

A MESSAGE FROM YOUR PROGRAMME & ADVOCACY TEAM!



Dear Soroptimists,

For most of us, if not for all of us, water and sanitation are things we take completely for granted. Having a drink of water from the tap, taking a shower, going to the bathroom – these are the most routine daily actions we can think of. As we all know, **women** bear a disproportionate part of this burden. It is **women** who fetch water, thus missing out on school or work; it is **women** who are disproportionately exposed to diseases as a result of not having access to proper sanitation facilities.

While so much remains to be done in this area, the good news is that all the key indicators are on the up. It is up to us to continue this work, to ensure that all women and girls around the world can, one day, like us, take access to clean water and to safe sanitation facilities completely for granted.

Renata Trottmann Probst, President Elect and head 'Programme & Advocacy'

This month we talk about: WATER

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Women are vital to achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 on Water

Water touches every aspect of life, and yet, nearly 700 million people still lack access to safe drinking water, and adequate sanitation is not available to some 2.4 billion people. As a consequence and due to poor hygiene, an estimated 1,500 children die from diarrhoea every day.

Women, water and sanitation are closely connected. In many countries women are responsible for fetching the water used for drinking, irrigation and business. In over 70 per cent of households in which water must be fetched, it is the women and girls who are responsible. Survey data for 25 sub-Saharan countries indicate that women spend a total of 16

million hours per day collecting water – time which could be better spent on education or income generation.

On the other hand, all the experience women have gained in water management is why Women for Water Partnership underlines the important role women play as experts, agents of change and partners in securing SDG 6 on Water, i.e. equal access to water and sanitation for all and for all uses. It is therefore crucial to aim for the combined implementation of the SDGs 6 (Water) and 5 (Gender Equality).

Sadly, women's expertise is largely disregarded. Women hold only 17% of the paid jobs in the water sector worldwide. The main reasons for this are linked to values and beliefs about the position and role of women, such as a perceived inability to do field work or unsafe working environment. Water is also lar-

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gely seen as technology driven and therefore, beyond women's competence. Both men and women need to change these stereotypical beliefs. After all, there is an enormous shortage of sector worldwide. The main reasons for this are linked to values and beliefs about the position and role of women, such as a perceived inability to do field work or unsafe working environment. Water is also largely seen as technology driven and therefore, beyond women's competence. **Both men and women need to change these stereotypical beliefs.** After all, there is an enormous shortage of qualified personnel to gain full access to water for all. To overcome this shortage, all stakeholders should acknowledge the know-how and expertise of women in the field of water and ensure that enough funds are available for women to play their role in achieving both SDGs 5 and 6.



Mariet Verhoef-Cohen, SI President Elect

Women for Water Partnership (WfWP)

Soroptimist International of Europe (SIE) has been a member of WfWP since 2007.

WfWP is a unique partnership of women's organizations and networks, uniting women leadership in around 134 predominantly low and middle-income countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA region) and Western Europe, reaching over one million women.

Since its establishment in 2004, WfWP has consistently raised the profile of women in the water and development sector, both in their professional capacity and as a major group in society.

All 27 member organizations are rooted in society and are active in the areas of water and sanitation, sustainable development, women's participation and empowerment. The membership ranges from

rural women, academia, women water professionals, and businesswomen to service organizations and special interest groups. WfWP positions women as active leaders, partners, experts and agents of change in water.

Soroptimist International (SI) President elect Mariet Verhoef –Cohen has been the President of WfWP for almost 3 years and Asha Abdulrahman, SIE - Union of Kenya - is a member of the Steering Committee. Both of them are doing a great job for that we can be proud of.

As appointed as an active representative for SIE of WfWP since autumn 2016 I have had the pleasure of participating at the Women's Forum at the Budapest Water Summit November 2016. The Forum was established in co-operation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary, World Water Council and WfWP with high level speakers. Among the topics were: Women and Water geopolitical aspects towards crisis management, Intersections of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 (gender equality) and 6 (clean water and sanitation) implementation. Mariet gave a very powerful and interesting speech about the topics and stressed the importance of combining the implementation of SDS's goal 5 and 6, at all levels. She mentioned how valuable and effective the cooperation with SIE was in different kind of projects e.g. helping and learning women to secure access to clean drinking water and Sanitation.



I have seen the benefit of the cooperation between WfWP and SIE and now SI – who has recently joined as a member of WfWP - both in Budapest and at the last two "Commission of Status of Women in New York. It has given a valuable synergy and the possibility for SIE/SI to achieve access to high level events and speakers and to achieve our common goal to empower women and girls.

SIE Immediate Past-President, Ulla Madsen

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SERIES OF "MY VISION"...



For this issue we have the testimony of SIE Communication Officer, Marie-Claude Bertrand

« What does it mean to be a Soroptimist?

- Firstly, to embrace the values of Soroptimist International which are to defend human rights for all, elevate the status of women, promote strong morals, equality, development and peace.

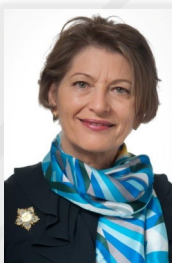
- Daily and whenever possible, to apply these values and the commandments of Dr. Suzanne Noel, Founding President of Soroptimist International of Europe. *

- to put your talents and expertise at the disposal of Our Organization.

- to carry out projects proposed at local, national and international level - by Soroptimist International, the European Federation and the National Union - that aim to improve the lives of women and girls, helping them to reach their full potential, become autonomous, independent and free to live their lives as they seek fit.

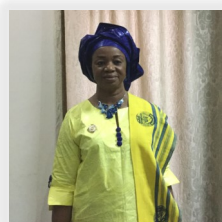
- To promote our cause before all local, national and international bodies.

Being a Soroptimist is also about understanding respect, kindness and the bonds we share. It is to belong to a network of like-minded women from all professions and horizons. »



WATER AND WOMEN IN MALI

Haoua Mariko Tandjigora & Aminata Sangare Traore, respectively Programme Directors of Bamako Lumière & Bamako Espoir analyze the challenges that their country is facing.



There is an acute water problem in Mali, and the drinking water supply remains of great concern. In the peripheral districts of Bamako (capital of Mali) the women spend hours by the

standpipes waiting for clean drinking water, often remaining there throughout the night. **The infrastructures to access drinking water are insufficient, and the cost of water is relatively high for the low-income populations living in these districts.** The situation is especially critical at this

*Commandments of Perfect Soroptimists by Dr. Suzanne Noel (extracts)

Soroptimists will:

- Recognise that as members of a large club individuals are stronger together
- * Cultivate the spirit of the Union, collectively and individually
- * Keep empty words to themselves
- * Welcome all their sisters with love and joy
- * Always confer with other sister team members
- * Invite and show empathy towards outsiders
- * Apply themselves to everything with passion and enthusiasm
- * Endeavour to act "soroptimistically" at all times
- * Be ready to make huge sacrifices to bring peace to the World

time of year (between March and June), since this marks the dry season when the level of the Niger - the main source of water supply - falls drastically. As a consequence of the drop in water levels, water is rationed between the various city neighbourhoods. Some areas can go without a single drop of tap water for up to two days.



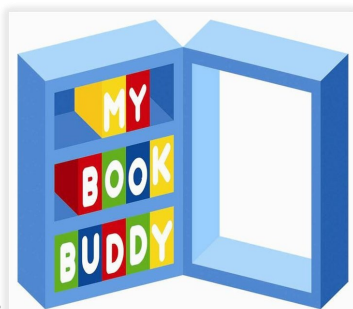
There is no piped water supply to villages in rural areas.

Instead the villagers rely on wells, rivers, lakes and backwater for their water supply. The women are often forced to walk for miles to fetch water (known as *corvée de l'eau* - water-related drudgery). The populations contract many illnesses and diseases because the water is unsafe to drink. In certain areas, it is common for people and animals to share the same water sources (rivers and lakes). The majority of the population does not use any means of water treatment at home (chlorination, boiling, filtration). All these various factors coupled with the lack of personal hygiene means diarrhoeal diseases are very widespread.

As for sanitation, the proportion of individuals nationally who have access to an adequate sanitation system is just 11%. Studies show that more than 50% of illnesses documented in health centres are due to diseases brought about by the lack of access to adequate sanitation. Very few houses in rural areas have toilets. Sponsors are currently heavily investing in the construction of latrines.

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FEDERATION PROJECT MY BOOK BUDDY



Providing 34,000 girls with a new book to read at home every week - where are we at?

- **Why is it so important that we work towards this goal?**

This morning I heard on the news that in The Netherlands 2 million people have low literacy skills! I was shocked. How can this be? I then read a European Commission report and I learned that literacy is a big problem worldwide. It is a challenge for us to really create added value for 34.000 girls in Africa and Western Europe with our federation project!



- **Why is literacy so important?**

The [Learn to read website](#), states that "reading is fundamental to functioning in today's society, it is how we discover new things, it develops our imagination and it develops the mind. [...] Teaching young children to read helps them develop their language skills. It also helps them learn to listen. Lack of listening skills can result in major misunderstandings which can lead to job loss, marriage breakup, and other disasters - small and great". Reading is a gateway to autonomy, education, employment, economic independence and, hopefully, to a peaceful world. The [UNESCO website](#) states that "Literacy is a fundamental human right and an instrument of empowerment to improve one's health, one's income, and one's relationship with the world".

- **Where we are at the moment and what we want to achieve**

In March we set up libraries in 4 schools in Kenya and preparations are underway for implementation in a school in Nepal and one in Madagascar. Currently, of the 1265 clubs in SIE **32 are actively participating in 12 different countries** (Rwanda, Madagascar, Kenya, Italy, Mali, Burkina

Faso, New Caledonia, Austria, France, Belgium, Germany and The Netherlands) and 6 countries are active at Union level (France, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Poland, Austria and The Netherlands)! We are very happy with these results and **hope that in the last 6 month of this year we shall be welcoming many more participants!**

Because we must now match applications and donations for 6 schools with 2500 children, of which 1350 are girls, we are still some way short of our target: 34,000 girls!

We have received many applications and **10.000 children are waiting for books**, but without donations there is nothing we can do.

Please come aboard our Soroptimist Train and let's finish this together with pride!

We invite you to join our Soroptimist teachers to make reading a joy for every child!

Let's start organising Sponsored Reading Events!

(between April 23, World Book Day and September 8, UN Literacy Day)

1. **Choose a day and a location** and invite the parents, neighbours and friends. Or decide to use a school and invite all the children to participate.
2. **Ask children to read** a page or more from a reading book (teachers can advise on which titles to choose!)
3. **Use the sponsor card** available in the toolbox on our [website](#) so that children can be sponsored for their reading. A letter for their parents is also available.
4. **Choose a school** (see the "schools" page on our website) that you wish to sponsor. With your help many children without books will soon be able to read.
5. Perhaps you would like to become involved in the school's activities and exchange knowledge as pupils, as teachers or as mothers?

And of course if you just want to donate, please do so by following the instructions on the website.

Let us know how we can assist you so that together we can make the dreams of so many children come true. They are longing for books and stories and new perspectives! YES WE CAN!

Programme team
Marlène van Benthem (PD), Caroline Junier (APD),
Amélie Duval (Programme and Advocacy officer)

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35,000 SOROPTIMISTS ARE ENGAGED IN PROGRAMME & ADVOCACY

SIE Larvik, Norway

In developing countries, women are often the ones responsible for getting water every day – work that is too often under-valued and under-recognized. This impacts their health and their education, when girls are unable to go to school because they have to fulfil their water duties. **6 kilometers is the average distance that women have to walk to get clean water for their families every day!**

Last year, the SIE Club of Larvik, in Norway organized a walk to raise awareness on the lack of water throughout the world, and on the issue of women missing out on opportunities because of lack of access to fresh and clean water. Soroptimist from the district were invited to the walk, which was open to both members and non-members. No less than 65 participants showed up to participate, enjoy the good weather and walk in solidarity. The event was a great success !



SIE Antananarivo Doyen, Madagascar

Following the draught that hit the inhabitants of the Antananarivo Doyen area this year, the members of the Soroptimist Club decided to lead an action of sensitization on the use and preservation of water. First, they taught the children that they regularly host in their Club how to use and save water during washing – personal and food hygiene. They then chose to strengthen their action by **sensitizing also all the people in charge of these children**, such as their grandmothers, aunts and sisters.

In order to do so, they screened short, didactic films on an economical use of water, the treatment of the wells' water, the use of water in terms of hygiene and cleanliness but also for consumption. These short films were reinforced by image presentations illustrating what had been seen, and quizzes closed the workshop in

order to evaluate what had been memorized. Plastic buckets, soaps and bottles of product were shared with participants. The sewing training students, who also attended the presentation, received a little toiletry kit. **This amazing project arose a lot of interest!**



SIE Ouagadougou Princesse Yennenga and SIE Union of Denmark

Dori is a city located in the Sahel region, in the North of Burkina Faso. In April 2016, the SIE Club Ouagadougou Princess Yennenga offered water tanks and washing hand containers to 2 schools, with the financial support of the SIE Danish Union. This donation came to support the school's canteen program of the World Food Programme (WFP).

The water tanks allow students at school to get clean drinking water and avoid diarrhoea. The washing hands containers allow children to wash their hands before and after eating, thus avoiding dirt related diseases. The aim is to motivate and improve children attendance at school, now impeded by the lack of easy access to potable water.

Teachers and students of the two beneficiary schools were sensitized and trained in hygiene and sanitation for the proper use of equipment. After the installation, a happy mother said **"By educating the school children on hygiene, you educate parents and the whole society!"**



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NEWS ON MENTORING

Highlighting Soroptimist experiences, thoughts and feelings about Mentoring is a good way to keep its spirit and values in the limelight. Here is another testimony about what Mentoring can mean to our organization.

Elena Savu, Scholarship Committee Member

Mentoring - A Challenge
for Swiss SoropTimists

S.I Switzerland is proud to have 61 clubs and almost 2,000 active members whose projects are designed to help empowering women and girls. [Fighting illiteracy](#) is one way that the Union does this. Mentoring is another key activity. However, there are many Soroptimists who have been acting as Mentors in their professional lives but they never talk about it. This must change!

I have always been involved in promoting Mentoring. During my Swiss Union Presidency (2014-2016) a Mentoring project focused on educating 29 women with a migrant background was achieved. The Swiss clubs raised about 40,000 Swiss Francs and cooperated with the CFD (Christlicher Friedensdienst) in the German part and "Decouvrir" in the French part of Switzerland. The organizations provided training courses and helped these women find a job by getting their skills and diplomas recognized. We also called upon our members to support these women by volunteering as Mentors for about 9 to 12 months. At least 10 very successful 'mentorings' were done during my presidency.

At present, the Board of S.I. Swiss Union with the support of Union President Eleonore Perrier decided to relaunch Mentoring: a new commission of 3 Soroptimists will be set up to work on a program for all our clubs based on the diversity of our linguistic and cultural regions. A survey will be sent out to ask all club members to report their Mentoring activities and their time availability for such activities.

We believe Soroptimist Mentoring is empowering women by using the professional skills of our members. Thus we can make Soroptimist International more visible to younger women and achieve our goals.

Catherine Scheurer-Tribolet
Immediate Past-President (2016-2017)
SIE Swiss Union

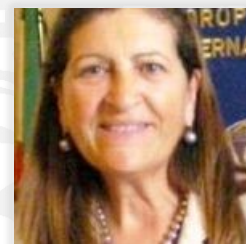
The Federation promotes Women in Sport!



SIE aims to empower women by striving to increase and strengthen women's presence across all layers of society. These efforts include awards and scholarships to further women's activities. Until now, Federation actions in support of women in sports have been limited, the Marathon in Rwanda being the exception. The "[Women in Sport](#)" Prize will take this support to a whole new level, not only by offering women greater opportunities in sports, but also by promoting equal opportunities in sports, where gender inequality is still widespread. SIE has created the "Women in Sport" Prize in response to a proposal by a number of SIE Clubs which, over many years, have used sport – and golf in particular – to raise funds for various projects. The prize will be funded by donations from Clubs as well as a contribution from SIE.

We can call it a **pilot project**.

We do not know if it will be possible to create a network of clubs throughout the Federation ready to support the Prize in the long run. Based on the results of this test the Board will make a decision for the future.



What we do know is that SIE received an enthusiastic reaction from many clubs and Unions and a great number of applications. There are a lot of young women athletes and/or *pro bono* sports trainers and coaches whose daily pursuits and responsibilities embody the "*mens sana in corpore sano*" ideal. Let us make them role models!

Maria-Luisa Frosio
Scholarship Committee Chair

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COUNTRY FOCUS

SWEDEN



SI Sweden's Union Project – Solvatten – Safe Water from Women to Women

Today more than 663 million people lack access to safe water, and every day more than 800 children under five die from diarrheal diseases due to contaminated water and poor hygiene.



Solvatten is a Swedish innovation made by Petra Wadström. Solvatten uses solar energy to purify contaminated water. After a few hours in the sun the water is hot and free from the pathogens that cause diseases such as dysentery, salmonella and cholera. Solvatten saves

time, energy, money and the environment. A Solvatten can be used several times a day, it is easy to use and carry, and no batteries, spare parts or chemicals are required.

Petra Wadström has received many prestigious awards, such as **Momentum for Change Lighthouse Award** by UN's Climate Secretariat UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) from December 2015 and on March 8, 2017, Petra Wadström, as an outstanding entrepreneur, came second in the European Commission **2017 Prize for Women Innovators**.

The Solvatten Programme is directly and indirectly contributing to **all 17 Sustainable Development goals, set up by the UN**.

In 2011 the Swedish SI Club Stockholm-Roslagen raised about Euro 10 000 for a delivery of 74 Solvatten units to an SOS Children's village in Angola. Inspired by this initiative the SI Sweden Union decided to make Solvatten a Union Project for two years, as from October 1, 2012. The project received a Best Practice Award at the 20th Congress of SI Europe in Berlin 2013 in the category: 'Address the specific needs of women and

girls by improving environmental sustainability, and mitigating effects of climate change and disasters', Goal 5.

As the project was so successful the following SI Sweden Presidents let it continue as a Programme, and in 4 1/2 years, up to the end of March 2017, Swedish SI clubs, four German SI clubs and one Finnish SI club have raised **1 367 000 SEK = Euro 135534**, with which the Solvatten Programme Group has bought **1 212 - ONE THOUSAND TWO HUNDRED AND TWELVE** Solvatten units that have been distributed to vulnerable families in for instance Kenya, Tanzania, Angola, Malawi, Sénégal, RDC, Sierra Leone and Nepal.



When starting up a new project, it is very important to make a thorough investigation, before signing an agreement. It is essential to find a local person who can act as project leader

and take responsibility for the introduction, information and distribution to the women concerned – they learn not only about the actual handling of a Solvatten, but also about its positive effects on their health, their economy and the environment. Finally, the project leader is responsible for reporting to us on the progress of the project.

The savings made by one family using one Solvatten for one year are:

- 45 fewer sick days
- 200 USD saved (no need for buying medicines, charcoal, kerosine)
- 400-450 kWh solar energy absorbed
- 56 workdays released
- 10 trees left standing
- 40 m² forest spared
- 2 tons fuelwood spared
- 1-2 tons LESS CO₂ emission !!!!



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On www.soroptimistsweden.se and www.solvatten.se you will find many Reports on the excellent and outstanding qualities of Solvatten and Evaluation reports describing the above areas of savings. **Most beneficiaries claim that Solvatten changed their lives for the better.** Some also claim that a Solvatten gives them a higher status in their community.

Solvatten in Nepal

To comply with SI President Yvonne Simpson's Nepal Appeal we started up a project with a Swedish organization 'Street children in Nepal' and so far **48 Solvatten have been distributed to the poorest families and children in the slum area Shantinagar in Katmandu.**



On the right, see picture of the slum and of the proud family who received the Solvattens.



Kenya

Our very first delivery was made to Eldoret in Kenya in 2013.

In the photo Past SI Kenya President Helen Yego is handing over a Solvatten to an old woman in a widow's community.



Currently about 50 000 Solvatten units are in use all over the world serving around 300 000 people with SAFE DRINKABLE water.

If you would like to contribute to this programme and increase these figures, please send your donation to the Soroptimist account at

NORDEA – IBAN: SE95 9500 0099 6034 0657 1178,
BIC-code SWIFT:
NDEASESS

*Kärstin Jacobsson,
Swedish Union
President
Jytte Roos, Solvatten
Programme Group*

SI President Appeal 2015-2017 To train future leaders: Nepal

Launched on 10 December 2015, SI President Yvonne Simpson's appeal is in full swing, both in terms of fundraising and the projects being implemented in Nepal. This is an opportune moment to publish some figures and to thank Soroptimists from the European Federation for their generosity.

Six projects are currently underway. Others are to follow imminently. They all aim to improve the life of the Nepalese women and girls through education and empowerment. Information about these projects is available on the [SI's website](#). To date, the President's Appeal has raised 383,000 euros across the four federations. This includes the magnificent sum of **150,000 euros**, raised to date by the SIE Soroptimists.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all the European Soroptimists for their generosity, and in particular, the Unions of Germany, Denmark, Finland, France, Greece, Italy, Iceland,

Israel, Luxembourg, Norway, The Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland, as well as numerous other clubs for their donations. A further special mention goes to the French and Swiss Unions, both of which have made a significant contribution to this SI Nepal Appeal.

But the appeal for donations remains very much ongoing. **A great many Nepalese women and girls still need you** to get involved in rebuilding and bringing about changes in their community. You will find instructions on how to donate [here](#).

*Caroline Junier
SIE Assistant Program Director
Member of the education & leadership committee*



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SOROPTIMISTS AT WORK IN MALI

We interviewed Haoua Mariko Tandjigora & Aminata Sangare Traore, respectively Programme Directors of Bamako Lumière & Bamako Espoir, on their actions in Mali.



Woman fetching water

What role do you think the Soroptimists can play in helping to resolve the water problem in Mali?

Soroptimists can have a huge influence in helping to resolve this problem by initiating and supporting projects that facilitate access to safe drinking water for women and children, as well as the men. The Mali Soroptimists have initiated many projects related to providing access to safe drinking water for women in rural areas. Projects range from constructing large wells to drilling boreholes. **Between 2008 and 2016, the clubs enabled the construction of 17 large wells and a borehole across several Mali locations. All these works were carried out with the financial support of the partner clubs, and we would like to take the opportunity to thank them here.**

These infrastructures not only give all the populations in these areas access to safe drinking water, but also enable the women to cultivate vegetable plots (for trade) around the water points. Growing their own food enables them to generate an income as well as improve their family diets.

Various initiatives have been carried out in the field of sanitation, such as the construction of latrines at the school in Niaréla financed through the action fund, and at the school in Fourra. Pupils can now use the toilet in private, preserving their dignity and the environment.



A large well in Ngolokouna

Which of your projects related to water and sanitation are currently underway? What support do you think the other clubs could give you?

At the moment, we are involved in several projects geared to providing access to safe drinking water and sanitation, notably:

- a sanitation project for the town of Diafarabé, backed by the Espoir Club through the action fund.
- a borehole drilling project in Dialakorodji (an outlying area of Bamako)
- a project to equip the Bandiagara water tower with solar panels. A borehole has been drilled in Bandiagara thanks to the support of an alliance of clubs. Now it needs to be equipped with solar panels in order for it to function correctly.
- a project of digging and dredging a large well for the women of Drani, "rural district of Mountougoula".



A borehole in Bandiagara

We would very much welcome financial support from other clubs to enable us to bring these projects to fruition.

The challenge is enormous, and despite the state's efforts, there remains much to be done in the field of water and sanitation. **We need the support of all those who are in a position to help.** This can relate to any of the following areas:

- The construction of water towers and distribution networks in the large urban agglomerations
- The construction of drinking water points (wells) and large wells in rural areas
- The organization of public awareness campaigns with regards to hygiene
- The provision of small businesses (EIG and others) with adequate materials for garbage collection
- The construction of waste deposal sites and transit facilities for solid waste and used water
- The installation of waste transformation and used water treatment plants.

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GENERAL NEWS



SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL OF EUROPE 21ST CONGRESS IN FLORENCE

The Soroptimist International of Europe 21st Congress will take place in **Florence, Italy on 14-16 July 2017.**

We invite you to visit the Congress website where you will have access to relevant information on the event, details of the registration, information on the "excellences" of Florence and many more:

<http://www.soroptimistflorence2017.com>

You can also "like" the dedicated Facebook page, by clicking [HERE](#)



SPONSOR A YOUNG WOMEN IN STEM TO ATTEND THE SIE CONGRESS!

DEADLINE EXTENDED

President Elisabetta is delighted to see the enthusiasm of Clubs, Single Clubs and Unions for sponsoring young women working or studying in the field of STEM to participate in the 21st SIE Congress.

Wishing for Clubs, Single Clubs and Unions to make the most of this sponsoring scheme, the deadline for applications has been extended to the **25th of May.**

Find out more [here](#).



IMPORTANT DATES

June 5th World Environment Day

June 20th World Refugee Day

HAVE COMMENTS?

This is YOUR newsletter! If you have a comment, document, link, or anything else that you would like us to communicate in an upcoming edition of the newsletter, please share it with us! Feel free

to send your news to:

programme@soroptimisteurope.org

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