



The Link

A global voice for women

3/2011-2012 N° 226



*Nairobi Conference
Step by Step to an
African Federation*

*World Water Forum in Marseille
Pre-Conference on 'Women
Leadership in Water'*

*56th Session of the CSW
Soroptimists Make Their
Mark in New York*

Soroptimist International (SI) is a worldwide organisation for women in management and professions, working through service projects to build a better world for women and children. There are currently over 90,000 members in more than 3,000 clubs in 124 countries. Soroptimist International of Europe (SIE) is one of four federations of Soroptimist International. It has some 35,000 members in over 1,200 clubs in 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 for more information about the aims, activities and projects that characterise our organisation.

Note from the Editor

A TRIBUTE TO AFRICAN SOROPTIMISTS

In a tribute to an African woman in *Time* magazine, Mo Ibrahim, a successful businessman now heavily engaged in his own foundation to promote leadership, development and democracy in Africa, wrote, 'Women are the economic drivers of Africa, on average working twice as many productive hours as men.' He went on to say 'they are also the constituency most incentivised to build peace'. What an enormous compliment! And an insightful analysis from a man who knows the continent! As the many contributions to this issue of *The Link* prove, our African Soroptimists are truly exemplary in their efforts to improve the lives of women and girls. Indeed every issue contains inspiring stories about projects and initiatives. With their commitment and diligence, our African clubs and unions are making an enormous difference in their communi-

ties. We as an organisation should - and do - give them the support necessary to implement their projects. Considering the huge historical and cultural diversity of the continent, consolidation into an African Federation will not be an easy task, but it is certainly a worthwhile pursuit. It is wonderful to see the tremendous interest in the Nairobi Conference at all levels of our organisation. I congratulate the newly elected task force on the Proposed African Federation and wish them the best of success in their efforts. In the meantime, we will continue to show our support for the many exciting projects and activities realised in Africa in the name of Soroptimist. And *The Link* will do its part in keeping you informed!

Christine Cromwell-Ahrens, Editor, *The Link*

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 President: Kathy Kaaf, Am Römerlager 15, D-53117 Bonn, Germany • Phone: +49 228 67 79 67, Fax: +49 228 67 86 47 • Email: kathykaaf@arcorde.de
 Editor: Christine Cromwell-Ahrens, Lundsford House, Lundsford Farm, Etchingham, East Sussex TN19 7QH, United Kingdom • Phone: +44 1580 819 319, Fax: +44 1580 819 077 • Email: ccromwell-ahrens@cacas.de
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Cover page

Union President Roswitha Briel (right) awarded SI Germany's biennial prize to sociologist Professor Jutta Allmendinger (centre) in the presence of Hessian Secretary of State Petra Müller-Klepper. Photo: Paul Müller

President's Letter

Dear Soroptimist Friends

In my view, the high-level meeting in Nairobi is truly 'a milestone towards the future African Federation' (see page 4-5). My accompanying programme both before and after the conference was packed and culminated in a meeting with *Dr Auma Obama*, US President Obama's half-sister, who will be *one of the keynote speakers at the 20th SIE Congress* in Berlin 2013.

It was a pleasure for me to meet so many Soroptimists from several *Portuguese clubs* at Cova da Moura, an immigrant quarter of Lisbon. I loved planting another tree in connection with their efforts to improve the environment in this area (see page 20). The children I encountered were great, and their picture is a *precious souvenir* of this visit in my continuing tour of SIE world.

There have been many activities and inaugurations in the past months. Soroptimist is growing: we have just welcomed the *six thousandth member of SI Germany* and chartered the 200th club in Germany, SI Düsseldorf-Königsallee. I also had the pleasure of attending the Annual Meeting of SI Switzerland in Bulle and the *'17^{mes} Journées d'Expression française'* in Montreux. It was a great honour to meet our dear Soroptimist Rolande Becker, who founded the French language Conference and gave a wonderful speech.

But not all is happy news: The situation in the Middle East appears to be unclear. Although we may not have full knowledge about what is happening, I really wonder what has become of the *'Arab Spring'*. The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt would like to establish a 'Family Council', instead of the previously existing 'Women's Council', because in their opinion a Women's Council threatens the traditional values of Muslim women. Saida Fitouri, President of SI Tunis Ariana and a member of the task force on the future African Federation, told me in Nairobi that *women in Tunisia* are currently fighting to maintain the same democratic laws they had before the recent election of the moderate Islamist party.

While women are making significant advances in several Arab countries, *many women in Afghanistan* are suffering as a result of the new guidelines of the almighty 'Religious Council'. President Karzai announced that 'men are of fundamental, women of secondary importance'. Our Soroptimist efforts to empower women throughout the world are therefore more crucial than ever.

Just to give you another rather frustrating example: Although our delegation of 38 Soroptimists was very successful at the *56th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)* in New York (see page 8-9), it



was more than disappointing to learn that *no final agreed conclusions* were adopted. It was a slap in the face for all who had been working for days (like the Soroptimists) on a conclusion of the necessary demands on the subject of the 56th session: 'Empowering Rural Women'.

But Soroptimists never tire in their efforts to promote women's (human) rights, which is repeatedly demonstrated by my Board members and our staff at HQ. Even during her free time, SIE HQ Executive Director *Anne Simon* is an excellent ambassador for SI. She was invited to be a moderator at an important *conference of the MENA Businesswomen's Network Forum* in Dubai and promoted our organisation during her introduction. As a result, many participants later asked her about Soroptimist International. She has also been invited to be a *Global Ambassador for Vital Voices* (Hilary Clinton's movement for women). Congratulations, Anne!

Soroptimists who travel to Dubai regularly on business are already taking the initiative to create a club in this exciting city. I am sure we will have a future in the Middle East. If you are among those who have good contacts here or in other countries, do not hesitate to inform *SIE Extension Chair Maria Luisa Frosio* (froman72@tiscali.it).

In the meantime take care and have a wonderful summer,

Kathy Kaaf, SIE President 2011-2013

During her visit to Portugal, SIE President Kathy received this souvenir 'certificate of tree planting' from some children she met in Lisbon.

STEP BY STEP TO AN AFRICAN FEDERATION

Nairobi Conference

The Conference on the Proposed African Federation took place in Nairobi, Kenya, from 22nd-24th March 2012. More than 100 Soroptimists from 20 countries – with Africa represented by Benin, Ivory Coast, Ethiopia, Ghana, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Tunisia, Zimbabwe and host country Kenya – gathered at the Kenya Institute of Administration (KIA) to listen, discuss, share and dream.

Inspiring speakers on topical subjects, practical help for SI work and visionary thinking regarding the formation of an African Federation – the meeting in Nairobi offered all this and more. The international organisation demonstrated its support for the idea of an African Federation by the strong attendance of officers, including SI President Alice Wells, SIE President Kathy Kaaf, SIGBI President Maureen Maguire, SIE President Elect Ulla Madsen, SIE IPP Eliane Lagasse, 1st Vice President Christine Peer, SIE Programme Director Ulrike Neubert, SIE Extension Chair Maria Luisa Frosio and SIE Project Manager Africa Mariet Verhoef-Cohen.



Below left: Former teacher Dr Ida Odinga, the wife of the Prime Minister and a supporter of SI Kenya, stressed the importance of educating women to become leaders.

Focusing on Women

Kenya's Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. Raila Odinga, was scheduled to open the session, but unfortunately the affairs of the state kept him away. Director/CEO of KIA Professor Margaret Koba kindly read his speech. In her speech, Dr Sally Kosgei, Kenya's Minister for Agriculture, stressed the urgent need for sustainability in agriculture and the important role played by rural women in protecting the soil and water catchment. Kenya's Environment Secretary Dr. Alice Kaudia reminded the audience not only to look at the negative impact of climate change, but also to see the opportunities to foster a better contact with nature. Professor Kobia then spoke on Women Education and Leadership, while SI UNEP Rep Dr Alice Odingo presented the case study of the *Women and Climate Change Project* of SI Denmark/Kenya.

Practical Assistance

The second half of the programme was devoted to SI topics. SI President Alice underlined the great variety and effectiveness of our organisation, as illustrated in the Global Impact Report. SIGBI President Maureen Maguire elaborated on the Maternal & Child Health Project.

After the Africa Regional Reports were presented, Conference organisers, SIE Extension and Follow-Up for Africa Maria Soumonni and SIE VP

Asha Abdulrahman, discussed *Objectives and Justifications – Why Africa Federation*. SIE PD Ulrike then conducted trainings on the SI Programme Focus Objectives and *How to Implement a Project*. SI UNEP Rep Rose Mwangi took the delegates through Financial Management with a presentation titled, *Where does the Shilling Fall?*

At the initiative of the then SIE President Mariet Verhoef-Cohen the cooperation with the Women for Water Partnership was introduced in 2007. Since then WfWP has supported SIE in many ways. In Nairobi WfWP Mary Kundu and SIE Project Manager Africa Mariet led workshops on the *Power of Networking*. WfWP Director Alice Bouman later spoke on the *Empowerment of women through the grass root – Leadership and Empowerment of African Clubs*. This gave the delegates greater insight into the WfW partnership and project identification.

A Task Force is Elected

SI President Alice and SIE President Elect Ulla presided over the election of a task force to work towards the Proposed African Federation. The elected members are Chair Chinwe Ezenwa-Mbah (Nigeria); Vice Chairs Constance Mutunhu (Zimbabwe) for Southern Africa, Tadelech Debele (Ethiopia) for Eastern Africa, Christiane Wellfens-Ekra (Ivory Coast) for Western and Central Africa and Saida Fitrouri (Tunisia) for Northern Africa; Treasurer Rose Owuor (Kenya); Constitution Chair

Yekini Bairath (Ivory Coast); Programme Coordinator Nneka Chris-Asoluka (Nigeria); Secretary Vivian Namayi (Kenya); Constitution Chair Yekini Bairath (Nigeria); Financial Controller Betty Spiwe Katiyo (Zimbabwe) and Extension Chair Asha Abdulrahman (Kenya). SIE Extension and Follow-Up for Africa Maria Soumonni (Benin) will support the task force as a Special Adviser.

In her keynote address on *Promoting Women for Political Leadership*, the wife of the Prime Minister, Her Excellency Dr Ida Betty Odinga, a teacher in her own right, emphasised the important role played by civil society in empowering the grass-root women, showing that we are 'spot on' with our *Educate to Lead* theme. She pointed out that women leaders are more assertive and persuasive, have a stronger need to get things done and are more willing to take risks than male leaders. Before closing the Conference, Dr Odinga also officially inaugurated the task force.

A Successful Outcome

This was the first time that African Soroptimists were able to share their experience with the SI President as well as both SIE and SIGBI Federation Presidents. Indeed, an African Federation is no longer just a dream. This event strengthened the bonds, identified the importance of finances and communication for the future and, with the task force, brought the vision one step closer to reality.



Below left: SIEVP Asha Abdulrahman (far left) and her team were praised for the organisation of the Conference.

A new task force to work on the Proposed African Federation, shown here with SIE President Kathy, Dr Ida Odinga, SI President Alice and SI Kenya President Betty, was elected in Nairobi.



Soroptimist International of Europe, as part of the Women for Water Partnership, co-organised a pre-conference in Marseille, France in preparation for the 6th World Water Forum. During this two-day conference, participants from different women's networks had the opportunity to exchange their knowledge and ideas as well as to come up with joint messages to propose to the Forum.

World Water Forum in Marseille

'WOMEN LEADERSHIP IN WATER'

The 2012 Forum was seen as particularly crucial as it also was to pave the way for Rio+20, mainly moving from priorities to action. For this reason, the messages the women's groups proposed were for the Rio+20 UN Conference on Sustainable Development, as well as for the World Water Forum. The overall theme for the pre-conference was 'Women Leadership in Water'. Three priority topics were tackled as part of this theme: women's role in water and food security; community water supply and sanitation; and water, peace and security. Ministers, water professionals, women's civil society organisations, young professionals and indeed Soroptimists all presented their Best Practices on each of the priority topics. Soroptimist speakers at the pre-conference included the SIE Liaison to the WfW Partnership Mariet Verhoef-Cohen, French Union President Marie Claude Bertrand and French Union President elect Christine Dagain.

The motto of this Forum was 'time for solutions'. The focus at all levels was implementation and action, as opposed to just dialogue. It is important to recognise that women's efforts result in concrete solutions. The following are the key messages and solutions concluded:



SIE Past President Mariet Verhoef-Cohen made use of her vast experience with water projects in the pre-conference discussion.

- * Needs-based approach! Women know the what; involve them in the how!
Solution: Move from consultation to participation. Put women's civil society groups at the centre of the needs assessment process and promote women's role as decision-makers.
- * Empower women to play a central role in the provision, management and safeguarding of water!
Solution: By empowering women through water and sanitation, they will be in a position to drive integrated community development.
- * Sustainability of water and sanitation provision and management are social, not technical issues!
Solution: Organise local community involvement and use existing civil society mechanisms as a network.
- * Involve women as drivers of rapid change! Promote women's leadership!
Solution: Give women access to knowledge and resources to make informed decisions and to become leaders in the development of their own communities.
- * Dare to let go and delegate responsibility to local level!
Solution: Women hold the key to the development of their communities.
- * In times of crisis, put your money where your mouth is!
Solution: To ensure sustainability fund successful, locally owned projects that can potentially be up-scaled.
- * From policies to implementation, the principal actors change!
Solution: 2013 International Year of Water Cooperation. Take women on board to accelerate and meet water-related internationally agreed development goals.

These messages and solutions were prominently presented on a catwalk during the High Level Special session at the World Water Forum where Ministers of Environment of Uganda and South Africa, Ambassador of Green Cross, USAID Head of mission and Mayor of Bangangte in Cameroon spoke. The High Level Session received a lot of media attention and attracted a large number of participants. The speakers supported the above messages and provided concrete answers based on their experiences. It was widely agreed that involving women

The roundtable participants formulated the messages and solutions that were presented at the High Level session.



in decision-making resulted in successful grassroots projects. It was evident from the discussions that education and empowerment of women are crucial to including women in decision-making processes.

Ahead of the Rio+20 conference, Kenza Kaouakib Robinson, Secretary of UN Water, who chaired the High Level session rightly concluded, 'we've argued the case; now it is the time to act!'

On a side note, special thanks go to the members of SI Marseille who offered home hospitality and untiring organisational help during the entire week of the WWF.

Suba Parthiban, SIE HQ Programme Executive

With her concluding words of the Session Secretary of UN Water Kenza Kaouakib Robinson set the tone for the Rio+20.

56th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women

SOROPTIMISTS MAKE THEIR MARK IN NEW YORK



In addition to the official Opening Ceremony in the General Assembly, more than 70 side events were staged at the UN premises.

1 The Commission on the Status of Women opens its 56th Session at the United Nations in New York.
UN Photo
Paulo Filgueiras

2 UN Women Executive Director Michelle Bachelet, shown here with CSW56 Chair Marjon Kamara, concluded at the CSW56: 'We cannot afford to leave rural women out.'
UN Photo
Paulo Filgueiras

3 On 8th March, International Women's Day, the NGO CSW held the first-ever demonstration with the motto 'Global Women for Equality, Development and Peace'.

4 From left: SIE Extension Chair and author of this report Maria Luisa Frosio, SIE Programme Director Ulrike Neubert and SIE President Kathy Kaaf at the Art Fair, where the SIE stall displayed products from Rwanda and Israel.



The 56th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) took place in New York from 27th February to 9th March 2012. Thanks to SIE's consultative status, SI doubled its participation to 40 delegates, led by SI President Alice Wells and the Presidents of the four Federations. SIE Extension Chair Maria Luisa Frosio submitted an excellent report, which is available in full from our SIE website. Here are some excerpts.

CSW is a commission of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) dedicated to gender equality and the advancement of women (see www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/). More than 2,000 delegates from 435 civil society organisations – including a large number of rural women – attended the official UN, Member State and NGO parallel events.

The priority theme of the session was *The Empowerment of Rural Women and Their Role in Poverty and Hunger Eradication, Development and Current Challenges*. A total of 1.1 billion people suffer from chronic hunger worldwide. Since rural women are responsible for 60-80% of food crop production in developing countries, it is time for a more gender-oriented approach to ensure that women benefit as much as men from land rights, inheritance rights, credit, production tools and market access.

Greater visibility

More than 70 side events took place on the UN premises and 300 more around the city, covering all topics related to the themes of CSW56. These meetings acknowledged both the crucial role of NGOs and the need for governments and civil society organisations to share best practices. SI APD Anusha Santhirasthipam's memorable statement delivered at a high level meeting further strengthened SI visibility (see SI website). The side events organised by SI with UN Agencies or other NGOs were well received and well attended. SIE President Kathy Kaaf gave an inspiring speech at the panel discussion, *From Seeding to Feeding* (see SIE website).

Over 1,000 NGO delegates gathered at orientation sessions on the CSW56 issues and to hear from important speakers, including Michelle Bachelet (Under-Secretary General and Executive Director of UN Women), Leymah Gbowee (2011 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate from Liberia) and Mirna Cunningham Kain (the 'voice' of indigenous women). The delegates also had the opportunity to listen to interesting panels on regional perspectives and issues facing rural women, engage in advocacy training and spend time networking.

Combatting inequality

The opening ceremony held in the General Assembly on 27th February marked the real kick-off. Michelle Bachelet, together with CSW56 Chair Marjon Kamara from Liberia, the President of ECOSOC and representatives from Member States, highlighted the inequality suffered by women, especially rural women and girls, and their needs and challenges.

The review theme on *Financing for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women* (agreed conclusion from CSW53) received a lot of attention. UN Women stressed that laws and policies do not translate into a better life. On the contrary, advocacy, the active engagement of women, involving more men and boys, fighting gender stereotypes, monitoring results, gender budgeting and accountability of funds are the answers. To reach this goal, UN Women launched a new partnership, *EDGE – the Evidence and Data for Gender Equality* initiative to meet the rising demand for greater support in collecting and using sexdisaggregated statistics and national systems on data collection to advance gender equality and women's empowerment.

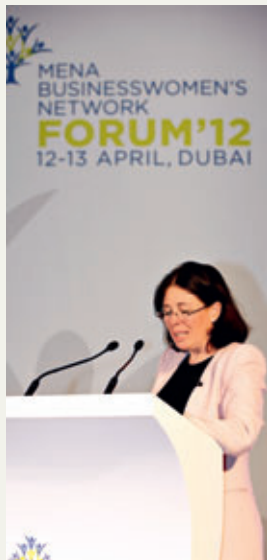
Engaging Young Women and Men, Girls and Boys, to Advance Gender Equality was the dedicated emerging issue. It touched the crucial point of including our youth in gender equality interventions to effect change and address stereotypes at the earliest possible age.

No outcome document

Unfortunately, no Agreed Conclusions were adopted, which represented a sad end to an otherwise very good CSW. The major disagreements were over reproductive rights and gender equality in general, with the word 'equality' being particularly disputed. The Commission is to re-convene at a future date with the goal of achieving consensus on the outcome document. The priority theme of the CSW57 is *Elimination and Prevention of All Forms of Violence against Women and Girls*.

I have been able to report on only a fraction of the meetings, panels and discussions held during the two weeks in New York. This was the second time I attended, and I would like to congratulate the organising team – SI PD Hilary Ratcliffe and SI APD Anusha, together with SI HQ Programme Director Reilly Dempsey and SI UN Representatives in New York – for their dynamic and committed work. They made life much easier for our delegation!

MENA Forum in Dubai



SIE Executive Director Anne Simon addresses participants in the MENA Businesswomen's Network Forum '12.

FURTHER UNLEASHING WOMEN'S POTENTIAL

Having worked for several years in the Middle East, SIE Executive Director Anne Simon has long known how fast this region could develop but also how the Western world often misperceives the role of women there. She was thus very pleased to accept the invitation to participate in the 1st MENA Businesswomen's Network Forum in Dubai last April.



The Forum, titled 'Unleashing the Economic Potential of Women in the Middle East and Northern Africa Region', clearly delivered on its promise, bringing together nearly 400 professional women with the common interest of participating in the growth of their economies and their countries' prosperity.

And this is where I really saw the difference: in less than three years after the publication that I co-authored on Arab Women Leadership, progress was really visible – from Algeria to Qatar, from Oman to Saudi Arabia, the number of women in the driving seats of companies and organisations has significantly increased. Women spoke openly about finance, health and legal rights. And growing numbers now hold key positions on boards.

In her opening remarks, H.E. Sheikha Lubna Al-Qasimi, UAE Minister of Foreign Trade, told her personal story, taking us back some 25 years



Media leaders from the Middle East discuss the problems facing women.



Nearly 400 women from all over the Middle East attended the meeting.



HE Sheikha Lubna, Trade Minister of the UAE, and Sheikh Al Khalifa, Minister of Housing of Bahrain, were among the prominent participants in the MENA Conference.



ago when she asked her family if she could study computer science in the US! As a pioneer, she highlighted the key role of such meetings in equipping and enabling women to grow their enterprises and transform their societies by providing hands-on skills and valuable networking opportunities.

The Forum offered leading businesswomen the opportunity to connect, build skills and strengthen ties. Participants met, shared views, and exchanged business cards. One woman took a look at my card and exclaimed, 'I am a Soroptimist!' This is how Doria Triki, Treasurer of SI Tunis-Ariana, and I met in Dubai! Doria was part of a large Tunisian delegation interested in sharing experience and establishing business links with their peers in the Gulf countries.

During the opening of my session, I had the opportunity to introduce Soroptimist International to this large audience and to promote the organisation as the 'Global Voice for Women' with its particular emphasis on education and leadership. Many women came to see me afterwards impressed that such a network of 100,000 professional women actually existed, but was so little known. Several expressed their interest. Thanks to Connie Gehrken of SI Germany and SIE Extension Committee Chair Maria Luisa Frosio, Dubai may soon have its first club. I am therefore convinced that SI can play a role in unleashing the potential of women in the Middle East and North Africa!



Scholarship recipient experiences Hollywood

TOP TRAINING THANKS TO SIE

A young woman raised with monks leaves the monastery to track the murderers of her father. This is the plot line of the short film I wanted to produce in Los Angeles. The proposal I submitted to the SIE Scholarship Committee also included participating in a mentoring programme, organised by film professionals. You cannot imagine how happy I was when Roswitha Briel of SI Wiesbaden, and currently President of SI Germany, told me I had been chosen to receive the full SIE grant of € 10,000!

I travelled to the world's film capital in 2010. My award-winning mentors Marc and Elaine Zicree (www.marczicree.com) have written, produced and sold hundreds of screenplays. They know countless famous actors and have worked with successful screenwriters

and directors such as Guillermo del Toro, who is directing the sequel to Peter Jackson's 'Lord of the Rings', 'The Hobbit'.

These mentors helped my film production 'KARMA' become a business card for me as a director. They also connected me with the Los Angeles 'Table', an amazing network of film professionals who assist each other on a non-profit basis. I have stayed in touch with my mentors and now feel confident to produce and direct a feature film. We have also developed a career strategy for the future. The short film will be submitted to major film festivals worldwide and already has the interest of three distributors. We will start in Europe with the Biennale in Venice, Italy. The film was screened at the Annual General Meet-



ing of SI Germany in April. One of the German Soroptimists I met in Fulda offered to help me submit my film to the international women's festival in Dortmund.

The next step is to shop around for screenplays by international authors to establish co-productions between Europe and the US. Also thanks to SIE, my dream may actually come true. Keep your fingers crossed!

Ingrid Patzwahl, Hanover

SIE Scholarship recipient Ingrid Patzwahl (second from left) oversees the filming of her own film production in Hollywood.

RELIEF FOR SOROPTIMISTS IN MALI

A call for support We saw the news broadcasts and read the reports in early 2012: Mali's northern region came under attack from a Touareg separatist movement demanding the independence of the Azaoud, a region comprising large territories of northern Mali, Niger, southern Algeria and Libya. Thousands of Malians fled the region. The human tragedy prompted SI Alliance of Timbuktu to suggest a relief project for women and children refugees, but before a Disaster Grant of € 6,000 could be sent to the club the conflict spread to Timbuktu itself. The SIE Board then transferred the money to SI Lumière and SI Espoir of Bamako, who used it to provide food and other necessities to 30 displaced families from Timbuktu, including 13 Soroptimists from SI Alliance and their families. To support the efforts in Mali and other long-term aid programmes in areas affected by disaster, such as the famine in Somalia and the earthquake in Turkey, please donate to the Disaster Fund. Details are available via the SIE website or by contacting SIE HQ at siehq@soroptimisteurope.org.

In the newly built medical centre, funded by a charity event in St Moritz, blind children receive appropriate treatment for their eye problems.

SIE Roswitha Ott Fund To be born blind is difficult for any child, but the difficulties are compounded in Africa. There are few schools that offer blind children or children with eye defects the appropriate help and training to manage their lives.

BETTER LIVES FOR THE BLIND IN AFRICA

When SI Parakou 'La Grande Royale' was chartered in Benin in 2003, the new members invited a group of talented blind boys and girls to sing at the charter ceremony. This contact was the start of the cooperation with the School for Blind Children in Parakou. And a lot of help was needed. After some smaller donations, the first big investment was used to build the medical centre where children receive the necessary treatment for their eyes diseases, thus helping to save rest of their sight. This centre was financed by a charity event in the world famous Grandhotel Badrutts Palace in St Moritz after the White Turf, a horserace on ice in winter. Thanks to the generosity of the people in St Moritz, the required funds were soon collected. The medical centre was built in 2011 and was named after the famous hotel.



However, a home for some 100 children and young people also needs a dining hall or a room where people can meet. The children currently eat outside or in their dormitories, where mice and rats hunt for leftover food. With the generous help of our SIE clubs and other European sponsors, a new building with a big hall, furnished with tables and chairs, will soon be ready. This help not only funded the hall for dining and meetings, but also gives handicapped children a chance for a better life.

Roswitha Ott, Manager of the SIE Roswitha Ott Fund

HELPING CLUBS HELP OTHERS



(1)



(2)



(3)

Soroptimist Project Matching SI Volcan, Panama submitted the project 'PAN0001 - Soroptimist Training Centre for Women and Girls'. The plan is to build a Training Centre that teaches women and girls of Volcan the skills they need to obtain a decent job which will provide a sustainable income. The club will conduct training in sewing and quilting, cooking and baking, manual arts, home economics, gardening as well as child and geriatric care. SI Manhattan Beach has agreed to donate \$ 9,700 to this project, which will enable the club to start on the Training Centre and continue their training efforts.

The Project 'PL0001 - Support for Mothers of Profoundly Impaired Children' targets the mothers of disabled children. They will receive help to cope with the situation, thus improving their social lives. SI Bielsko-Biala, Poland plans to organise group activities led by professionals to help mothers understand that for their own well-being and that of their children, they need to address their individual needs. These activities will contribute to building confidence and put them in contact with other mothers who are in a similar situation. This project has received funding from SI Club Aachen in Germany and SI Club Diekirch in Luxembourg.

For details of more projects, please regularly check the website: www.soroptimistprojects.org. If you would like to submit a project for the Project Matching programme, please ensure your project does not require an enormously high amount of funding. This makes it easier for individual clubs to support. If your project is more ambitious, we suggest you break it down into phases. In any case, feel free to email the Programme Team suba@soroptimisteurope.org if you need any assistance.

Students at the Training Centre established by SI Volcan and funded by SI Manhattan Beach present their project on food and nutrition (1) and learn how to set a table (2), a useful skill for work in restaurants.



(3) Women and girls also learn practical skills such as quilting, which provides them with a potential livelihood.

SIE CONGRESS WEBSITE GOES LIVE

Registration opens on 1st July 2012

The 20th SIE Congress website went online in mid April 2012. Please go to www.soroptimist.waterandfood.eu to find information and practical tips on the Congress in Berlin from 12th-14th July 2013 with the motto 'Visions of Paradise - Soroptimists Go for Water and Food'. You will discover details of the events which promote international friendship and better communications. The website also contains information about the many cultural activities on offer in Berlin.

Registration opens on 1st July 2012. Don't forget that early registration at a reduced rate is available until 1st April 2013.

SIE President Kathy Kaaf, SI Germany and the SI Clubs of Berlin and Potsdam look forward to seeing you in Berlin. The versatile and interesting programme is currently being finalised, and your Congress Committee is totally committed to organising an enjoyable, enlightening and successful 20th SIE Congress in the German capital.



The SIE Congress website went online in mid April.

The SIE Congress weekend will begin with a unique concert at the Jewish Museum in Berlin.

(Photo: visitBerlin/Wolfgang Scholvien)



Heide Ibach, Chair Congress Committee 2013

KENYAN/DANISH PARTNERSHIP DRAWS TO AN END



Women and Climate Change



Dressed in their best clothes, the widows of Eldoret welcomed us with lots of singing, dancing and a sumptuous feast, prepared on the cookers we had provided.

The project has funded three rainwater tanks for the Embaksi Girls School, located in the slums of Nairobi.



The Women and Climate Change in Kenya project, scheduled to run over two years, concluded at the end of April. With a grant of Danish krone 2.1 million (nearly € 283,000) from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the key objectives were to enable Kenyan women to mitigate and adapt to climate change and to implement cleaner production practices that will benefit the environment, save on resources (water, energy, waste, money, time, health) and improve their wellbeing. The project targeted the most needy women in rural areas, schoolchildren/girls supported by SI clubs, as well as employees in selected textile, food and hotel industries.

A group of 12 Danish Soroptimists travelled to Kenya in March to see the outcome. The achievements have gone far beyond expectations, thanks to the dedication, hard work and effective use of the diverse professional skills and experience of the participating Soroptimists in Kenya. The collaboration with local institutions, such as the Kenya National Cleaner Production Centre (KNCPC), also contributed to the success.

Women's groups and schools

The initial training in climate change and cleaner production practices with 30 Soroptimists had generated the desired spin-off effect, so that the almost 200 Soroptimists in Kenya are well equipped to act as climate change ambassadors. Eight out of ten clubs in Kenya have implemented one or more practical projects.

For example, more than 200 rural women/households, i.e. some 1000 people, are now benefitting from solar-based LED lamps we provided. They reduce the dependence on other energy sources, save money and lower CO₂ emissions. The LED lamps also allow schoolchildren to study at night. Some women told us how they are now able to make a business out of charging phone batteries, which has earned them power and respect. As a compensation for receiving a lantern for free, each woman was required to plant 50 indigenous tree seedlings.

Other successful interventions include how to make an energy saving stove that uses less firewood and a 'fireless' cooker. These stoves/cookers have become very popular by the women in the project, as they freed up time and save on firewood. For example, members of SI Eldoret took us to meet a group of 29 widows in Western Kenya, who could not wait to show us their skills with the improved stoves/cookers and served us a sumptuous meal. Just being with these women made us understand that the project is really making a difference.

We also visited several schools that have been assisted by the project, including the Embakasi Secondary Girls School in Nairobi, which was featured in *The Link* No. 225. The girls have planted trees, formed an environmental club, made a vegetable garden and a fish pond and a huge 6000-litre rainwater tank has been installed. We then donated two more tanks during our visit.

Industry is the second focus

In all seven industries in the fields of textiles, food and hotel business participated in the project. They have all been audited by KNCPC and presented with an investment plan on ways to make their production cleaner, safer, more environmentally friendly, ultimately leading to savings on energy, water, chemicals, etc.

So, we visited the textile company RIVATEX in Eldoret, which has reduced the use of energy and water. The financial savings will partly be used to help give people in the surrounding community access to clean water. At the North

Coast Beach Hotel in Mombasa the staff has been trained in cleaner production practices. A solar water heating system was installed in the laundry area, and plans are underway for a similar system for kitchens. Energy-saving light-bulbs are used everywhere, and notices on conserving energy and water are placed in all guest rooms and public places. A big kitchen garden has also been planted, providing the hotel with fresh vegetables and fruit, which in turn saves transport and CO₂.

What is next?

With major fundraising still ongoing in Denmark, the two Project Steering Committees in Denmark and Kenya will continue to work together. Currently handbooks and posters on how to handle climate change will be distributed to all clubs in Kenya. Likewise, a practical handbook on cleaner production practices is being developed for the industry sector. An evaluation report and the financial auditing and closing report of the project are underway.

The project has raised public awareness of SI in both Denmark and Kenya. New partnerships and cooperation with government institutions have been established in Kenya, and two new clubs are planned. Another outcome is the nomination of Alice Odingo and Rose Mwangi, both members of the Kenya Project Steering Committee, as representatives to the UNEP HQ in Nairobi. And our project was the overall winner of the SIE Best Practice Award 2011.

For more details on the project objectives and design, including the functions of the Project Steering Committees in Kenya and Denmark, please see the SI Kenya website www.soroptimist-kenya.org.

Else Larsen, Member of the Danish Project Steering Committee

Solar-based lamps and cookers offer invaluable practical help to rural women.





AN INVITATION FROM SI NICOSIA & SI PAFOS

The SI Clubs of Cyprus are pleased to invite all Soroptimist friends to the 9th European Meeting and Friendship Days from 28th September – 2nd October 2012. Situated at the meeting point of three continents, the island of

Cyprus is an ideal venue for participants to reach and experience Cypriot culture, history and nature. October is the perfect time to visit Cyprus.

The programme starts with a welcome session on the Friday evening. The conference on Saturday will be devoted to the *European Year 2012 for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations*. It aims to raise awareness and promote active ageing and solidarity between generations at a time when the EU grapples with a steadily ageing population and its impact on public services and finances. In addition, the distinguished speakers and round table discussion will stimulate a debate and develop mutual understanding between Member States and stakeholders at all levels, including civil society organisations. We also hope to encourage and support policymakers and stakeholders to promote active ageing and solidarity between generations. The conference offers the opportunity to meet and work together in a spirit of international goodwill and friendship for a common purpose.

Simultaneous interpretation will be offered in three languages, Greek, English and French. Excursions will also be offered.

We look forward to welcoming you at Cyprus, to share with you these unique days, to make the difference and enjoy 'active' and memorable days. Of course you are most welcome to bring companions, husbands, children and friends.

Please visit our website www.wix.com/esolomou-nicosiasoroptimistclub for more details and to register.

'Active Ageing' – Solidarity & Gender Equality Keys to Effective Strategies on Active Ageing



The weekend also offered time for sight-seeing in Luxembourg.

Below: Trainer Claudine Schmitt offered the mentees a good mix of theory and practical exercises.

Mentee reunion in Luxembourg

NETWORKING CONTINUES

The alumnae of the first SIE mentoring programme organised a reunion in Luxembourg several months after the end of the programme. When the 25 young women finished their mentoring programme in June 2011, they already decided to stay in contact. Networking was one of the three biggest benefits of the mentoring programme. So they put some effort into planning their first meeting.

As the mentors and mentees of the SIE programme had already met in Kloster Haydau and Bensheim, Germany, in Brussels, Belgium, and in Malmo, Sweden, the mentees chose Luxembourg as the venue for their first post-mentoring meeting. One of the local mentees, Jennifer Saffran, organised the whole reunion weekend.

The programme started with a networking evening to bring each other up-to-date on Friday night in the small town of Dudelange. Saturday was devoted to a training session with the Luxembourg neuro-linguistic programming trainer Claudine Schmitt. Focusing on speech, feelings and senses, the training was a good mixture of theory and practical exercises. In the afternoon the group toured the local rescue station, where Jennifer Saffran, a pharmacist, volunteers in the ambulance service. Saturday evening the group got together with the Luxembourg mentors and a mentee who could not participate the whole meeting. The evening full of lively discussions ended with a walk through the city at night. Sunday was spent getting to know Luxembourg a bit better.

The participants departed motivated and inspired by the reunion. The next meeting is scheduled for March 2013 in Cologne and Bonn, Germany.

Eva Steiniger, mentee in the first SIE Mentoring Programme



17th French Language Conference

SWISS HOSPITALITY AT ITS FINEST

More than 170 participants gathered on the shores of Lake Geneva in Montreux, Switzerland for this year's French Language Conference from 4th – 6th May, organised by the Clubs of Lavaux, Monthey and Chablais, Vevey and Montreux. We were honored by the presence of Rolande Becker, SI Lyon, who founded this biennial event in 1978.

A public panel discussion helped raise awareness of the 2010-2012 'Soroptimist Microcredit' (MSS) initiative of the Swiss Union, which supports women entrepreneurs by providing them with micro-credits in a spirit of partnership and solidarity.

The cultural programme consisted of two conferences, one on Ramuz and Swiss-Romande contemporary women's literature and a second on painters inspired by the landscapes of Lake Geneva (Hodler, Kokoschka, Corot, Courbet, etc.).

The lake showed its many faces between showers and sunny spells throughout the duration of the weekend programme. A visit to the Musée des Traditions et des Barques du Léman preceded a folklore evening in a rustic setting, allowing our guests to enjoy their raclette to the rhythm of cowbells. The hostesses donned period costumes and led the visitors through Montreux, following in the footsteps of Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

The gala evening brought the participants together in a relaxed atmosphere. Speakers included SIE President Kathy Kaaf and Swiss Union President Ursula Jutzi. Live music featuring a repertoire of traditional Swiss songs charmed the guests.

The Sunday excursions, including a tour of the Lavaux vineyards (a UNESCO heritage site) closed the 17th Annual Conference.

Patricia Pidoux, SI Montreux

The head table at the gala evening (from left): President SI Belgium Marlise Biinder, SIE President Kathy Kaaf, President SI Switzerland Ursula Jutzi, President SI France Marie-Claude Bertrand and Chair of the SIE Scholarship Committee Annabeth Studer-Meyer.

Federation News

Disaster Grant in Haiti

PARTNERING WITH A CNN HERO

The co-founder of one of our partner organisations in Haiti, Malya Villard-Appolon, has been selected as one of this year's CNN Heroes!

One of our Disaster Grants was given to the sister organisations MADRE and KOFIVIV to implement projects in Haiti for women who suffered from the after-effects of the earthquake in 2010. Malya Villard-Appolon, herself a victim of a violent crime, is the co-founder of MADRE's Haitian sister organisation KOFIVIV. For years, Malya has helped survivors of sexual violence to access medical care, shelter, legal counsel and psychological support. Her work became even more vital after this catastrophe triggered a surge in violence against women. Malya and her organisation help victims achieve justice. A grant of US\$ 50,000 from Soroptimist has enabled MADRE and KOFIVIV to strengthen their Women's Centre and to provide women and girls displaced by disaster and threatened by sexual violence with medical and psychological services. The money is also being used to allow women and girls to relocate and to develop skills to play a



Co-founder of MADRE's sister organisation, KOFIVIV, Malya Villard-Appolon (right), is dedicated to helping the victims of rape in Haiti.

Photo: CNN

meaningful role in rebuilding Haiti on the basis of human rights and gender equality.

By supporting MADRE's work in Haiti, we have ultimately given Malya and KOFIVIV the resources to protect and empower thousands of rape survivors. MADRE's mission is to advance women's human rights by meeting urgent needs in communities and partnering with women to create long-term solutions to the crises women face.

To be a CNN Hero is a great honour. 'It is a testament to Malya's courageous and groundbreaking work,' says Yifat Susskind, Executive Director of MADRE. To watch Malya's segment on CNN and learn more about her life-saving work, go to www.madre.org/index/press-room-4/news/haitian-partner-malya-villard-appolon-named-a-cnn-hero-789.html.

By the end of two-year reforestation programme, SI Mandrosoa aims to have had 1,000 young trees planted.



HELPING PRESERVE A NATURE SANCTUARY

SI Mandrosoa of Madagascar

SI Mandrosoa organised a conference debate on Madagascar's urgent need for reforestation and on the contribution of green areas in towns and cities. Representatives from several international organisations and associations working to protect the environment from climate change attended the event. It marked the launch of the club's 2011-2013 programme *Managing the environment in order to save it*.

The conference illustrated SI Mandrosoa's desire to contribute to saving the planet, especially the environment on the island of Madagascar.

The conference organised by SI Mandrosoa addressed the urgent need for reforestation to protect the environment.



car with its exceptional biodiversity. The soaring poverty of the local population (linked to the degradation of the environment) led the club to propose a solution of replanting local forests by creating green areas in towns and cities and using solar power for cooking. Some 90% of the island's deforestation is due to cutting wood for household use. Managing household waste and donating improved seeds are also part of the pro-

gramme.

The proposed cost of the programme is € 50,000. The club does not have all the funds yet, but is ready to rise to the challenge with inventive fundraising ideas and will no doubt have to rely on the goodwill of generous local and international donors.

The result expected at the end of the two-year programme is 1,000 young trees planted, 600 tons of waste sorted and 6,000 tons of wood conserved thanks to the gift of solar cookers for 200 families.

Soroptimist Prize in Germany

SOCIOLOGIST RECEIVES ENDOWMENT

On the International Women's Day, May 8th 2012, SI Germany awarded its biennial Soroptimist Prize, endowed with € 20,000, to Professor Jutta Allmendinger, one of Germany's leading sociologists and the President of the Social Science Research Centre Berlin (WZB), at the award ceremony in Wiesbaden. Professor Allmendinger received the award in recognition of her efforts to promote gender equality. The prize money will be used to help finance her 'Berliner Runde' project, an interdisciplinary network that will serve as a platform for dialogue between leaders in science, business, organisations, media and politics. The 'circle' will convene every eight weeks to discuss how women can be supported in gaining leadership positions.

After welcoming the guests and thanking the sponsors, SI German Union President Roswitha Briel described Soroptimist International and explained the purpose and selection procedure of the Soroptimist Prize. It is presented every two years to a person or an organisation for a specific project aimed at increasing the proportion of women in leadership positions, promoting women in technical professions or positions traditionally reserved for men, improving the family-work balance or furthering gender equality. 'For decades Jutta Allmendinger has been fighting for gender equality, family-work balance, more widespread daycare centres and crèches, flexible work-time, equal pay for work of equal value and for more women in management positions,' said Roswitha, who was also on the jury. 'These are the same values to which Soroptimist International is dedicated.'

Petra Müller-Klepper, Secretary of State in the Hessian Ministry for Social Affairs, described Professor Allmendinger 'as one of the most visible scientists in Germany', before joining German President Roswitha in presenting the prize. In his entertaining and witty laudatory speech Andreas Lebert, editor-in-chief of *Brigitte*, one of Germany's largest women's magazines, said he had rarely met a person who stands up for her opinions with greater conviction than Jutta Allmendinger.

SIE President Kathy Kaaf called Professor Allmendinger a shining beacon in her networking efforts. 'I hope we can join forces in the future because with you we have gained a great communicator who is used to interdisciplinary thinking in order to inspire change.'

Monika Pelzer, SI Düsseldorf-Hofgarten



News from Unions and Clubs

A SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIP

Luxembourg and Burkina Faso

The last of five potable water points (completed between 2009 and 2012) was inaugurated in January in Ouagadougou in the presence of Mayor of Nongr-Massoum and the Presidents of

While the President of SI Ouagadougou Awa Corisez (centre) and the President of the administering women's group (far right) look on, the mayor of Nongr-Massoum (left) and FSL President Maggy Berckes test the water source.



the Fonds Soroptimist Luxembourg and SI Doyen of Ouagadougou, Maggy Berckes and Awa Corisez, respectively, as well as with Soroptimists from both countries.

The goals of the project were the renovation of five primary schools, the construction of five potable water points and a provision of carts and casks to five women's groups so that they would be able to transport and sell this water in their neighbourhoods.

The project was developed in partnership with Fonds Soroptimist Fund Luxemburg and SI Doyen of Ouagadougou and co-financed by SI Clairfontaine and SI Minett of Luxemburg, the City of Luxemburg and the Luxemburg Ministry of Foreign Affairs at a cost of € 52,500.

For this project, SI Doyen of Ouagadougou received the 'Officer of the Order of Merit for Social Action' Medal from the Government of Burkina Faso on International Women's Day in 2011.

Maggy Berckes, President, Fonds Soroptimist Luxemburg



PROMOTING HEALTHY HABITS

SI Portugal stages a colloquium

SIE President Kathy Kaaf visited different club projects and met several Soroptimists during her three-day trip to Portugal in April. Attending the Annual General Meeting of the Portuguese Union she expressed her appreciation for the developments in Portugal and was interested to hear the details of several initiatives. Her full agenda included spending time with potential members of the new club to be chartered in Lisbon. She enjoyed hearing about their commitment to Soroptimist causes. SIE 1st Vice President Christine Peer also participated in some of the events, including the General Meeting.

Kathy also attended a colloquium organised by the Portuguese Union on healthy living, good nutrition and ageing in the 21st century at the Medical Bar Association, which was open to the general public but especially targeted teachers and health care providers.

All the Portuguese Soroptimists were highly delighted by the visit.

Luisa Ramires, President, SI Portugal

Children wearing T-shirts promoting healthy habits appeared on stage with SIE President Kathy Kaaf.

Above: Former recipient Tami Belay expressed her gratitude for the scholarship.
Below: The five new recipients with Club President Batia Biller (left), Representative for Women's Affairs Vered Sweid and Nili Sandler, Chair of the Scholarship Committee.



EDUCATION EMPOWERS WOMEN

SI Rehovot



In the presence of the Prime Minister's Representative for Women's Affairs, Vered Sweid, SI Rehovot awarded five scholarships on International Women's Day for a total of 15,000 NIS (€ 3,000). Past scholarship recipient Tami Belay, who studied dental hygiene, then spoke about her work. She stressed the importance of the club's help and her desire

to give back to the community by explaining dental care to schoolchildren on a voluntary basis.

From 2008 to 2011 the Club has presented scholarships for a total of 60,000 NIS (€ 12,500), which was mainly raised by members. The Club surveyed 23 past scholarship winners and came up with some interesting statistics: 13 finished their studies, nine are in their final year and only one dropped out. Two earned a Masters degree and ten a Bachelor's degree, while two have become chartered accountants and one a graphic designer. Of those completing their studies, four attended universities and 18 various colleges. Seven have chosen education as their field, one psychology and another dental hygiene. Two of those achieving a B.A. are continuing with a Masters programme.

The club is extremely proud of its efforts to empower women who otherwise would not have had the opportunity to study.

Aliya Kedem, Secretary, and Sylvia Flowers, Friendship Coordinator, SI Rehovot



PORTUGUESE NURSES HONOURED

SI Setúbal

At the 50th anniversary of the incorporation of paratroop nurses into its Armed Forces, the Portuguese Air Force honoured Maria Arminda Santos of SI Setúbal, the first nurse to qualify as a paratrooper in Portugal.

Inspired by the paratrooper nurses of the French Red Cross, the group was established in 1961 under the guidance of Isabel Rilvas, the first woman parachutist in Portugal, and under the direction of Lieutenant-Colonel Kaúlza de Arriaga, the then Under-Secretary of State for Aeronautics. The 'six Marias', as they were called, received the Green Beret and the Parachuting

Brevet at the Tancos military base back then. Graduating with the rank of Second Lieutenant, 46 nurses qualified over 13 years.

During the Portuguese Colonial War, these nurses attended the wounded, often under fire. They evacuated hundreds of patients from Africa and also from the hospitals of Goa and Timor. Sadly, one of these heroines died in action. Besides offering military assistance, they also treated civilians and prisoners of war.

On the initiative of General Araújo Pinheiro, the ceremony began with tribute by General Almendra, who talked about the feats of these military nurses at a time when the Armed Forces were predominantly male, and Portuguese society was quite conservative. The General also highlighted how the women rose to the challenges of wartime and performed their duties in combat, risking their own lives in a spirit of self-sacrifice.

At the subsequent lunch, on behalf of all the nurses, Maria Arminda Santos thanked the General and the Armed Forces for this tribute, also mentioning the strong bond that had developed between the group and the Portuguese Air Force. This bond still prevails at the meetings that the nurses periodically organise.

In 2011 Maria Arminda Santos also starred in the documentary, 'Quem Vai à Guerra' (Who Goes to War), directed by Marta Pessoa, which features first-hand reports of the women who waited, volunteered and rescued soldiers from the front.

Alexandra Costa, SI Setúbal

Soroptimist Maria Arminda Santos (left) was the first nurse in Portugal to qualify as a paratrooper and was among those honoured by the Portuguese Air Force.



A CULTURAL OUTING TO BONN

SI Luxembourg

SI Luxembourg organised a visit to the exhibition about the Dogon people living in the central plateau region of Mali at the Kunst- und Ausstellungshalle in Bonn, Germany. Known for its mask dances, wooden sculptures and interesting architecture, Dogon country is a World Cultural Heritage site in Africa. 42 Soroptimist from seven clubs participated in the excursion. After visiting the exhibition, SIE President Kathy Kaaf met with the Luxembourg delegation for a short working meeting.



A Rwandan success story

IT ALL BEGAN WITH AN ATELIER



Above right: An artisan at the San Marco Centre works on a piece of jewellery.

The final jewellery and dolls, crafted in Kigali and Gisenyi, are works of art.

During my biennium as President, SI Italy and SI San Marino cooperated in a project to preserve the traditional handicraft techniques in Rwanda to design jewellery and other artwork. The women can then sell their products locally or in Europe. SI Italy organised workshops for local artisans in Kigali at the San Marco Centre. Using indigenous materials, these artisans create true masterpieces, some of which were exhibited at the Venice Architecture Biennale in September 2010. With these skills, Rwandan women are now empowered to earn their own income. Our dream, and their dream have come true!

This year I travelled ten days through Rwanda to visit various clubs and to learn more about their projects. It was a rich, interesting and exciting experience and long enough to gain a better understanding of the meaning and value of the atelier that was established in 2009. Two young Italian designers still work at the side of the Rwandans.

The training of these craftswomen in San Marco/Kigali, and now also in a second studio in Gisenyi, is bearing fruit. The *agatako cooperative* has since been set up to support the business and the social and economic development of these artisans.

Don't give a woman a fish; teach her how to fish instead. This is how to make a difference! And the cooperative shows that the artisans can use their skills to become self-sufficient and responsible of their own future.

Wilma Malucelli, Immediate Past President of SI Italy

SI Luebcker Land

A MEMORABLE VISIT TO MOROCCO

What first appeared to be just a short trip to Morocco turned out to be a memorable experience for us four Soroptimists from SI Luebcker Land in Germany. Club member Martina Meier liaised with SI Marrakesh to organise the journey.

Our tour included a visit to a Montessori kindergarten 40 km south of Marrakesh, which is funded by donations from Germany. After passing modest clay huts among dry bush, we suddenly spotted the kindergarten like a *fata morgana*. The rooms were clean and tidy, and everything was in good condition. Here, the children learn that a good education leads to a better future and more chances in life.

Touria Binebine, founder of SI Marrakesh, the first SI club in an Arab country, is a true inspira-



The Soroptimists presented Touria Binebine with the spectacles they had collected in Germany. From left: Melanie Backes, Martina Meier, Ilka Saage, Touria Binebine, SI Marrakesh, and Annemarie Koch.

tion. With much energy and despite her own ill health, Touria set up a boarding house for girls in Marrakesh, also financed by donations, and looks after the girls, who come from up to 300 km away to attend one of the secondary schools in Marrakesh with the aim to obtain the A (advanced) level of education. Some 200 girls currently live there.

On the 'medical day' sponsored by SI Marrakesh some 1500 people receive health examinations. SI Luebcker Land presented Touria Binebine with the 200 spectacles they had collected in Germany. The four of us were very pleased we could help with this small contribution.

Melanie Backes, SI Luebcker Land/Germany

SI Grenoble's 80th anniversary

PRIZE FOR A FRANCOPHONE NOVEL

SI Grenoble will celebrate its 80th anniversary on 17th-18th November 2012 and award the 6th Soroptimist Prize for a Francophone novel at a special festive literary event in Grenoble on this weekend.

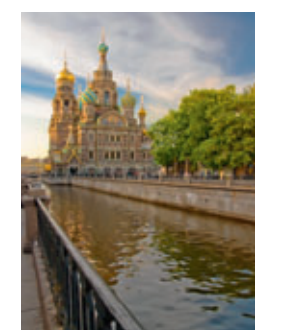
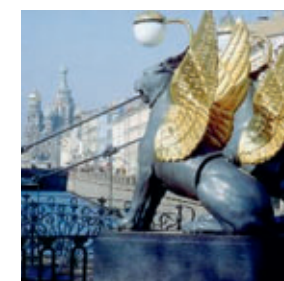
Created in 2002 by SI Grenoble, this Soroptimist Prize recognises a novel written in French by a woman of non-French nationality and/or whose native language is not French. The prize aims to promote the international influence of the French language and to highlight the rich literary tradition and cultural diversity of the many French-speaking countries. SI's goals, such as supporting women, international friendship and the spread of culture, are also reflected. The 2012 selection includes ten authors representing Albania, Algeria, Australia, Belgium, the Ivory Coast, Estonia, Lebanon and Senegal.

Abdou Diouf, General Secretary of the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie, has been the patron of this prize since 2008. More than 400 members of the 60 clubs of SI France will elect the laureate next September.

Contact: si-grenoble@wanadoo.fr

St Petersburg-Neva

TOUR THE CITY AND MEET NEW FRIENDS




SI Saint Petersburg-Neva is offering Soroptimists interesting tours of St Petersburg throughout the year until March 2013. The idea is to get acquainted with Soroptimists from other countries – and show off our beautiful city of Saint Petersburg. During the five-day tour you will be able to attend our club meeting and see lots of places of interest in the city, including Vasilievsky Island, the tsar's Winter Palace, the Hermitage Museum, the Amber Room of Catherine's Palace, the Peter and Paul Fortress and much more.

In July SI St Petersburg-Neva celebrates its anniversary and guests will have a great opportunity to visit the ancient town of Novgorod.

For more information and details of costs, please contact Nordic Travel Ltd – info@nordictravelrussia.com, whose director, Luba Sofian, is a member of the SI St Petersburg-Neva or go to www.nordictravelrussia.com. Luba's travel agency will handle all bookings. Your hostesses will do their best to make your trip to Russia unforgettable and exciting!

The tour includes many sights of St Petersburg.



Please submit your  contributions to the next issue of *The Link* by 31st July 2012!

NEW SI/E CLUBS TO BE CHARTERED

2nd June 2012

Klosterneuburg Stadt (Austria)
 Charter to be presented by
 Beate Speicher, SIE Secretary
 General

Club President

Helga Pammer

Berchtesgadnerhofgasse 21
 AT - 3400 Klosterneuburg
 Phone: +43 650 4511 690
 E-mail: pammer@aon.at

8th September 2012

Reken-Lembeck (Germany)
 Charter to be presented by
 Kathy Kaaf, SIE President

Club President

Ute Uphues

Am Ravelin 25
 DE - 48653 Coesfeld
 Phone: +49 2541 77 71
 E-mail: ute.uphues@gmx.de

22nd September 2012

Tours (France)
 Charter to be presented by
 Kathy Kaaf, SIE President

Club President

Nadine Zoccola
 52 Ter rue François Clouet
 FR - 37400 Amboise
 Phone: +33 676 1214 07
 E-mail: nadine.zoc@orange.fr

13th October 2012

Landshut (Germany)
 Charter to be presented by
 Daniela Stern, SIE Extension
 Committee

Club President

Almut Nötzold
 Haselweg 22
 DE - 84036 Landshut
 Phone: +49 871 2760 905
 E-mail: mail@almutnoetzoeld.de

17th November 2012

Lisboa Caravela (Portugal)
 Charter to be presented by
 Kathy Kaaf, SIE President

Club President

Rita Nogueira Ramos
 Rua Professor Carlos Teixeira,
 n°3-10° A
 PT - 1600-608 Lisboa
 Phone: +351 21 840 08 70
 E-mail: lenia.lopes.lawyers@
 sapo.pt

FORTHCOMING EVENTS FOR SIE

15th-17th June 2012

20th Nordic Meeting
 Luleå (Sweden)

16th-17th June 2012

50th Anniversary
 SI Kavala (Greece)

30th June-8th July 2012

Icelandic Soroptimist Week

14th-15th July 2012

Governors' Meeting
 Budapest (Hungary)

12th September 2012

25th Anniversary
 SI Saarbrücken (Germany)

14th-16th September 2012

Deutschsprachiges Freundschaftstreffen
 Bad Ischl (Austria)

19th September 2012

25th Anniversary
 SI Trento (Italy)

23rd September 2012

50th Anniversary
 SI Brest (France)

26th September 2012

25th Anniversary
 SI Isartal/Bad Tölz (Germany)

28th September - 2nd October 2012

9th European Friendship Days
 SI Nicosia & SI Paphos (Cyprus)

29th September 2012

50th Anniversary
 SI Enschede (The Netherlands)

12th-14th July 2013

SI/E Congress
 Berlin (Germany)

INTERNATIONAL AWARENESS DAYS AND EVENTS

5th June

World Environment Day

21st September

International Day of Peace

