaking at this event, SI/E President Mariet paid special attention to water and sanitation, by presenting projects that SI/E was undertaking in Africa and elaborating to what extent SI/E was building women's capacity, promoting leadership and improving women's lives. 'Soroptimists encourage women to be the leaders in their communities,' said Mariet. 'We inspire them to take over project leadership and ownership.' Indeed, this very fact was emphasised throughout the Forum as the key to success. Efficient and equitable management of water resources is only achieved when women are involved in consultation processes, capacity building, decision making, policy making as well as in the management and implementation of water-related services. A short documentary about the Senegal Water Project, supervised by the Past SI President Sadun Katipoglu, was also shown at this event.



The passion and commitment of the Turkish Union was clearly evident in the photo exhibition 'Imagine Life Without Water' at the Kadir Has University in Istanbul. The message of this exhibition not only reached the Forum participants, but also addresses the younger generation of Turkey, since the photos will be shown at other universities in the country.

The second side event, 'The Role of Women in Irrigated Agriculture: Experiences from Turkey and Sri Lanka', was organised in partnership with the NetWater organisation, based in Sri Lanka. Here, experts from different backgrounds discussed the role of women in irrigated agriculture.

In addition, SI Club Kyoto created maximum visibility for our organisation when, during the closing ceremony, they presented Watershed Organisation Trust, India, with the Kyoto World Water Grand Prize for its excellence in 'contributing to the Millennium Development Goals through grassroots initiatives'. The prize was co-sponsored by the city of Kyoto and Club Kyoto. For more information, see [www.worldwaterforum5.org/index.php?id=1899&L=0](http://www.worldwaterforum5.org/index.php?id=1899&L=0).

## Water does not divide – it connects

The concluding Ministerial Declaration of the Forum failed to recognise water as a human right. Instead, it only refers to 'access to safe drinking water and sanitation [as] a basic human need'. Interestingly, only last year the UN Human Rights Council adopted a resolution emphasising human rights obligations related to water and



The Turkish Union displayed artwork by children as part of its 'Blue Gold: Water Education Project'.



Following the Forum proceedings are (from right) SI/E Programme Officer Suba Parthiban, Union President Emine Erdem, SI/E President Mariet Verhoef-Cohen and SI/E VP Nilgun Ozler.

sanitation. Unfortunately, the Ministerial Declaration falls short of reiterating women's right to water mentioned in the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women three decades ago. This reconfirms the lack of political will and the low priority given to water on the political agenda.

On the one hand, water education, the cooperation of NGOs with professional associations, efficient national and international partnerships, building of networks and increased state investment in water management will bring us closer to the realisation of the MDGs before 2015. On the other hand, the lack of transparency in policy making means that the conflict potential of water will increase. It is clear that women and children are the most vulnerable with a proliferation of water conflicts. More women in decision-making processes who can fight the power asymmetry will help bring water to the top of a state's political agenda. Soroptimists need to develop new strategies, policies and energise policy makers in the years to come. We do not want to start the process from scratch when we meet for the 6th World Water Forum in Durban, South Africa in 2012. Soroptimists have a duty to take the process to the next level by LEADING, SHARING and CARING.

*Suba Parthiban*

SI/E Programme Officer, Geneva, Switzerland

# SI/E BENEFITS FROM GRANTS

One of the key advantages of joining the Women for Water Partnership is the possibility to obtain grants and funds to further our work and to support our projects. Since becoming a member in 2007, SI/E has received numerous grants and resources for water projects in Africa, totalling nearly € 34,000.

As already reported in previous issues of The Link, Women for Water Partnership (WfWP) is a worldwide strategic alliance of local, national and international women's organisation and networks active in the areas of sustainable development, water, poverty and gender issues. Member organisations are in South America, the Caribbean, Africa, Asia and Western and Eastern Europe. The partnership consists of more than a million women from different social, cultural and professional background. Empowerment, local ownership, equity mainstreaming, partnership and grassroots development are the key concerns of WfWP.

WfWP members can apply for grants every two years. There are four different kinds of grants available:

**Seed Funds (SF)** are given for the development of project proposals. In this connection SI/E received a grant totalling € 5,500 for a water project proposal initiated in Mali. Club Nijmegen made the application.

A **Communication Infrastructure (CI)** grant is meant to help improve the communication of member organisations internally, with Women for Water Partnership, the WfWP members and the rest of the world. One of these grants was allocated to SI/E in 2009 for the development and maintenance of its 'Seroptimists go for Water' website providing information about the SI/E Water Congress.

**Capacity Development (CD)** grants support capacity development activities to strengthen member organisations, such as training for project management, lobby and advocacy, etc. and the transfer of capacity competences from one member

organisation to another. SI/E received a CD grant for the Dynamic Networking (formerly known as Functional Networking) training at the Governors' Meeting in 2008 (€ 7,750) and will be given a second CD grant for the Sustainable Leadership training provided at this year's Governors' Meeting.

An Exchange Visit grant allows exchanges between WfWP member organisations to develop and implement project proposals or to provide alternative solutions based on a study visit programme.

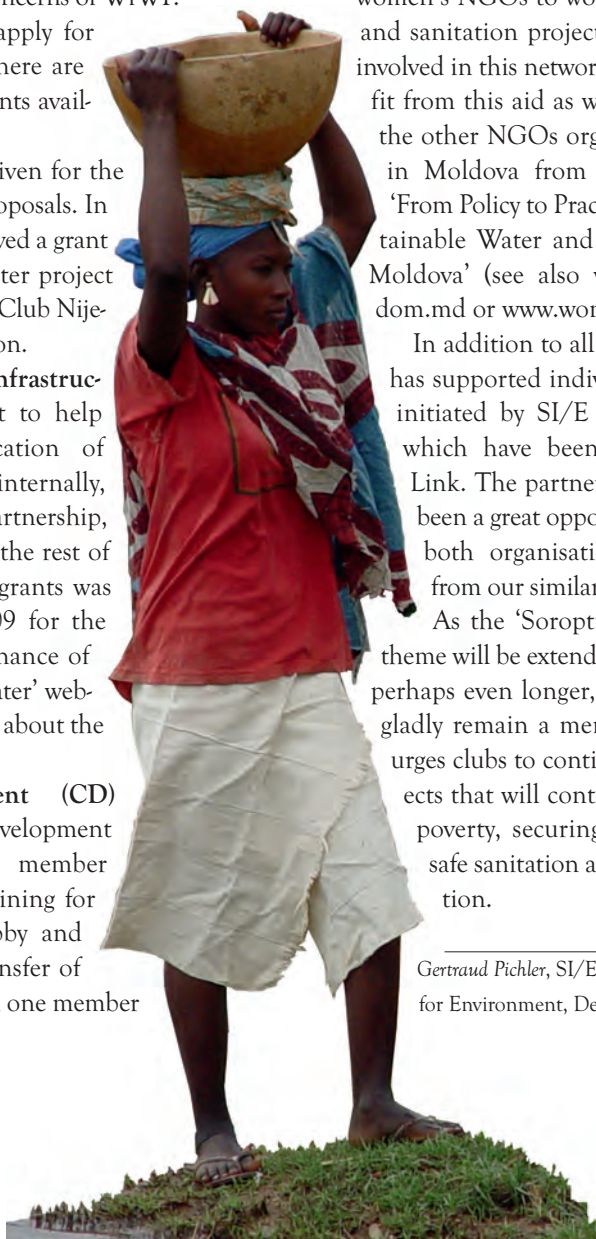
WfWP is also supporting an important Moldova network with WfWP members and women's NGOs to work together on water and sanitation projects. Club Chisinau is involved in this network and will thus benefit from this aid as well. The WfWP and the other NGOs organised a conference in Moldova from 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> May titled 'From Policy to Practice: Developing Sustainable Water and Health Projects for Moldova' (see also [www.conference.wisdom.md](http://www.conference.wisdom.md) or [www.womenforwater.org](http://www.womenforwater.org)).

In addition to all these grants, WfWP has supported individual water projects initiated by SI/E in Africa, many of which have been presented in The Link. The partnership with WfWP has been a great opportunity for SI/E, and both organisations have benefited from our similar goals and objectives.

As the 'Seroptimists go for Water' theme will be extended through 2011 and perhaps even longer, our Federation will gladly remain a member of WfWP and urges clubs to continue supporting projects that will contribute to eradicating poverty, securing potable water and safe sanitation and promoting education.

Gertraud Pichler, SI/E Programme Coordinator for Environment, Delegate for WfWP

At the initiative of Club Nijmegen, Mali received a WfWP grant to help develop the water project that relieves the burden on women to supply water to their families.







The cityscape of Auckland taken from Mount Eden is breathtaking!

Region of New Zealand North

## EXPERIENCE GIFT OF FRIENDSHIP

The Region of New Zealand North invites Soroptimists from outside New Zealand to apply for its Friendship Grant 2010. Those eligible must be either two Soroptimists or one Soroptimist and a spouse/partner/friend who have preferably not been past recipients of a Gift of Friendship.

The six Clubs in the Region offer home hospitality and accommodation for a period of three weeks between the months of March and November 2010. Visitors will be expected to pay for all travel expenses to and from New Zealand North. They will also be asked to pay admission fees where applicable. In addition, some transport between clubs may be at the expense of the recipients. If a club meeting coincides with a visit, the guests may be asked to speak informally.

Applications should be in English, and no more than 500 words. They should include the applicants' Soroptimist background, occupation, interests and leisure activities. Please also send a recent photograph and reasons for wishing to visit New Zealand.

**Applications close on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2009 and should be sent to: Laurice Botica, 276A Shirley Rd, Papatoetoe, Auckland 2025, New Zealand**

During the Governors' Meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> July in Amsterdam, the SI/E Board has organised a training seminar on sustainable leadership. A professional trainer will coach participants on how to lead and to accept leadership in an organisation of women volunteers.

Most of us have experienced the challenges and pitfalls of being leaders and being led in our professional lives. Especially for the highly trained and well educated, it is not easy to fit into an organisation and find the right tone in leading peers. More challenges arise when professionals are united in a volunteer organisation comprised of women of many different nationalities and cultures. Professionals have the natural tendency to think they know best what to do and how to advise others. Among themselves, professional women often have difficulties in creating a good climate for decision-making and in accepting the leadership of others. Almost every decision is subject to lengthy discussions, debates and sometimes even open conflicts. Clearly, this is not the most effective way of making decisions and moving forward. At times, we as leaders may even lack the inspiration and creativity needed to 'sell' our own ideas and arguments to others.

The purpose of the training seminar at the Governors' Meeting is to recognise and acknowledge the need for professional leadership at all levels of Soroptimist International and when Soroptimists work with other organisations, such



Machteld Pel has years of experience in mediating and will lead the leadership training in Amsterdam.

Workshop at the Governors' Meeting

## CHALLENGES AND PITFALLS OF LEADERSHIP

as the Women for Water Partnership. We will investigate and map the current state of leadership, identify obstacles and pitfalls, develop a model of what professional leadership means and examine ways of introducing and accepting real leadership.

Soroptimist Machteld Pel, Director of the court-annexed mediation agency in the Netherlands and a qualified mediator and mediator trainer, will lead the training. After an introduction to leadership, co-operation and issues that can be obstacles to or can promote productive co-operation, smaller groups will discuss designated topics and practice specific skills. In the end, we hope that participants will go away with the feeling that we have made progress in creating an optimal atmosphere for co-operation in our organisation.

Study tour of Sierra Leone

# HOPE FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE

In Bo, the Soroptimists were greeted by a group of young women who expressed their gratitude by singing and dancing.

Thanks to the support through the Sierra project, young women are able to learn a trade like hairdressing, thus becoming more self-reliant.



Gerd Stenberg, Sierra ambassador in Norway, reports on her study trip to Sierra Leone in early February 2009 with participants from four federations. Goal of the tour was to see the results of the SI project 'A Family and A Future' which was initiated a year ago.

Well, actually our trip was cut short by two days due to delays at Heathrow airport caused by heavy snow. Our thanks go to Hilary Ratcliffe, Programme Director for SI Great Britain and Ireland, who invited everybody to stay at her home. Participants of this trip were Alison Sutherland, SI Quadrennial Project Liaison; Fatamata Cole, Vice President of Club Freetown; SI President Elect Hanne Jensbo and myself, as well as a representative from our partner organisation, 'Hope and Homes for Children'.

After arriving safe and sound in Freeport, we embarked on a five-hour drive to Sierra Leone's second largest city, Bo. Ninety-three smiling young women welcomed us, cheerfully singing and dancing to the drums of two boys who once had been street children! It was quite moving to hear the girls sing how we had given them a new future, an opportunity to survive and become self-reliant.

At the centre, the girls had received vocational training in cooking, hairdressing, sewing and dyeing. Childcare was provided so that the young mothers could attend the centre for one and a half years.

We also met with a group of women who wanted to form a new Soroptimist club! Hanne Jensbo gave a talk about the organisation and encouraged them in this respect.

The next day another long journey followed to the out-back village of Makeni. The project in Makeni started in 2007. Here, 40 families with a total of 126 children are now receiving support. In addition, some 150 street children are attending school and learning a trade. The centre has an administration building, a day-care centre, a health clinic and a school. The clinic assists pregnant women, treats those with malaria and provides therapy for AIDS victims. We then met another group of women who plan to form a new club!

Day three brought us to the village of Kamakwie where we met with several families. The village head thanked the Soroptimists for their support, adding that we are helping the world to become a global village.

Our return journey to Freetown ended up quite adventurous after one of our vehicles broke down. Before departing, some participants visited the Mercy Fistula Hospital. I stayed on for a further week to meet with members of the local club.

All of us were pleased to see how our aid is bearing fruit. 'Hope and Homes for Children' is doing a wonderful job of helping those who need it most by offering them a brighter future. I would love to see more clubs support Project Sierra. Your help is highly appreciated!

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Gerd Stenberg, Sierra ambassador in Norway



Individual projects to be continued

## SI EXITS PROJECT FIVE-O

At the FIVE-O Committee meetings held in New York in February, SI President Margaret Lobo announced that SI will drop out of Project FIVE-O, thus following in the footsteps of Zonta International and the International Federation of University Women. The organisations Business & Professional Women International and International Council of Women will continue with Project FIVE-O. If necessary, SI will provide transition support to the new leadership until the end of 2009. But most importantly, SI will finish the projects it started and carry forward with other projects under the SI umbrella. SI Clubs participating in local FIVE-O projects are also urged to continue with their support. In addition, SI Clubs and UN representatives are encouraged to foster collaborative partnerships with other organisations, including the former FIVE-O partners.

One of the main reasons for this decision was that the money for FIVE-O projects was almost exclusively donated by SI. Another concern was that the funds raised should only be used for projects. Any remaining money will be allocated to projects, primarily to those already existing.

It was no doubt an admirable idea when the five international women organisations decided to work together on projects in developing countries at the second World Women's Conference in Copenhagen in 1980. The resulting projects have helped to advance the status of thousands of women worldwide and to improve their lives and as well as those of their children.



Project FIVE-0 in Mumbai

## EMPOWERING WOMEN FROM SLUMS

The aim of the 'Home Management Course - Life Skill Development' project, organised by FIVE-O, is to educate women from Mumbai's slum communities to become recognised professional domestic help. By learning better negotiating skills, the Indian women are empowered to succeed.

At the end of February, I took part in the event celebrating the certification of the first 43 young women to finish their education. The training included 'Housekeeping & Kitchen Management', carried out at the famous Hotel Taj Mahal; 'Child & Geriatric Care', taught at the Family Service Centre, a voluntary organisation committed to preserve, promote and strengthen the family as a unit; and 'Grooming & Personality Development', offered by the members of WGU (Women Graduate Union affiliated to the International Federation of University Women).

The young women, whose average age is 18 years, dressed in their finest for the occasion, and

some even brought their babies. All listened attentively to the speeches stressing the accomplishments of Project FIVE-O. Some of the participants described the change in their lives. They are now more independent and have achieved a higher standing in their families. With this certificate they will be in great demand as domestic help. For all this, they are truly grateful.

After experiencing this moving event, I can once again attest to the great benefit of Project FIVE-O and what it has meant for women in poverty and need! I personally regret the SI Board decision to exit Project Five-O, as I have always been wholeheartedly committed to the idea of five being stronger than one, especially during my term as SI Liaison Project FIVE-O.

*Elke Schildberg, SI Liaison Project FIVE-O 2003-2006*

Thanks to the professional education provided by this Project FIVE-O, the 43 young participants are far better prepared for future employment.

At the 19<sup>th</sup> SI/E Congress in Amsterdam, the European Federation will present cash prizes honouring two exemplary water projects. The Selection Committee will choose the winner of the Water Best Practice Award 2009 (€ 10,000), and online voting will decide the Public's Project Award (€ 5,000) from the eight nominees presented below in alphabetical order by country.



Club Spittal/  
Millstättersee  
raised the funds  
for the costs of  
constructing  
a well at the col-  
lective farm  
for orphans in  
Aricesti  
near Bucharest.

Selecting the eight nominees from all the excellent water projects was not easy. Many more were worthy of distinction, but sadly, the criteria for submitting an application were not always followed. Each potential candidate had to submit a 2-4-page report using the Criteria for the Water Best Practice Award as a guideline and including photos and drawings. The sponsor also had to prepare a poster presentation of the project for the Congress. The projects had to have been realised during the period from September 2007 to June 2009. The deadline for applications was 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009.

## Club Spittal/Millstättersee in Austria

An old pump on a collective farm for orphans in Aricesti, half of whom are girls, was unable to meet its own water needs, so Club Spittal/Millstättersee decided to help by building a well/fountain and educating the young people about the importance of conserving water. Now there is enough water for drinking, sanitation and farming uses. They grow their own vegetables and have even started delivering produce to local markets.

The 'drums on wheels' financed by Club Ouagadougou allow women in

Signonguin to transport water to their homes and to generate income by renting the drums.

## Club Ouagadougou in Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso has a serious water problem. Club Ouagadougou came up with the idea to supply drinking water from a fountain for the inhabitants of Signonguin on the outskirts of the city. Water drums attached to wheels will allow



some of the poorest women in the area to transport sufficient quantities of water to their homes. By renting out these drums, the women can also generate an income.

## Club Kumasi in Ghana

Club Kumasi constructed toilets, bathrooms and a borehole in Ayeduase, thus offering decent sanitary facilities to the village inhabitants and the students from the nearby university. Employment was provided for local construction workers





# WAS DIFFICULT

and maintenance personnel. Income generated by selling the water will help pay the salaries of workers and fund other projects such as the construction of an incinerator and a day nursery where mothers can leave their children.

## Club Xanthi in Greece

This comprehensive project involved informing and sensitising citizens and authorities about a wide variety of water issues. With the assistance of the Environment Coordinator of the Greek Union, Club Xanthi organised a Conference on Water. A successful PR campaign was also initiated, resulting in wide coverage in the local media.



Alexandros Kodos, Greece's Minister of Agriculture, spoke at the Conference on Water and the Environment, organised by Club Xanthi.

## Club Udine in Italy

In line with the Italian Union's national initiative 'Pax per aquam', Club Udine implemented a project in Mozambique, 'A well for Chica'. The main goal was to dig a well for the village of Chica with the help of Italian architects. The project was successfully completed in December 2008, and the well now provides clean water to Chica's Health Centre as well as to the local community.

## Club Mandrosa in Madagascar

The objective of this project was to build a nursery with toilets and provide a well for drinking water in the village of Ambohidehilahy, cur-

rently lacking in electricity, a school, day care and clean water. This will enable women to go to work and thus earn a living as well as improve local hygiene and health. A committee will manage the water distribution.

## Turkish Union

Several clubs of the Turkish Union co-operated on the Blue Gold Water Education Project to create awareness of the importance of water among teaching trainees. The Union also sponsored an 'Imagine Life Without Water' Photo Exhibition and helped organise the Preparatory Conference for the 5th World Water Forum. The awareness-building Photo Exhibition will tour several universities. Catalogues were sold to finance the Education Project. The Turkish Union's activities at the 5th World Water Forum are mentioned in a separate article.

## Club Dnepropetrovsk in the Ukraine

Club Dnepropetrovsk had a two-pronged project to install special filters at a local orphanage and to educate the young people about the importance of clean water and how to conserve it. The children learned about the water issues through fairy tales and poems and contributed pictures to an exhibition on the subject of clean water. The Club also financed biological and chemical analyses of the water.

With the support of Club Udine in Italy, a well was constructed and now provides clean water to the village of Chica in Mozambique



The provisional Board of the Future African Federation chaired the meeting in Cotonou.



## STILL A LONG WAY TO GO

19<sup>th</sup> Future African Federation Meeting

The First Lady, Chantal de Souza Yayi, opened the Future African Federation Meeting in Cotonou, Benin, in the presence of several Ministers and Deputies and also gave much support to the whole Congress, held from 12<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> March. The opening ceremony, the dinner at the Consulate of Ivory Coast and the gala were of a very high standard. Everybody present enjoyed the festive atmosphere.

Unfortunately, the General Assembly itself again showed a lack of knowledge of the Constitution and the By-Laws of our organisation. The fact that participants change from one African Meeting to the next makes it difficult for the provisional Board to realise the dream of the Future African Federation. I assisted during part of the meeting and offered advice, but the training was postponed and lasted only half an hour because of lack of time. So I concentrated on the most important questions.

The very big advantage of the meeting is the contact between the many countries present: Benin, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo. The election of three Technical Commissions – Extension, Constitution and Finance – is a step forward for the African Meeting.

The next meeting will be held in Nigeria in 2010.

*Roswitha Ott, SI/E Project Manager Africa*

Various projects in Africa

## ACHIEVING MORE THROUGH CO-OPERATION

Continuing her untiring work for a variety of projects in Africa, Roswitha Ott, SI/E Project Manager Africa, provided the following report after her travels to Togo and Benin in March 2009. She witnessed how strong clubs have initiated projects to help in the development of their countries – often with the support of the Women for Water Partnership, European clubs, the Action Fund or money raised by Roswitha herself or African Soroptimists.

### Club Lomé I

Club Lomé I realised two projects during the past year with the help of the Action Fund and Women for Water. One was the solar pump in Badja mentioned in the last issue of *The Link*, and the other impressive project is the big wall around the school, Ecole Tokoin CEBEVITO, which is now finished. The wall will help protect the very young pupils from drug dealers. I am currently looking for a sponsor to fund the work to add two doors in the wall.



This ward for premature babies now has sufficient electricity thanks to Club Lomé I.

Club Lomé I has initiated a new project to provide solar electricity for the maternity ward in Badja. Vaccinations and many other treatments are impossible without electricity. In 2008 the centre treated 575 patients and 39 babies were born. The plans for electrification and part of the money are ready. However, I must find an additional € 2,500.





This well in Dangbo is 60 metres deep and was constructed with limited technical means.

### Club Lomé Aurore

It is a long-term project of Lomé Aurore to help an evening school where students between seven and fifty years old learn to read and write in classes of about 40 people. The Club donated books for the students, desks for a whole schoolroom, blackboards and electric light. The salary of a teacher is EUR 15 a month. I paid the wages of seven teachers for two months to prevent the school from closing down because of lack of money.

In cooperation with Club Monthey in Switzerland, Club Lomé Aurore is supporting the maternity ward of the Tokoin hospital. Together with the Club, I visited the hospital, where its Chief Paediatrician Professor Atakoumad explained the difficult situation. The visit itself was a horrific experience. The members of Club Lomé Aurore and I were totally shocked about the condition of the maternity ward. So we are all highly motivated to offer help to the newborn babies, and above all those prematurely born. Club Lomé Aurore spontaneously decided to clean the dirty maternity. Club Monthey is helping with medical equipment, financed by selling a beautiful calendar 2009.

### Club Lomé Agapé

During the last six years Club Lomé Agapé has built up the Rayon de Soleil orphan home, together with the Clubs Milano Fondatore and alla Scala. Sixteen girls have found a home and education here. Rayon de Soleil is one of the most impressive projects in Africa, and the long-term cooperation between Togo and Italy deserves all our admiration.

Financed by the Action Fund and sponsors I have organised, Edwige Lawson, Past President of Club Agapé, developed teaching materials for teachers and children to help curb the spreading of HIV. Edwige herself travels to many schools to give lessons on this subject.

Edwige is also working on a toilet project for the Ahépé-Seva school, which we visited. Another water project is planned for the small fishing village of Kouvé to purify the local water sources.

### Club Kara Lila

As Kara Lila was too far away for me to visit this time, President Elise Adom came to Lomé to report. The Club built two wells, one in Agninkata in cooperation with the Spanish Clubs Marina Baixa/Costa Blanca, Val d'Aran, Madrid and Costa del Sol, and another in Agnarme with the Clubs Antwerpen-de zes Rozen, Antwerpen Anthos and Land van Waas.

### Club Cotonou Doyen

The Club Cotonou Doyen organised a drawing competition at the school of Adoungo and handed over prizes to the ten best pupils. They have also discussed drinking water in the area and the construction of a maternity ward. Club Cotonou Doyen and its President Koubourath Osseni intend to take care of the entire village.



One of the ten pupils at the school of Adoungo collects her prize.

### Club Cotonou Gazelle

Through the initiative of Moubaraka Adjao, President of Club Cotonou Gazelle, a first well has been built in Dangbo with the help of sponsors from Cotonou. As Vice-President of the Chamber of Commerce, she made use of her good contacts and collected € 7900 towards this project. The well is 60 metres deep and was constructed with very limited technical means. The Club is planning two more wells. One will be partly financed by Club Lippstadt, Germany.

Roswitha Ott, SI/E Project Manager Africa

With the death of Gertie Kaan-Pakesch on 22nd April, Soroptimist International of Europe has lost a dedicated member and a dear friend. Gertie was SI/E President 1983-1985 and founding member of Club Graz/Austria. She also worked as SI/E Programme Liaison 1989-1991.

Concert pianist Gertie Kaan-Pakesch used her many tours to spread the Soroptimist idea – not only to the benefit of the Austrian Union, but also the European Federation. Many new clubs throughout Europe owe their existence to her commitment. Gertie showed us all that it is possible to combine family life with a profession, and still have time for others.

Born on 5th November, 1924, Gertie was not only well educated and profoundly knowledgeable, she was also an outgoing and amicable person with a life-long interest in learning and a good sense of humor.



**In Memory of Gertie Kaan-Pakesch**

SI/E President 1983-1985

She taught us not to take ourselves too seriously and never to forget others: 'It is good to know that we have the privilege to be there for one another', was a typical remark from her. We admired her for her dedication and elegance. For Gertie being a Soroptimist was a commitment to serve and to

put talents and capabilities to good use. It was she who coined the expression 'the radiating power of Soroptimism'.

Gertie will be fondly remembered for many things: one example being the 'Three Country Meetings' with German-speaking Soroptimists from Austria, Germany and Switzerland that she started in 1967 in order to improve networking. It was also Gertie who introduced workshops at SI/E Congresses. Initiated in 1985, the last year of her presidency, they have now become a permanent feature. The workshops at the forthcoming Congress in Amsterdam will be held in her memory.

Thank you, dear Gertie, for being our role model, a soror optima and a very good friend.

Heidrun Konrad, SI/E President 2003-2005

Three recent news items should cause growing concern among women around the world. The Taliban introduced its stricter form of Sharia law in the Swat Valley of Pakistan with severe restrictions on women and girls. A court judge in Saudi Arabia refused to annul a marriage between an 8-year-old girl and a 47-year-old man. And then the last straw: the parliament of Afghanistan passed a law on 'Personal Status' for Shia citizens which contains paragraphs clearly violating women's rights, for example, by virtually legalising rape in marriage. Although the new law is meant only for the Shia population (which in itself is contrary to the Afghanistan Constitution), it paves the way for application to all Afghan women.

SI/E President Mariet Verhoef-Cohen drew SI President Margaret Lobo's attention to these developments. Ultimately, SI made an appeal on the blog site. President Mariet wrote letters to Afghan President Hamid Karzai, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navaneetham Pillay as well as President of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso, asking for assistance in stopping this law from coming into force. Christine Cromwell-Ahrens, SI/E Representative to the Council of Europe, also urged the President of the Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations to take a stand against this new legislation. As a result, the President of the Gender Equality Transversal Group sent an open letter to President Karzai as well. We are now all waiting to see that he makes good on his publicised promise to change the law.

All these measures are not only fully acceptable according to our Constitution, but also necessary to help defend women's rights. We as Soroptimists have a duty to make ourselves heard in cases of discrimination against women and girls. For more information, see <http://siprogrammeblog.blogspot.com/> or [www.soroptimisteurope.org](http://www.soroptimisteurope.org).

Letter from SI/E President Mariet Verhoef-Cohen sent by email to Afghan President Hamid Karzai.





Earthquake in Italy



## SOLACE AND SUPPORT IN DIRE TIMES

In the early hours of April 7, 2009, an earthquake devastated the medieval city of l'Aquila and surrounding areas of Central Italy. Miriam D'Ascenzo of Club di Pescara gives us a personal account of the situation and shows how Soroptimists offer solace and support in dire times.

Words cannot describe the devastation and despair this severe earthquake left behind. It was the worst natural disaster in thirty years. Several hundred people were killed, thousands injured, about 55.000 persons lost their homes. It is hard to talk and even painful to write about it, if one is part of the tragedy itself.

The world's eyes were on l'Aquila, but the reality is much worse than shown by the media and it will stay – long after the cameras have gone. The survivors attempt to organise some kind of normal life, although there is not really a 'normality' to go back to. Deprived of their belongings and their daily routine, these people have experienced the loss of loved ones and friends, the total destruction of the ancient parts of their town, the disappearance of their past. They are experiencing panic, pain, hopelessness and despair. As a member of the l'Aquila club told me in a tearful voice: 'We are alive, but inside we are dead'.

Faced by such an atrocious void, the Soroptimist spirit has created a chain of solidarity, which has initially focused on comfort as the first form of aid for our 'sisters' and their families. The news spread all over Italy from one mobile phone to the other; it was a great comfort for the people of l'Aquila to hear friendly voices, to receive reassurance, to be given signs of hope.

Every time a new tremor is felt, our thoughts fly to our friends and to the thousands of victims in precarious situations. It is important to know

that there are people who care for us and who offer such comforting and encouraging words. But now the time for words and thoughts is over. Soroptimist friends from all over Italy are coming together to set up a coordinated and effective aid strategy.

Readiness, commitment, participation and involvement are the key words of their actions, remembering that it is not only what we do that defines us, but our ability to get up and pick up the pieces after such a tragedy.

The local population voted unanimously for the reconstruction of l'Aquila, even though the earth is still quaking repeatedly many times a day. They are very conscious of the vulnerability of l'Aquila, built in the Middle Ages according to a harmonious design, which has no precedent in the history of Italian urban architecture.

For more information on l'Aquila, please go to: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/L'Aquila>.

Miriam D'Ascenzo, Club de Pescara

### Appeal for support!

S/IE President Mariet Verhoef-Cohen sent a message of empathy to our Soroptimists in Italy, which was highly appreciated. The European Federation will make a donation from the Action Fund to help with recovery efforts. If anyone would like to show special support to the Soroptimists and people of L'Aquila, please send your donations to

**Soroptimist International d'Italia, Banca Credito Emiliano – Branch of Savona (Italy): ABI 03032 – CAB 10600 – CIN K – c/c 1789; IBAN: IT44 K030 3210 6000 1000 0001 789 – Causale: pro Abruzzo.**

Giovanna Colangelo Giammaria, the President of Club L'Aquila, who is a head public officer of the regional government of Abruzzo, will coordinate the efforts and ensure that the donation is put to good use.

No one will forget the photos of devastation and despair after the earthquake struck in Central Italy.

# NEW FACES COMPLETE THE TEAM

SI/E Headquarters in Geneva

After 12 months spent clearing, cleaning, updating computer systems and furniture, welcoming new staff and saying goodbye to outgoing members, SI/E HQ can finally take a deep breath and get on with its daily activities with ease and assurance.



*Jenifer Beles* SI/E HQ Executive Officer

Our little family has recently welcomed a new member: Isabelle Favre, who seconds Suba Parthiban with Programme Focus Reports, maintains the Friendship Links and is currently lending a hand to the preparations of the Governors' Meeting. At the moment, we are all focused on the upcoming Governors' Meeting and most of our time is spent keeping the communication channels between HQ and our members static free, supportive and smooth.

Claire Govaerts joined HQ in July 2008. Throughout the roller coaster ride that has been our accounting system, Claire has helped SI/E

Treasurer Huba Colbus-Gross iron out many of the problems. We now have a comprehensible budget, and our accounts are up to date. Suba continues to work her way through the many Programme Focus Reports, and we are delighted that members are increasingly using this platform to document their projects' progress. Sylvaine Pietroff is the veteran of the team, as she has been with SI/E HQ for eight years. She has assumed the role of Logistics Officer, and we would be lost without her. She keeps us all grounded and manages SI/E's charters, inaugurations, The Link subscriptions, brochures, stock and most recently



*Claire Govaerts* SI/E Accounting Executive

*Suba Parthiban* SI/E Programme Officer



*Sylvaine Pietroff* SI/E Logistics Officer

*Isabelle Favre* SI/E Administrative Assistant

the implementation of the new database. Suba is working tirelessly on projects such as the Best Practice Awards, PFRs, newsletters, and the list goes on and on. She will be finishing her Masters in June, and we are so pleased that she has accepted to work at 100% capacity, as she is such a tremendous resource of knowledge and a very diligent worker. Suba and Claire will be joining me at the Governors' Meeting and will remain for the Congress.

We are all very dedicated to the work that Soroptimists have initiated in Europe and in Africa and feel honoured to be a part of your legacy. President

Marjet Verhoef-Cohen and the entire SI/E Board have been an integral part in our structural and administrative changes, for which we are all extremely grateful. Thanks to Marjet's vision and her perseverance, we now have the tools necessary to be more efficient with our administrative tasks, which allow us to spend more time focusing on programme-related issues. It is with great excitement and anticipation that we look forward to working with President elect Eliane Lagasse in the new biennium beginning in October. [See you in Amsterdam!](#)

Jenifer Beles, SI/E HQ Executive Officer

As here with Club Lüneburg from Germany, the visits with Friendship Links are always unforgettable.



Becoming a Soroptimist not only allows a wide range of networking in one's own country, but also opens the opportunity for friendships abroad. With clubs in about 124 countries, the world of new cultures and friends is literally just a mouseclick away. The wonderful tool is called: Friendship Link.

Friendship Links are a fantastic opportunity to meet Soroptimists in other countries. We all know how inspiring new cultures are, how we can learn from each other, exchange experiences, become active in an international project. Working together gives a sense of fellowship and the awareness that together we can make a difference – no matter the distance. And last but not least: becoming friends.

## Friendship Links

# SOROPTIMIST TIES ACROSS BORDERS



## How to go about it?

Usually a Friendship Link between two clubs comes about through personal contacts, mutual acquaintances or projects. If you want to expand your horizon, but don't have a contact yet, why not participate in one of SI's quadrennial projects?

Or maybe you would like to start with a club in a neighbouring country with manageable distances, which would make it easier to meet in person. Your first step could be an email to the prospective new friends, introducing your club, your activities and the goals you aim to accomplish together. If you are not sure, the International Goodwill and Understanding (IGU) Coordinator of your respective Union will assist you in this respect. She will also help you with the registration of the new Friendship Link. You will find detailed information at <http://www.soroptimist-europe.org/en/projects/friendship-links.html>.

## We take friendships seriously

In order to blossom and bring joy – like a beautiful plant – the new friendship has to be nourished. We recommend having one individual of your club responsible for keeping in contact, exchanging news, organising visits or offering participation in a project. And yes, as with any other friendship, it will take time and effort, but as many Soroptimists will tell you, the benefits are well worth the while. SI Friendship Links are friendships across different cultures. They foster friendships and solidarity among Soroptimists all over the world, encourage helpfulness and human understanding and contribute to international understanding and friendship. These friendships are a source of happiness, energy and a sense of purpose in life.

*Ellen V. Nielsen, Union Coordinator IGU, Danish Union*

Danish Union IGU Coordinator Ellen Nielsen (left) warmly welcomes Felicitas Hubert, who, at the time, was visiting from Friendship Link Club Pretoria in South Africa and is now a member of Club Taunus in Germany.



SI/E Scholarship Fund

# THE STORY BEHIND THE SCHOLARSHIP

The Scholarship Fund, established in 1968 by SI/E, supports and promotes the professional, occupational and vocational development of professional women, Soroptimist or non-Soroptimist. For 2007/2008, the total amount spent on scholarships was € 72,000. One of the 16 recipients was Dr. Penka Petleshkova-Angelova from Bulgaria. With the grant of € 7500, she was able to expand on her research work at the San Martino Hospital in Genoa/Italy.

I work at the Department of Neonatology, at the Pazardzhik AD Hospital in Plovdiv/ Bulgaria. For the implementation of my research project: 'Hearing Loss in Neonates and Infants - Rehabilitation of Deafness in Children', I visited the Audiometry Sector of the ENT Clinic at the San Martino Hospital in Genoa several times. The support of both Professor A Salami, Head of the ENT Clinic, and specialist Dr M Barbieri, was invaluable.

Dr Barbieri shared his experience in the diagnosis and treatment of hearing loss in neonates. He made it possible for me to use the equipment and perform evaluations. Moreover, I could attend operations on Cochlear implants in selected cases, which was very beneficial to me.

My colleagues in Bulgaria were excited to hear about my experience and had a lot of questions. The method of Cochlear implants is still very new in Bulgaria. It became evident that we must continuously update our knowledge in the early diagnosis and rehabilitation of hearing loss of neonates in the first six months after birth. Such a hearing loss is curable by inserting a Cochlear implant. We should also increase our expertise in order to retain children's speech capabilities.

So we came up with the idea of creating an interdisciplinary rehabilitation centre in Plovdiv. Since there are problems with rehabilitation in Bulgaria, we intend to buy the needed equipment and organise countrywide training sessions for colleagues.

During my stay in Genoa, I also visited the local SI Club. I met with acting President, Daniela Caprino, who is a paediatrician. We discussed the possibilities of a future cooperation. Back home I informed the SI sisters accordingly,

and as a start, we will establish a Friendship Link between the two clubs.

In closing, I would like to express my gratitude to SI Europe for their encouragement and generous financial help. This project has enriched me not only in a professional but also personal way. My sincere thanks also go to our Italian sisters for their friendly welcome and contribution.

*Dr Penka Petleshkova-Angelova, Club Plovdiv*



Dr Marco Barbieri looks on while Penka examines a young patient.



Penka (right) meets with Soroptimists from Club Genoa.



Dr Danilo Türk, President of the Republic of Slovenia, honoured Club Maribor by attending the anniversary celebration.

Club Maribor celebrates 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary



## A TRIBUTE FROM A PROMINENT GUEST

It was an evening to remember for the 30 members of Club Maribor in Slovenia, their many friends, including Soroptimists from Clubs Ljubljana and Ptuj, and guests: together with his wife Barbara, Dr Danilo Türk, President of the Republic of Slovenia, joined the celebration as guests of honour. In his keynote speech at the event marking the 15th anniversary of the club on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2009, Dr Türk thanked the Soroptimists for their continuous help and dedication in providing support for women and children, especially in the important field of education.

Before Dr Türk spoke, Club member Janja Postruznik had explained that the club's activities lie in the field of humanitarian projects, such as in the cooperation with institutions caring for the mentally and physically challenged, in aid to young musical talents and in education. Club Maribor is especially proud of their first project, the founding of a safe house for women, which was the first shelter for women and children suffering from domestic violence in Slovenia. In addition, Janja informed the audience about their international cooperations with other Soroptimist clubs, e.g. in the Sierra Project.

It was a cheerful celebration. Everybody enjoyed the musical entertainment, which was performed by young musicians whose talent and education are supported and furthered by Club Maribor.



Honouring the work of Roma Krzemien

## SOROPTIMIST ELECTED WOMAN OF THE YEAR

Roma Krzemień, who supports young musicians, is the first Soroptimist to be elected Krakow Woman of the Year.



It is a sad fact of life that women often remain in the shadows no matter how significant their contributions to society. As a case in point, the Town Council of Kraków, Poland, elects a 'Krakowianin Roku' (the Krakow Man of the Year), whereby the title already presumes that this citizen will be a man. Several years ago, the first SI club of Krakow decided to create an alternative award with the title of 'Krakowianka Roku' (the Krakow Woman of the Year). The award recognizes an outstanding woman whose actions and accomplishments are in line with Soroptimist aims and the needs of local community.

Up till now the title has always been awarded to non-Soroptimists who are distinguished artists, managers, scientists, writers or social workers. This year the club broke with tradition by awarding the title to Soroptimist Roma Krzemien, who supports musically talented youths, thus promoting – together with her team of teenagers – the art and culture of Krakow both in Poland and abroad. Roma is a modest and sensitive woman whose efforts perfectly exemplify the aims of the Club and Soroptimist International.

In the presence of hundreds of invited guests, the 11<sup>th</sup> award ceremony was held on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2009 in the Town Hall of Krakow. An exhibition at the ceremony demonstrated the many projects realised by Club Krakow over the past 13 years.

Marzenna Siepracka, Club Krakow

Maria Rozko, Secretary of the Polish Union





Each kilometre run by participants earned one euro – for a total of over € 20,000.

10K Run in Monaco



## RUNNING FOR A GOOD CAUSE

‘Heels instead Wheels’ was the name of the game on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2009. As a warm-up for the Monaco Marathon, five Service Clubs came together to race and to raise more than € 20,000.

It was the first time that Monaco’s five International Service Clubs – namely Soroptimist International, Kiwanis, Lions, Rotary and Zonta – presented themselves in a joint project. The objective was to help needy families in and around Monaco.

There was a common spirit of generosity within the clubs, to become active with the slogan ‘Running for a good cause’. The sponsorship was set up in such a way that each kilometre run earned one euro. The event took place under blue skies and, of course, with lots of fun and enthusiasm. We were happy to see so many participants and delighted with the total sum of € 20,118 we managed to raise.

The money was used to support the associations selected by the International Service Clubs Committee: Cœurs du Campanin, MIR and

Conférence de Saint Vincent de Paul. These organisations, based in the Principality of Monaco and its surrounding areas, are all committed to distributing meals and basic food supplies where they are most needed.

Each club rose to the challenge to make this event happen – be it through their work, their networks or some other contribution to this united, successful effort.

*Elisabeth Lillo-Renner, Club Monaco*



Monaco’s five international service clubs cooperated in organising the marathon to help needy families.



## INTERNATIONAL FRIENDSHIP WEEKEND



Previous guests at the International Friendship Weekend enjoyed a day of sightseeing in Budapest.

Swiss Soroptimists were once again successful in raising funds by selling tulips – this time for Sierra Project.

Club Budapest invites all interested sisters to the next friendship weekend in their beautiful city. This year's event will take place from 10<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> September 2009.

Initially, the members of Club Budapest had organized their friendship weekends as a biennial affair in support of their charity concerts. This fundraiser, together with sightseeing and other cultural – and, of course, culinary – events, was so well received that the idea came up to invite the many international friends on a yearly basis.

In 2008, the programme took place in the advent season. Club Budapest introduced the visiting clubs to their projects and activities. The traditional charity concert was very touching: Children of the Beethoven Programme played won-

derfully and showed how the hard of hearing can learn and enjoy music in spite of their disability! It was a very successful fundraiser.

Not to forget Hungarian hospitality. Guests enjoyed homemade food and excellent Hungarian wines. Other activities included visiting the advent fair of a sister organization and a city tour led by a Soroptimist who is an architect.

Doesn't all this sound tempting? Members of Club Budapest are pleased to invite interested Soroptimists and friends to their next International Friendship Weekend in September 2009. The participation fee will be approximately € 300.

The three-day programme includes a guided city tour, excursions to the countryside, a visit to the opera house, a Gala Dinner and more. The detailed programme will be available on the SI/E website [www.soroptimisteurope.org](http://www.soroptimisteurope.org) shortly. Please note that the event is limited to 50 participants. Applications will be accepted on a first come, first served basis.

For more information and to apply, please contact Katalin Juhos at [katalinjuhos@yahoo.com](mailto:katalinjuhos@yahoo.com) or Tatjana Juhasz at [tania@hunsat.hu](mailto:tania@hunsat.hu). For the application form and the detailed programme, please visit either [www.soroptimistbudapest.hu](http://www.soroptimistbudapest.hu) or [www.soroptimisteurope.org](http://www.soroptimisteurope.org).



To mark the occasion of International Women's Day, members of eight French-speaking Clubs in Switzerland combined forces – or rather sales forces – in order to raise funds for the Sierra Project. On 7<sup>th</sup> March 2009 Soroptimists from the Clubs in Lavaux, Martigny, Monthey,



## TULIPS FOR SALE

Neuchâtel, Nyon, Rolle, Vevey and Yverdon sold yellow tulips in the centres of their towns and raised the amazing sum of US\$ 7000 in support of the Sierra Project.

This initiative also provided a good opportunity for the members to improve public awareness of SI's objectives and activities. In addition, the respective club leaders had contacted the local media to gain further publicity for the event. So, from four clubs last year to eight clubs this year: we are happy to see how these little streams of activity flow together to form great rivers of momentum – for a good cause.





Members of the Club Les Fagnes meet with their Soroptimist friends in St Petersburg.

## HELPING ORPHANS IN ST PETERSBURG



Thanks to the initiative 'Friendship without Borders' between the Clubs Les Fagnes/Belgium and St Petersburg, orphaned children receive continued support.

It all started with a visit to St Petersburg, where our member Patricia Chambeau was confronted with the miserable living conditions of abandoned street-children and the pressing need to help. Our committee agreed to support the orphanage project, an initiative of our SI friends in St Petersburg.

With Patricia liaising between the two clubs, a visit was organised in September 2008. A group of Fagnes club members travelled to St Petersburg

to visit the orphanage and, of course, to personally meet the local club members.

We were given a very warm and friendly welcome. Besides handing over a donation of € 2,500, we brought school equipment, toys, sweets, vitamins and also seeds. The children were excited to receive so many gifts. It was like an early Christmas for them.

Since the orphanage was initially established, it has provided social integration for two thousand children, giving them a better life and a better future.

Club 'Les Fagnes'

## SOROPTIMISTS MEET IN BRUSSELS



President Bruna Sassi and members of Club Bruxelles Doyen invite all Soroptimists to join them for their Summer Get-Togethers in the lounge of the hotel 'The Dominican' in Brussels. The informal meetings will be held every Wednesday in July and August from 12.00 to 2.00 pm.

Situated at Rue Léopold 9 behind the Théâtre de la Monnaie, The Dominican owes its name to the Dominican Monastery, built in the 15th century with its cloisters still visible today. Later it became the residence of the famous French painter Jacques Louis David. For more information, please see [www.thedominican.be](http://www.thedominican.be). Parking is available at Monnaie ou Ecuier. The métro station is De Brouckère (direction: Place de la Monnaie). The phone number is +32 (0)2 203 08 08.

To sign up please contact President Bruna Sassi under the phone number +32 (0)475 85 41 77 or at [tis.sassi@skynet.be](mailto:tis.sassi@skynet.be).



The Dominican in Brussels will be the venue of the summer get-togethers organised by Club Bruxelles Doyen.

# NEW SI/E CLUBS TO BE CHARTERED

20<sup>th</sup> June 2009

## **Follo (Norway)**

Charter to be presented by  
SI/E Technical Committee  
Constitution and By-Laws  
Popi Athanassiou  
Club President Ingjerd Juel Ingeborgrud  
Stangasveien 6  
NO - 1415 Oppegard  
Phone: +47 669 917 68  
Mobile +47 481 211 11  
E-mail: Ingjerd.juel.ingeborgrud@nav.no

29<sup>th</sup> August 2009

## **Speyer (Germany)**

Charter to be presented by  
Governor, Austrian Union  
Elisabeth Brandl  
Club President Inge Bellmann  
Königsberger Strasse 6  
D - 67346 Speyer  
Phone: +49 (0) 62 323 5372  
E-mail: I.Bellmann@gmx.de

5<sup>th</sup> September 2009

## **Ancient Plovdiv (Bulgaria)**

Charter to be presented by  
SI/E President Mariet Verhoef-Cohen  
Club President Vesela Ilieva  
3, Smilevo str.  
BG - 4004 Plovdiv  
Mobile: +359 878 223 012  
E-mail: vesselabgpl@gmail.com

5<sup>th</sup> September 2009

## **Venlo Fossa Eugeniana (The Netherlands)**

Charter to be presented by  
Governor, Icelandic Union  
Hrafnhildur B Sigurdardottir  
Club President Marion Kleinjans-Pieters  
Hertog Reinoudsingel 156  
NL - 5913 XH Venlo  
Phone: +31 (0) 77 351 7056  
Mobile: +31 (0) 6 534 60535  
E-mail: marionpieters@piunlimited.nl

12<sup>th</sup> September 2009

## **Treviglio-Pianura Bergamasca (Italy)**

Charter to be presented by  
SI/E Programme Co-ordinator  
Environment Gertraud Pichler  
Club President Delia Pistoia  
Via Luscia Calvi, 6  
IT - 24040 Canonica d'Adda (BG)  
E-mail: delia.pistoia@tiscali.it

12<sup>th</sup> September 2009

## **Fénérive-Est (Madagascar)**

Charter to be presented by  
SI/E Programme Co-ordinator  
Human Rights/Status of Women,  
Maria Soumonni  
Club President  
Marie Carolle Hantanirina Floria  
Lot 66 A Ambataria  
MG - 509 Fénérive-Est

Phone: +46 (261) 331 495 760  
E-mail: pcieravinala@moov.mg

12<sup>th</sup> September 2009

## **Würgau-Fränkische Schweiz (Germany)**

Charter to be presented by  
Governor, Polish Union  
Boguslawa Kalita  
Club President Martina Hagen  
Schweinfurter Strasse 5  
DE - 96049 Bamberg  
Phone: +49 (0) 951 509 0429  
E-mail: martinahagen@freenet.de

19<sup>th</sup> September 2009

## **Cotonou-Sika Or (Benin)**

Charter to be presented by  
SI/E President elect Eliane Lagasse  
Club President Djemilath Djaga Osseni  
06 BP 494  
BJ - Cotonou  
Phone: +229 972 541 00 / 950 598 22  
E-mail: jossen@yahoo.fr

19<sup>th</sup> September 2009

## **Lansingerland (The Netherlands)**

Charter to be presented by  
SI/E President Mariet Verhoef-Cohen  
Club President Carla Zandvoort-Geerling  
Koningsvaren 14  
NL - 2661 PB Bergschenhoek  
Phone: +31 105 218 684  
E-mail: carla.zandvoort@wanadoo.nl

21<sup>st</sup> September 2009

## **Teramo (Italy)**

Charter to be presented by  
SI/E President Mariet Verhoef-Cohen  
Club President Emilia Gaviglia Ripani  
Via Tirso 20  
IT - 64100 Teramo  
Phone: +39 0861 411 985  
Mobile: +39 328 531 2374  
E-mail: emilia.gaviglia@istruzione.it

26<sup>th</sup> September 2009

## **Romerike-Lillestrom (Norway)**

Charter to be presented by  
SI/E Programme Co-ordinator  
Programme Liaison Ulrike Neubert  
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26<sup>th</sup> September 2009

## **Siegen (Germany)**

Charter to be presented by  
SI/E President Mariet Verhoef-Cohen  
Club President Annemarie Memarian  
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Phone: +49 (0) 271 144 460  
E-mail: a.memarian@web.de



## FORTHCOMING EVENTS FOR SI/E

6<sup>th</sup> - 7<sup>th</sup> June 2009

**80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**  
Club Marseille (France)

19<sup>th</sup> - 20<sup>th</sup> June 2009

**50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**  
Club Lucerne (Switzerland)

8<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup> July 2009

**SI/E Governors' Meeting**  
Amsterdam (The Netherlands)

9<sup>th</sup> July 2009


**80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**  
**Dutch Union**  
Amsterdam (The Netherlands)

10<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> July 2009

**19<sup>th</sup> Congress of Soroptimist**  
**International of Europe**  
Amsterdam (The Netherlands)

4<sup>th</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> September 2009

**10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**  
Romanian Union

 Please submit your texts for the next issue of The Link to SI/E HQ by 31<sup>st</sup> July 2009!