



The Link



A global voice for women

4/2011-2012 N° 227



Governors' Meeting in Budapest
Preparing SIE for
Future Challenges

Evaluation of Annual Reports
Reporting Procedure
Needs to Be Reviewed

SIE Best Practice Awards
Showcasing How Soroptimists
Change Lives





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 DISAPPOINTING RESPONSE

The question posed to German- and Italian-speaking Soroptimists was would more members be willing to subscribe to *The Link* if we offered a version in their respective language. The resounding answer was 'no'! Don't get me wrong. I was not pushing for more work. There is enough to do to produce the English and French versions. But somehow I find it rather disconcerting - and disappointing - that there is so little interest in your Federation magazine - even though the SIE Board often hears criticism about a lack of information and transparency. Believe me, a lot of the questions I hear at meetings are answered in detail in *The Link*. But never mind, it is still a great pleasure for me to put the magazine for those of you who are dedicated readers. And soon we will start a campaign via the SIE website to encourage more of you to check out the information on offer, even if you only purchase one issue in English or French!

Christine Cromwell-Ahrens, Editor, The Link

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Cover page

In support of EWL's campaign against prostitution, participants in the Governors' Meeting show violence against women the red card.
 Photo: Suba Uma

President's Letter

Dear Soroptimist Friends



Service organisations and NGOs such as ours are appreciated worldwide as communities of values in a world focused on profit maximisation. Soroptimist programmes work at all levels of awareness, advocacy and action: you only have to look at this issue of *The Link* and see why I am so **proud of our Federation**, and of all of you who are so dedicated to our mission.

What a variety of work - from **Best Practice examples** all over the world to the **Nordic Meeting** in Sweden and **Icelandic Week**, from the scholarship awardees to the bottom line of our commitment at the Rio+20 conference, from the various **projects in Haiti after the earthquake** to the **Peace Marathon** in Rwanda, from the Danish **AIDS Information Award** to the **Tutoring Children in Reading** in Austria.

Can you understand that I was the happiest Soroptimist in the world after this **Governors' Meeting** in the splendid ambience of the Corinthia Hotel in beautiful Budapest? All of us worked so hard, starting with the different meetings in which **sharing information** was the top priority of all activities. A good atmosphere contributed to the common feeling of partnership in our goal to be a global voice for women. I was glad that everybody appreciated how much and how hard our SIE Board, our SIE HQ staff and I have been working to push SIE forward.

It was thrilling to meet high profile Soroptimists, among them **Valentine Bonifacie** from Kourou, who as a programming analyst at the Spa-

tial Centre Guyana is responsible for administering the control centre. Valentine has designed the SI France's website and set up the **architecture of the new SIE website** in a very short time. She impressed all of us with her fascinating CV: she has six children but never stopped working!

The latest event was our **SI Board Meeting in Cambridge** in August. The Board with **SI President Alice Wells** at its head made the necessary arrangements for Soroptimist International to apply for charitable status. We reviewed the excellent process of **Birthing in the Pacific**, our international project to fund the training of midwives and traditional birth attendants in Papua New Guinea. This maternal health project provides upskilling of attendants in hospitals, clinics and aid posts. The project is already saving the lives of hundreds of pregnant women and their babies. It will remain the **International President's Appeal for December 2012**.

In addition to hearing progress reports from the Programme Team, the Board received an update on activities at the six **UN Centres** across the world, where **SI UN representatives act as advocates** on every issue that is pertinent to the SI mission.

The Board welcomed two new staff members to SI Headquarters: **Anna McCormick**, Programme Manager (replacing Anna Aiken who has resigned), and **Veronica Kendon**, Financial and Administration Officer. We also congratulated Programme Director and acting Executive Director **Reilly Dempsey** on her pregnancy.

This year's **Peace Day on 21st September** reminds us of the many conflicts in our world, and especially the civil war in Syria. Despite the failure of countless initiatives for peace, we nevertheless have to continue our plea for peace in our families, communities and all over the world. Strong women have the power to initiate changes which nobody would have imagined possible. That is why we do not only have to **educate women and girls** but **empower them to be leaders for a more peaceful world**. Let us pursue these responsibilities with enthusiasm and commitment, not only on Peace Day.

Yours

Kathy Kaaf, SIE President 2011-2013



PREPARING SIE FOR FUTURE CHALLENGES

Governors' Meeting 2012

There was an air of expectancy when this year's Governors' Meeting was opened in the impressive ballroom of the Corinthia Hotel in Budapest, Hungary. The agenda was long and detailed, so after a stimulating Governors' Training the previous evening, a well-prepared Board and 51 governors as well as many Union Presidents and silent observers began the proceedings with heightened anticipation.

After SIE President Kathy Kaaf welcomed the special guests, including SI President elect Ann Garvie and SI Past President Hanne Jensbo, SIE Executive Director Anne Simon went through roll call and the candle ceremony was performed. The agenda was approved and the minutes of the previous meeting were adopted including additions suggested by SI Austria. Anne-Marie Hendrickx was then elected SIE Treasurer 2013-2015 (see photo on page 2).

Constitution Chair Maria-Elisabetta de Francis presented the proposed amendments to the Federation Bylaws and Funds, which were duly put to vote – after, in some cases, lengthy discussions. The respective Union Governors and Single Club delegates attending the meeting



will communicate the details of the results, but all proposals that were approved will come into effect as of 1st October 2012.

Financial matters are chief concern

Financial matters are a chief concern of Unions and Single Clubs, also in light of the current difficult economic situation, so a great deal of time was devoted to the discussion and clarification of the pertinent reports. SIE President Kathy announced there will be more detailed explanations of the Financial Statement next year. The Governors eventually agreed that the €2.40 fee increase that was designated for SI, which was approved in Palermo in 2011, would be collected by SIE and left on a separate account. If SI does not require the amount within three years, a proposal will be presented regarding the use of the money.

A discussion of and additions to the reports of the SIE officers, committee chairs and those responsible for SIE funds as well as the presentation of the SIE HQ Executive Director Anne followed. Here too GM

attendees will provide the details to their members.

The Board accepted the suggestion of the Action Fund to issue grants to 13 projects presented by Clubs, totalling nearly € 70,000, and the Governors adopted this proposal. The Governors

also approved the 16 Scholarship grantees, totalling € 100,500. The candidate for the Dr Suzanne Noël Scholarship received € 10,000, (see pages 10-11).

As the meeting had to be extended to finish the matters at hand, there was less time available for the leadership workshop. The idea was to allow participants to look at SIE challenges and problems from a different perspective. Each country delegation first studied the national fact sheet and listed respective challenges for their Union. The delegations were then paired with another Union and requested to look at the SI world from their adopted Union's perspective. The subsequent discussion in the groups was very insightful for each side. Sadly, time restraints the following day did not allow for sufficient analysis of the findings, but the goal of creating better awareness and generating empathy for the situation of other Unions was achieved.

Proceedings continue on Sunday

Sunday's proceedings began with remarks by SI President elect Ann Garvie. The agenda then continued with SI matters and information pertinent to the organisational development of SIE. Of particular interest were the reports of the task force on structure and of the Extension Committee Chair Maria-Luisa Frosio, who

commended the most successful Unions in terms of growth, i.e. Germany and Austria, with a special Extension award going to Romania. VP Gerda Huisman then presented the summary of the Annual Reports submitted by Unions and Single Clubs (see article on pages 6-7).

The highlight of Communications matters was the announcement of the new SIE website, which was developed in close cooperation with SI France, and in particular Valentine Bonifacie. Programme Director Ulrike Neubert announced the Best Practice Awards (see pages 8-9). The SIE Biennium campaign titled 'Food for Thought' is discussed on pages 18-19. SIE HQ Programme Executive Suba Uma explained the latest developments concerning projects in Haiti financed by the Disaster Fund. The agenda culminated with the interesting reports of our representatives in European organisations.

After the Governors have had the opportunity to comment on the draft, the minutes of the GM will be available on the Member Area of the SIE website. The next Governors' Meeting will be held in Berlin, Germany from 10th-11th July 2013 and will be followed by the 20th SIE Congress focusing on the catchy theme 'Visions of Paradise' from 12th-14th July 2013. We hope the governors and other participants in the GM next year will extend their stay to include the Congress!



Above: The ballroom of the Corinthia Hotel in Budapest was the impressive venue of this year's Governors' Meeting.

Far right: SIE President Kathy Kaaf and SIE Extension Committee Chair Maria-Luisa Frosio presented a special extension award to SI Romania.

Right: The Leadership Workshop gave country delegations the opportunity to see the situation of other Unions from a totally different perspective.

Evaluation of the Annual Reports 2010-2011

REPORTING PROCEDURE NEEDS TO BE REVIEWED

By far the longest of the Governors' Meeting's documents is the so-called Co-ordinated Report, the collection of Annual Reports submitted by the Presidents of Unions and Single Clubs: the one for 2010-2011 counts 188 pages (accessible in the members' area of the SIE website, under agenda item number 13 b ii). These reports contain detailed information on the developments, activities and projects of the Unions and Single Clubs.

Following in the footsteps of Nilgün Özler, former Extension Committee Chair, I prepared a statistical analysis and evaluation of the data and presented the results to the Governors in Budapest. The overall conclusion is that the results are often incomplete and unreliable, and that the reporting procedure needs to be reviewed.

Not unexpectedly, the largest numbers of clubs are part of the German, Italian and French Unions, but the fourth place of the Dutch Union may come as a surprise. Going a step further, it is an interesting exercise to compare the number of clubs with the country's population (in millions). This gives a completely different picture of the spread of Soroptimism, with Iceland as the unconquered winner: one in 570 Icelanders - that is one in every 285 women - is a Soroptimist.

The graph for the figures related to Extension shows for each Union the number of clubs in preparation in blue (32 in all - but it is not known if and when they will be chartered), in red the number of clubs with less than fifteen members (49), and finally, in green, but still alarming, the number of clubs with less than eighteen members (73). The conclusion is that over 10% - that is 122 out of 1158 clubs - are in the danger zone.

As about a third of the Single Clubs did not submit a report, the graph on member numbers can only be indicative. Over half of the Single Clubs have a membership of up to 20, about a third between 21 and 25, and 13% have more than 25 members. The absence of the reports of one Union and of thirty Single Clubs is only one

reason why statistics based on the Annual Reports are not very reliable. The imprecise formulation of parts of the questionnaire as well as different interpretations of particular terms made it difficult to determine exact figures on topics such as membership, projects, scholarships, funds collected and spent.

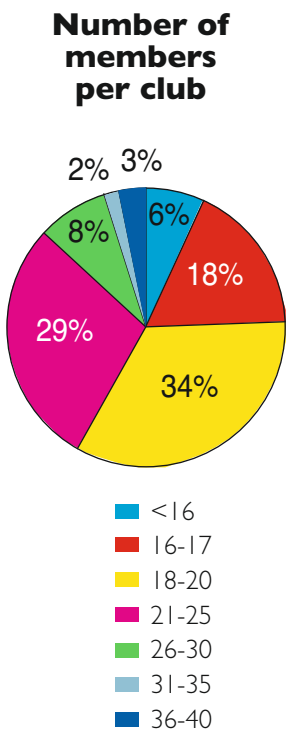
For example, Unions were asked for their number of clubs between 1st October 2010 and 30th September 2011. But which number should be noted here in case the Union had chartered one or more clubs during the year or lost some? When asked for the number of projects realised, some respondents apparently included 'activities' as projects, probably those related to Awareness and Advocacy, allowing them to note several hundreds of projects, while others used a much narrower definition and consequently reported significantly lower numbers.

It should also be noted that the figures given in the Annual Reports do not always correspond with those known from other sources, such as the PFR database and the membership questionnaires submitted to the Treasurer.

In 2010-2011 almost 500 projects, or about 10%, were related to the Federation theme, Safe Water=Safe Life, a number that is almost double that of the previous year. The absolute number reported for PFRs is also higher, but it is only half of those submitted in 2009-2010: about 20% as opposed to about 40%.

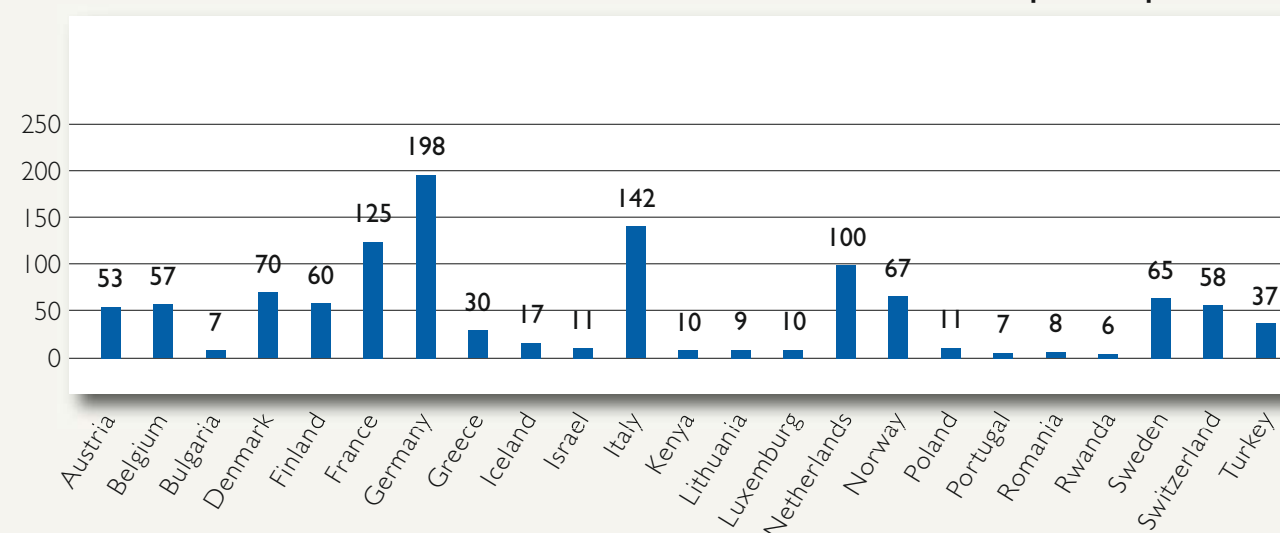
To conclude: it is evident that the Annual Reports in their present form cannot fill the demand for relevant, complete and reliable information that the Board needs for its evaluations and strategic decisions. The Board has therefore decided to review the reporting procedure before the end of this year, and to explore how the database in the new web platform may be employed as a partial or full replacement of the present practice.

Gerda C. Huisman, SIE Vice President 2011-2013

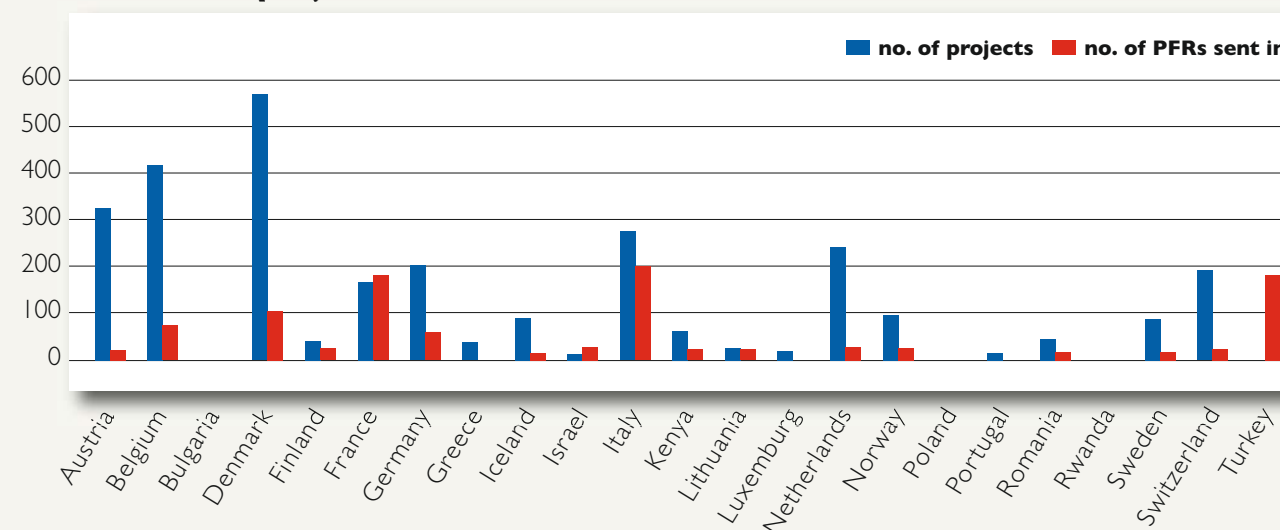


Number of clubs*

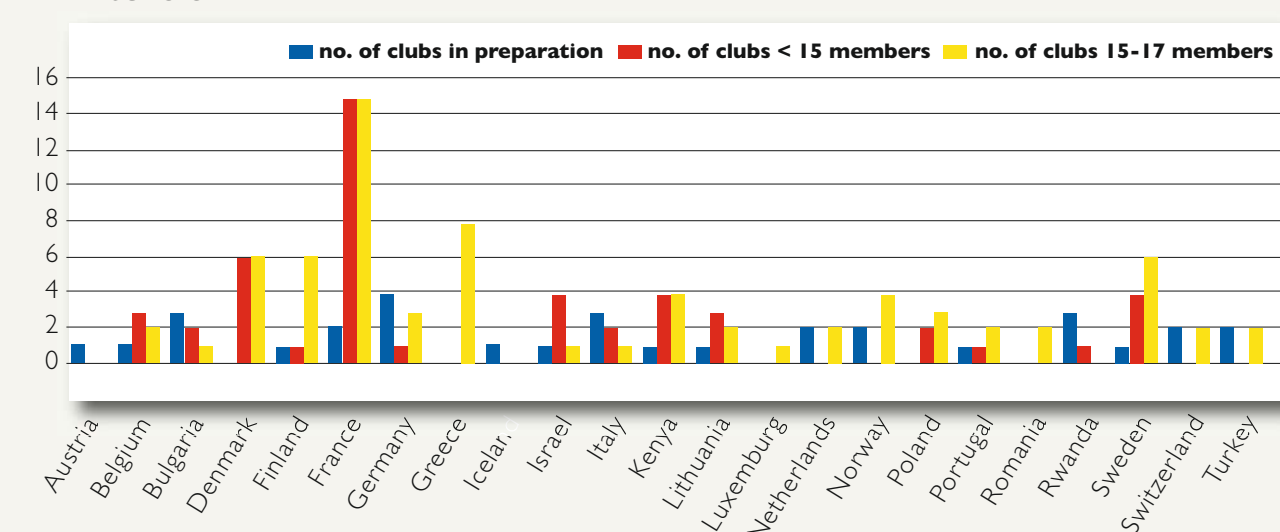
*as per 30th September 2011



Number of projects versus number of PFRs*



Extension*



SHOWCASING HOW SOROPTIMISTS CHANGE LIVES

Best Practice Awards

As Soroptimists, we subscribe to the SI mission to 'inspire action and create opportunities to transform the lives of women and girls'. And our Programme work, whether it is based on Awareness, Advocacy or Action, illustrates how engaged we are in fulfilling this important mission, which will ultimately change the social environment to be more just and equitable.



SI Slatina promoted intercultural and interracial tolerance by tutoring and caring for 12 Romany children.

SI Ankara won the Best Practice Award for its project to expand the green areas around the city.

The diversity of our programme work can be admired at the PFR database, which presents 1054 projects for the Soroptimist year 2010/11 alone. Based on these data, our members supported more than 100,000 women and girls with funds amounting to more than US\$ 3.3 million. This is a truly amazing achievement which needs to be recognised, made visible – and awarded!

This is the purpose of our SIE Best practice awards, which were introduced four years ago and presented again during the past Governors Meeting. These awards are of course only a tiny example of the huge effort so many members put into the design and implementation of exemplary projects benefiting less fortunate women and girls near and far.

As the Unions are closer to their members and can evaluate which projects fit the selection criteria best, the Programme team requests that Unions and Single clubs pre-select projects which they want to nominate for an award. Each Union can nominate two projects and each Single Club one. The

projects should meet the following criteria:

- * Have clear project goals/objectives related to the respective Programme Focus Objective,
- * Justify relevance and importance of the project,
- * Specify how the project improves the lives of women and girls and how many of them have been benefiting from the project,
- * Indicate whether other organisations have been involved,
- * Show how much funds have been used and whether these funds were raised by an SI club or other organisations,
- * Illustrate with pictures showing before/after
- * Previously report the project as a PFR.

The Programme team then has the task to select the winners from the submitted nominations – and a difficult task it is! To be as objective as possible, we developed an assessment grid where we 'judge' the following points: clear objectives (realistic, achievable); relevance; reference to the programme

goal; promotion of Soroptimist aims; number of beneficiaries; inclusion of appropriate partners; focus on women and girls; funds raised; planning, implementation, evaluation of the project; successful outcome; and sustainability. This last aspect is especially important as it proves the long-term impact ensuring women and girls live better lives beyond the project phase.

In Budapest we had the pleasure to present 10 awards to the winners (see adjacent list). SI Norway received the overall award for their 'Education Foundation', which has supported women's professional training in developing countries since 1990. A limited number of Best Practice brochures was distributed during the GM, and the publication is also available online. Please have a look at the SIE website posting and be proud of the changes Soroptimists make to the lives of women and girls worldwide.

Ulrike Neubert, SIE Programme Director

Best Practice Awards

Best Practice Awards

RECOGNISING OUTSTANDING PROJECTS

SIE Programme Director Ulrike Neubert announced the SIE Best Practice Awards 2012 for the most outstanding projects for each of the ten Programme Focus Objectives at the Governors' Meeting. SIE President Kathy Kaaf joined her in presenting the certificates to the winning projects, which are listed below:

- PFO 1:** Eliminate poverty and gender discrimination through ensuring women's full social and economic rights • SI Etiler, Bogazici, Marmara, Beykoz, Sisli Pendik, Atakoy, Levent, Moda and Istanbul/Turkey – 'Empowerment and economic development of local women in Balat through the culinary institute of Balat Culture House'.
- PFO 2:** End human trafficking and all forms of violence against women and girls • SI Apuania/Italy – 'Violence Against Women'
- PFO 3:** Ensure access to health care for women and girls • SI Bad Ragaz/Switzerland – 'Health for Haiti'
- PFO 4:** Support programmes and policies that eliminate HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis and other major diseases • SI Moda/Turkey – 'Mammography Screening'
- PFO 5:** Improve access to clean water, sanitation and essential food resources • SI Espoir Bamako/Mali – 'Well in Koyi'
- PFO 6:** Mitigate the effects of climate change and integrate sustainability into personal choices and government policies and programmes • SI Ankara/Turkey – 'Soroptimist Forest'
- PFO 7:** Meet the needs of women and girls during and after armed conflict and disasters • SI Budapest/Hungary – 'Red Toxic Sludge Disaster – Support the Revitalisation of the Village for Women and Girl Victims'
- PFO 8:** Promote peaceful conflict resolution, inter-cultural and inter-racial tolerance and condemn genocide and terrorism • SI Slatina/Romania – 'Partnership in Education after School for Romany Children'
- PFO 9:** Ensure equal access to education and training for women and girls throughout their lifespan • SI Norway – 'The Education Foundation'
- PFO 10:** Assure women's advancement in management, politics and decision-making • SI Crema/Italy – 'Education and Training Alliance (e-Trial)'



The overall Best Practice Award 2012 was presented to SI Norway for their 'Education Foundation' project.

SIE SCHOLARSHIP GRANTEES OLD AND NEW

Sophie Wairimu Wathigo

Kenya – Bachelor's degree in Psychology and part-time course in Theology
'I would like to express my gratitude for your support towards my studies... I managed to attain first-class honours...I am currently self-employed in a communication industry and run a secondary girls school where I practice as psychologist consultant part time. I am looking forward to my post-graduate studies soon.'



The Governors' Meeting confirmed the choices for SIE Scholarships 2012-2013 presented in Budapest by Scholarship Committee Chair Annabeth Studer. The following is a summary of the highly deserving grantees. More details are available on the SIE website. The photos show successful grantees from 2010-2011 with quotes from their reports indicating how they have benefited from SIE support.

SI Belgium: € 10,000

The highly talented musician who gained several awards and shows excellent certificates will receive funds for her last year studying for a Master of Music Performance at the very prestigious Royal Academy of Music in London.

SI Finland: € 8,000

The applicant, who is in her last year of postgraduate training as a gynaecologist at a University Hospital, will receive the grant for books and travel costs.

SI France: € 10,000

The orphaned African, who lost an eye due to a congenital infection, will receive a grant for her medical studies in France. She intends to return to Africa.

SI Germany: € 10,000

The neuropsychologist, who would like to work in academic research, will receive a grant while she finishes her Master's thesis.

SI Germany: € 10,000

The scientist living in Jerusalem will receive the grant to finish her research project analysing the

social situation of Palestinian and Bedouin women in Israel.

SI Iceland: € 8,500

This biomedical engineer wants to improve her knowledge of design to develop methods or devices to enhance people's mobility after skeletal failure or disease. She also hopes to find new methods to diagnose and prevent these disorders.

SI Israel: € 5,000

Despite her disabilities the grantee is successfully working towards a PhD in veterinary medicine.

SI Israel: € 4,000

The grantee wants to complete a Master's degree in gender studies and will receive help for fees and part of travel costs.

SI Italy: € 7,000

This grantee is working on a Master's degree in modern, classical and comparative philology, which is compulsory for teaching in her chosen field.

SI Portugal: € 2,000

This architect and highly qualified filmmaker will receive a grant for

to cover her fees towards a PhD in Visual Arts.

SI Romania: € 7,000

This grantee is studying to obtain a Master's degree in informatics.

SI Romania: € 7,000

With her PhD thesis in geography, on which she is collaborating with a university in France, this applicant hopes to contribute to the sustainable development of tourism in her country.

Päivi Savinainen

Finland – Bachelor's thesis in Law at the University of Eastern Finland

'My studies benefit my present profession as an information specialist and the head of the Information office... (and) also might give me additional opportunities in other kinds of leading and specialist work...I am very grateful for the grant (which) gave me the opportunity to study more effectively.'



SI Rwanda: € 2,800

This grantee wants to complete vocational training in order to start a new business in tourism.

SC Zagreb Centre/Croatia: € 4,400

This well-qualified oboist and former music teacher would like to complete her postgraduate studies in public relations, in order to promote classical music among young people.

SC Ogre-Kegums/ Latvia: € 1,900

The widow with two children is pursuing a Master's degree in Human Resources Management in evening studies while working full time. On completion she hopes to advise women on labour legislation and help them in their careers.

SC Chisinau/ Moldova: € 2,900

Despite her disability, this grantee is working to qualify as a professional cook-confectioner.

SC Maribor/ Slovenia: € 10,000

This female surgeon will receive the Dr Suzanne Noel Scholarship in order to finance part of a fellowship to the Canniesburn Plastic Surgery Unit in Glasgow, Scotland in order to specialise in plastic and reconstructive surgery.



Uwibambe Consolée

Rwanda – Bachelor's degree in Management at the Institute of Agriculture, Technology and Education of Kibungo

'I am already experiencing the fruits of my education. I am one of the managers in our school in the department of finance and administration...(and) have been elected (to) the district council in charge of recruitment and auditing commissions. With the management and administrative skills I acquired from my university studies...I am able to influence transparency in decision-making processes, support and promote decisions that benefit...marginalised citizens...(and) particularly the rights of women.'

After the earthquake in 2010, Soroptimist clubs and individuals worldwide showed their support for Haiti. Through their donations SI Port-au-Prince has been able to help many people devastated by this natural disaster. Here is their story. In December we will report on the long-term aid provided.



Countless children and orphans benefited from Soroptimist projects, which included providing food and school kits to the needy and rebuilding a paediatric ward.

THE WRATH OF THE EARTH

Soroptimists help Haiti

At dusk on January 12th, in just 35 seconds, the usually glorious sunset split open obscenely to reveal wounded bodies, twisted metal, blood and fire. That evening, the Earth's rumbling terrified the inhabitants - there was a brief, stupefied silence, then screams of horror, chants and prayers rose and filled the hush as if to ward off the tragedy.

Our people learned the meaning of words such as mutilated, crushed, dead, collapsed and amputated, as well as fault, Richter scale and epicentre. We saw the resilience of the population as, between aftershocks, they desperately tried with their bare hands to rescue anyone who could be saved from the rubble.

Members of SI Port-au-Prince threw themselves into establishing communications, finding loved ones in the ruins and distributing basic medical supplies, drinking water and blankets among victims.

Our club was confronted with a harsh reality - there was so much to do, and very few resources. We decided to focus on Port-au-Prince, the worst affected town with its labyrinth of lanes in ruins, and people crammed together in dark, insalubrious tents and makeshift shelters without water or electricity. The State was unable to meet even the most basic needs of the population. Fortunately, help from other countries was quick to arrive. We provided accommodation for volunteers from abroad who came to offer their help.

Our club decided to put our efforts into keeping vital services running (drinking water, humanitarian aid for orphans and sick children, etc.) and help get children back to school, which was psychologically important for them to share their experiences, rekindle friendships and make a start at returning to normal life.

Thanks to SIE, after a visit from the President Eliane Lagasse, Project Manager Roswitha Ott and a group of Spanish and Belgian Soroptimists, we managed to reopen the paediatric ward of Port-au-Prince's largest hospital which had been completely destroyed. It was then able to treat 150 children a day as outpatients and hospitalise more than 30 babies.

After the earthquake, the growing insalubrity led to the first cases of cholera appearing, and our club worked to prevent it spreading in the poorest, most vulnerable neighbourhoods. Thanks, once again, to SIE and SI Bad Ragaz in Switzerland, we were able to engage a specialist in order to organise 10 cholera prevention training sessions for 805 families and over 500 schoolchildren. We also distributed drinking water, antiseptic soap, chlorine, oral serum and containers to boil water.

With the help of the Disaster Fund grants from SIA and SIE, we also distributed hygiene products and maternity kits to 350 pregnant women and school kits to 400 children. The organisation *Food for the Poor* donated a container of medical supplies, food and blankets.

In March 2010, our club visited a partially-destroyed orphanage, home to over 30 children. Every week for two years we brought various food supplies and with the help of several partners, the premises were repaired and sanitised.

The water supply for the St Francis of Assisi school was badly damaged. So, with the aid of UNICEF, the premises were rebuilt and equipped with a 700-gallon water tank and a water purifier. SI Bad Ragaz kindly funded a second water purifier.

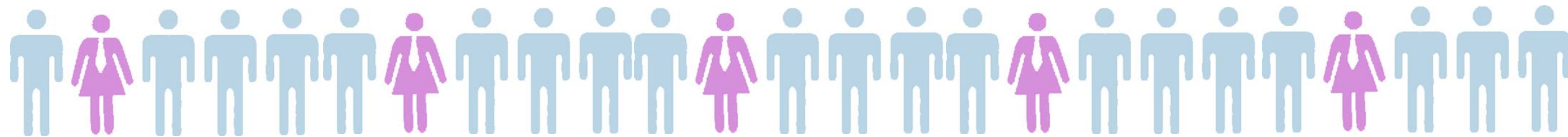
All these relief efforts and projects were made possible with the help, understanding and support of our Soroptimist sisters and other local partners. Our club was overjoyed with and very grateful for the contributions made by various clubs in Europe. Without this, it would have been difficult to live up to our motto to improve the lives of women and girls.

Nina Boumaoui, SI Port-au-Prince

Haitian Soroptimists distributed much-needed water containers in the disaster areas.

After the earthquake, victims lived for extended periods in makeshift shelters without water or electricity.





ARE QUOTAS THE ANSWER TO EMPOWERING WOMEN?

In the following introduction to our series in *The Link*, SIE HQ Programme and Advocacy Officer Gizeh Becerra sets the scene for the debate on the pros and cons of quotas for women in public office and business. If you would like to voice your opinion on quotas, please send your contributions to the Editor.

| What Some Quotas in Public Office Have Achieved | | | |
|---|--|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Country | Quota Type(s) | Results of the last elections | Percentage of women in parliament |
| Rwanda (List PR*) | Legislated quotas for the Single/Lower House Legislated quotas for the Upper House Legislated quotas at the Sub-national level | 45 of 80 | 56.3% |
| Sweden (List PR) | Voluntary quotas adopted by political parties | 157 of 349 | 45% |
| Iceland (List PR) | Voluntary quotas adopted by political parties | 27 of 63 | 42.9% |
| Senegal (Parallel) | Legislated quotas for the Single/Lower House Legislated quotas for the Upper House Legislated quotas at the Sub-national level | 64 of 150 | 42.7% |
| Norway (List PR) | Voluntary quotas adopted by political parties | 67 of 169 | 39.6% |
| Belgium (List PR) | Legislated quotas for the Single/Lower House Legislated quotas for the Upper House Legislated quotas at the Sub-national level | 59 of 150 | 39.3% |
| Netherlands (List PR) | Voluntary quotas adopted by political parties | 59 of 150 | 39.3% |
| Mozambique (List PR) | Voluntary quotas adopted by political parties | 98 of 250 | 39.2% |

*Party-list proportional representation Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union



A majority of women around the world were denied the right to democratic participation in politics and generally excluded from the business world well into the 20th century. In former times, most women in political positions were monarchs or noblewomen who had come to the post by right of inheritance or marriage. Beginning in the 19th century, women's suffrage movements in different countries pushed avidly for the right of all women to have equal access to education, to vote, own property and run for public office. As a number of countries began to extend democratic rights for their citizens, the rights of women in the political and economic spheres grew. Although expansion or curtailment of rights depended on the times and the government in power, the general trend over time has been to progressively grant women the right to hold public office and for them to increasingly participate in economic activities, with greater responsibilities.

However, the extent of participation in the political system has been limited. In addition to class and race issues, society's notions about the role of women in the home and family prevented them from proportionately participating in political life and from attaining senior management positions. Interest groups and some government officials proposed quotas— policies that set aside a certain number of posts for the benefit of underrepresented groups – in order to counter the effects of deeply-seated historic discrimination.

Securing more women in public office

Quotas have increased the numbers of women public office. Out of the 59 countries that held elections in 2011, 17 of them had legislated quotas. Of those 17, women gained 27 per cent of parliamentary seats compared to 16 per cent in countries without quotas.¹ However, increasing the number of women in political office does not necessarily lead to more demo-

cratic societies or to greater rights for women. In some countries women are even used as proxies for political parties whose agendas hardly ever advocate women's rights. Thus, there is sometimes the danger that quotas might reduce women's political empowerment simply to the number of women in office.

Quotas for women in business

Although nowadays the number of women in middle management positions is significant, fewer than 20% reach higher executive jobs. 'Across Europe the proportion of women on company boards averages around 10%, though with large variations: from less than 1% in Portugal to nudging 40% in Norway [...] the US at 16%, does somewhat better than the European average, and most emerging markets do less well.'²

Unfortunately, as *The Economist* notes, not a single company on France's CAC 40 share index or on Germany's DAX index is run by a woman. In the United States, only 15 chief executives of Fortune 500 companies are women. Britain does better, but not much. Only five of the FTSE 100 firms have female bosses.³

Women account for 60% of new graduates in the EU and enter many occupations in roughly equal numbers with men. But with every step up the ladder more of them drop out, and near the top they almost disappear.⁴

Having quotas for women in business may serve to compensate barriers due to discrimination and long-standing traditional practices, but is a quota the way women want to reach the top? Opinions vary, as this series will show.

Some believe quotas may help to breach cultural resistance, encouraging executive boards traditionally made up of all males to recruit based on diversity potential as opposed to hiring colleagues in their own image.⁵ However, there are several other factors such as cultural values, structural challenges and company practices whose



individual and collective effect on advancement should be considered.

Still, several questions remain— whether quotas mistakenly emphasise quantity over quality, whether they will have a practical effect, how both men and women in established positions might respond to women appointed by quotas, and to what extent can legislation can shape cultural values? We invite you to contribute your different viewpoints for our series addressing the question whether quotas are really the answer to empowering women and what other alternatives could be found to advance the agenda.

¹ *Women in Parliament in 2011 : The Year in Perspective. The Inter-Parliamentary Union. Accessed at: www.ipu.org/pdf/publications/wmnpersp11-e.pdf*

² "Too many suits and not nearly enough skirts in the boardroom." *The Economist*. 25th November, 2011

³ "Still lonely at the top", *The Economist*. 21st July, 2011

⁴ "Waving a big stick", *The Economist*, 10th March, 2012

⁵ "Getting Women into Boardrooms, by Law" *The New York Times*. 27th January 2010

DISCUSSING THE FUTURE WOMEN WANT



RIO+20
United Nations
Conference on
Sustainable
Development

World leaders gathered in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in June ostensibly to tackle the world's environmental and social challenges. In reality, the leaders were there to approve a document that was already adopted before their arrival – amidst widespread anger and disappointment from politicians as well as NGO representatives.

Kumi Naidoo, Greenpeace International's Executive Director, declared that 'this is Rio Minus 20 which fails on equity, fails on ecology, fails on economy'. He dramatically called the Rio+20 outcome document the 'longest suicide note in history'.

In its final statement, the Women's Major Group, a coalition of civil society, expressed its disappointment about the results of the Rio+20 conference, claiming that 'the governments of the world have failed both women and future generations.' The main outrage was over the failure of governments to recognise 'women's reproductive rights as a central aspect of gender equality and sustainable development in the Rio+20 Outcome Document.' On a more positive note, others called the text the right path to achieve cleaner and greener growth and were pleased about the agreement on the Sustainable Development Goals replacing the Millennium Development Goals.

Having said this, the participation of the Soroptimist delegation was very fruitful and interesting. We fully capitalised on networking opportunities, lobbying and other learning experiences.



Brazilian Soroptimists gave the international delegation vital support during their stay in Rio.
Photo: Suba Uma



At the press conference, UN Women Executive Director Michelle Bachelet admonishes leaders to include women as decision makers.



Anita Nayar of DAWN summarised the feelings of many women at the UN Women Leaders' Forum ahead of the Rio+20.

We made numerous contacts that may be helpful for our Soroptimist Programme work and gathered ideas to guide our members towards the future – the Future We Want as Soroptimists, in line with the theme 'The Future Women Want' championed by UN Women.

In the four days prior to the High-Level Segment, the Brazilian hosts had organised with the support of the UN the Sustainable Development Dialogues, a forum for representatives of civil society, including the private sector, NGOs and the scientific community. For example, the 'Sustainability Revisited: Population, Reproductive Health, and the Planet' event included Mary Robinson, a past President of Ireland and former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and Gro Harlem Brundtland, former Prime Minister of Norway and Special Envoy of the UN on Climate Change. The recommendations emanating from the Dialogues, such as the assertion that the empowerment of women and family planning are basic human rights that cannot be neglected, were conveyed to the heads of state and government present at the Summit.

In her opening remarks at the Women Leaders' Forum ahead of the Rio+20 conference, UN Women Executive Director Michelle Bachelet admonished, 'Twenty years ago, the Rio Declara-

tion emphasised that women's full participation is essential to achieving sustainable development; twenty years later, women continue to face inequality in rights, opportunities and participation.' Although many more prominent women speakers were heard, it was not until Anita Nayar from DAWN (Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era) took the floor that we could feel a breath of fresh air. She warned that there is a 'need for strong social movements to hold governments accountable and make sure they don't have amnesia'.

The interest in this forum was particularly high online. Some 1.4 million followers and online debaters joined UN Women on Twitter and Facebook. The 'Showcasing Women's Innovation' panel at which women presented their innovations was particularly inspiring. As Dr Nawal Al-Hosany, an engineer from the United Arab Emirates, put it: 'Give young minds the tools to invest in innovations. Invest in education.' The SI theme 'Educate to Lead' resonated well with the speakers at this forum, as everyone agreed that educating women and girls is essential to strengthen the economic participation of women.

All in all, we still have a long way to go. But one thing is clear: Women should not wait to be empowered; we must empower ourselves.

Suba Uma, SIE HQ Programme Executive

Women representing all cultures and levels of civil society participated in the Women Leaders' Forum.

Photos on this page: UN Women/ Fabricio Barreto



Benin water and food projects

EMPOWERING RURAL WOMEN

Women use water sourced from the artesian well in Tchi Ahomadégbé to irrigate their vegetable patches.



In line with biennium theme 'Soroptimists Go For Water and Food', SI Cotonou Doyen has been building partnerships with the municipality of Lalo in southwest Benin and PNE-Benin (National Water Partner) to make an effective contribution to the basic food security of the communities and help rural women's empowerment. The partnership aims to improve living conditions for women, their families and their

community through the economic development and local governance of water from the artesian well in the district of Tchi Ahomadégbé in the town of Lalo. It also aims to reduce wastage of the well water, which is put to many different uses.

The on-site efforts have raised the population's awareness of practices that are detrimental to the quality and sustainability of the resource. Better hygiene and sanitation practices have been adopted at each stage to supply homes with drinking water. Likewise, the construction of drinking fountains and the repairs made to the artesian well water tower now make it much easier to provide homes with drinking water and to irrigate vegetables, rice paddies and fish ponds.

In addition, 153 small scale farmers, 57% of them women, have been trained to a high standard in the principles of cooperatives and agricultural production techniques. The women have at their disposal more than two hectares of land suitable for growing African aubergines, crincrin (mallow leaves), peppers, tomatoes, okra, etc.

Raima Osseni Moudachironu, President, SI Cotonou Doyen

SI Kifissia-Ekali

A PROJECT FOR AND WITH CHILDREN

The children of the SOS Village in Athens drew pictures on the theme, which will be made into a calendar and then sold to contribute to costs for food and medications.

Painter Villy Makou of SI Kifissia-Ekali has initiated a project to ensure that the children of Athens' SOS Village have food security and access to good healthcare. She has given seminars on the subject of 'Water and Food' and encouraged the children to participate by drawing pictures on this theme. Their drawings will be made into a calendar, and the proceeds will contribute to the costs of their food and medications. In this way, the children are not only informed, but also get actively involved with their drawings!

Each child drew his or her picture on an A3 sheet of paper on which there was already a band of blue representing water with the Soroptimist logo and the SIE theme, 'Water and Food'. Lined up side by side, the band on the drawings forms a huge river. The more drawings are added, the further the river stretches... 'In this way, the concept of the 'Water and Food' makes a journey that recognises no borders and might just go all around the world!' says Villy Makou.



'Food for Thought' concept for biennium projects

LET'S ACT AS AN AGENT OF CHANGE!



The 'Food for Thought' concept targeting schoolchildren also addresses the wider issues of good nutrition.

The motto 'Food for Thought' does not replace 'Soroptimists go for Food and Water', but suggests putting the focus on creating awareness about food security, the challenges related to the issue and how it affects our daily lives.

Please tell us about your projects!

After the two previous biennia focused on ensuring communities' access to water and addressing water-related health issues, respectively, SIE President Kathy Kaaf chose to expand these themes to include food security. The 2011-2013 biennium theme 'Soroptimists go for Water and Food' links water availability problems to agriculture, nutrition, health and sustainability. With this SIE seeks to inspire projects that foster the availability of safe water resources for cultivation and irrigation, increase sustainable farm productivity and biodiversity, promote awareness of food insecurity and its ties to other global challenges such as poverty and hunger and increase knowledge about the importance of nutrition and health in preventing obesity and cardiovascular diseases.



The school garden projects began in Kenya with a picture competition for a calendar and have spread to other countries.

Coupling SI and SIE themes

No doubt this is an ambitious challenge, but as an organisation with 35,000 plus members, the clubs of SIE have an enormous potential if we work together. That is why we suggest using the collective power of the Soroptimist movement to create an action that will resonate across the world. Under the Federation theme 'Soroptimists go for Water and Food' and the SI worldwide motto 'Educate to Lead', we would like to encourage Unions and Single Clubs across the Federation, and in varied national contexts, to ex-

amples of how water and food projects empower women and children. We could take this idea a step further by initiating even more projects that target schoolchildren.

The 20th SIE Congress will be an ideal forum to report on the many different Water and Food projects implemented throughout the Federation. So, please remember to submit Project Focus Reports on your activities. After all, this information is how Soroptimists can show that they are true agents of change!

Icelandic Soroptimist Week

SHARING THE SOROPTIMIST SPIRIT

The invitation said, 'Explore Iceland together with your Icelandic sisters from SI Hafnarfjordur and Gardabær and share the Soroptimist spirit...' And that is exactly what we did!! Twenty-six Soroptimists from six different countries (including Canada), accompanied by four husbands, had a wonderful week. From early morning till late in the evening, our Icelandic sisters did a great job - cooking, organising and showing us the sights. Even their husbands shared in the work by



A group portrait of guests and hostesses of the Icelandic Week!

preparing the barbecue while we were waiting for our coach tyre to be repaired in the middle of nowhere. We had a wonderful evening in that mountain hut with sketches and singing. The youngsters among us enjoyed a mountain walk from midnight to 4 am with daylight all the time!

We had two two-day excursions - one to the north under the enthusiastic guidance of Ella, who was born and raised on the Snaefellsness peninsula, and one to the south. We visited the Westman Islands (Westmannaeyjar), where we not only enjoyed the spectacular scenery and the puffin birds, but also saw the story of the volcano eruption of 1973. In addition, we stood at the foot of the Eyafjallajökull, the volcano that blocked European air traffic in 2010.

On several occasions our Soroptimist hostesses received us on their own territory, but other Icelandic clubs were also involved, such as SI Olafsvik and SI Snaefellsclub. We heard about the inspiring life of a Soroptimist sheep farmer

and agricultural specialist in a sparsely populated coastal area. Kristin received us in her pharmacy museum in Reykjavik. The last day we were taken to the club's on-going AA project in the middle of geothermally active countryside. Lovisa, our guide and the AA director, explained this successful project that has helped re-integrate many people into society after alcohol or drug addiction. We saw splendidly coloured mountains, endless lava fields and blubbering hotpots. Our last adventure was a very relaxing dip in the Blue Lagoon.

On our final evening, after snacks and drinks in Jonina's garden, we enjoyed a wonderful dinner and performances of the well-known choir of the Flensbourg school where we stayed that week.

On behalf of all participants, many thanks to Jonina and her team for this marvellous week!

Marina van Koten, SI Wassenaar e.o., The Netherlands

Help for school children

WATER FOR HAITI'S IMPOVERISHED

Basic services in Haiti have always been poor, but the situation was made far worse by the earthquake in 2010, and underprivileged districts suffer the most from shortages.

The Notre Dame de l'Assomption School has 255 pupils aged between 6 and 14 from very poor families in Port-au-Prince. None of the children can afford to buy bottles of drinking water and are obliged to drink dirty water.



Thanks to the water purifiers furnished by SI Bad Ragaz, children at the Notre Dame de l'Assomption School have access to safe drinking water.



Thanks to SI Bad Ragaz in Switzerland, which contributed \$2,867 to the drinking water for impoverished children project, and the huge amount of work put in by SI Port-au-Prince, the problem has been solved. A UV Max water purifier, a water tower and a pump now supply the school with clean drinking water.

The results are impressive! 255 children have access to drinking water and the entire school is equipped with a water supply, thus reducing the risk of fatal water-related diseases. Freed from the danger of illness due to polluted water, the pupils are now missing less school.

The Notre Dame de l'Assomption School is the second school to benefit from the Soroptimists' support.

Roswitha Ott, Project Manager SIE Roswitha Ott Fund

Nordic Meeting in Luleå

'IT WAS SUPER!'



The Nordic Meeting in Luleå was a splendid occasion to stage a reunion of longstanding friends. So, Marja-Leena Puntila, Governor of Finland 1991-94; Lis Randrup-Thomsen, Governor of Denmark 1991-93; Kristin Einarsdotir, Governor of Iceland 1998-2000; Inger Björnsrud, Governor of Norway 1996-98 and Lisbeth Hass, Governor of Denmark 1996-98, gathered in my home at Tornby, Linköping for a few days of sight-seeing, chatting and reminiscing.

Among the sights were the castles of Linköping and Vadstena, medieval history and a tour of the famous Göta Canal, the blue ribbon connecting the coasts across mid-Sweden. Very early Friday morning my husband packed us into



Left: The Union Presidents from Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark and Iceland were all present at the Nordic Meeting. Photo: Anita Westerström

his van and drove us to Arlanda in time for the flight to Luleå.

Luleå greeted us with wonderful weather. Some of us went walking along the lake, while others rested. But I took the opportunity to participate in the workshop on Trafficking, headed by SIE President elect Ulla Madsen and with, among others, IPP Hanne Jensbo and the Finnish, Norwegian and Icelandic Union Presidents giving valuable input. In another workshop there were equally intense discussions regarding communication and membership with SIE President Kathy Kaaf and Swedish Union President Anita Westerström. Past SI President (1988-90) Thelma de Leeuw made valuable contributions to the discussions. Talk about stamina: Thelma and her friend Kate Goddard had driven a rented car almost 1000 kilometres along the Northern coast of Sweden from Stockholm to Luleå!

A boat tour crowned our first day in Luleå - and all the time the sun was shining!

A Saturday full of superlatives

A whole day filled with speeches - you might think that it would be too much, but I tell you: IT WAS SUPER. The latest research in 'seeing' wheelchairs for the visually impaired; the community's successful health care programme, Sami jojkI need pages to describe it all.

In a giant wooden Sami tent about 100 people were treated to the loveliest dinner featuring local dishes, such as moose, reindeer, lingonberries and Arctic cloudberry to name a few. A choir singing, joking and dancing, speeches and gifts completed the best of evenings, and all the time the sun was shining. It is true what the song says: 'The midnight sun never sets.....'

Ann-Christine (Stina) Söderlund, SIE Assistant Programme Director and Swedish Governor 1994-96

Below left: A pre-meeting reunion of longstanding friends at the invitation of Stina Söderlund set the tone for a marvellous weekend. Photo: Marja-Leena Puntila

8th Peace Marathon in Kigali

SOROPTIMISTS HELP MAKE THE SPORT EVENT A SUCCESS



Above: SIEVP Leena Viitaniemi teamed up with other Soroptimists to man the station offering drinks after the Run for Fun.

Top right: Professionals and amateurs participated in the now well-established Peace Marathon in Kigali.

Below: SIEVP Asha Abdulrahman hopes to improve Soroptimist visibility at the Run for Fun, which attracted some 600 children this year.

The 8th Rwanda Peace Marathon in Kigali started on a high note with the Children's Race on Saturday, 26th May, when the country marked Muganda Day. It is a special day when the citizens of Rwanda perform services to improve the environment in their communities.

The afternoon came alive with all the shops opening and children and adults heading to the stadium. About 600 children of different ages participated in this year's run. SIE Vice President Leena, Rwandan Soroptimists and I manned a station to distribute soft drinks after the race. Top ten winners were awarded with Teddy Bear 'medals', t-shirts, books and pens.

Early the next day we all met at the stadium, where the runners were warming up and eagerly waiting to start. Guida Biewer and her team were busy with the last minute issuing of t-shirts and numbers to the runners. About 900 runners participated in the different race categories, including the Run for Fun, half marathon, full marathon and corporate marathon relay.

A group from World Vision had a stand/tent presenting their activities. They had special t-shirts for children and staff. Some 50 children and 120 staff members from their Rwanda offices and their HQ in the USA participated in marathon. Their outfits were very colourful and attracted lots of attention.

Leena assisted Minister of Sport Mitali K. Protais in presenting each of the first ten winners of the respective races a medal. After the event we were invited to lunch by the Minister together with the



new president of Athletic Federation Jean Nkezabo and the rest of the Federation team.

Since many people asked who the Soroptimist were and what they did, it would be a good idea in the future to have a display of what we do worldwide and especially in Rwanda, as new people attend the event every time. This will make Soroptimist more visible and attract more partnerships in our projects and activities, especially with the 10th anniversary of the event approaching. I also suggest that more SI clubs in Africa be invited to participate. As this is an African event, it would promote solidarity. Special t-shirts in our colours would identify Soroptimists.

Asha W. Abdulrahman, SIE Vice President

Region of Victoria Incorporated

AUSTRALIAN SOROPTIMISTS PLAN FRIENDSHIP GRANT

SI Region of Victoria Incorporated in Australia invites a Soroptimist who speaks English to a visit in autumn 2013 from 7th April until 28th April for our biennial Grant of Friendship. To see what Victoria has to offer, please see www.visitvictoria.com.

The recipient will be required to pay for her travel (and/or visa) to and from Melbourne and to have appropriate travel and medical insurance. She is also asked to share her Soroptimist experiences with the fifteen Clubs in our Region, formally and informally for the period of three weeks. We request relevant health and special diet information from the recipient. We also anticipate the recipient

will share Anzac day with us, which begins with a dawn service at the Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne.

Soroptimists in different areas of our Region will host the recipient – usually for at least three nights and show her the local places of interest.

Interested Soroptimists are invited to submit their reason for application – to be received no later than 23rd November, 2012 Australian date time – to our Hospitality Coordinator, Margaret Paulsen, at

margraypaulsen@bigpond.com. Please outline your interests and lifestyle, years of membership and positions held in their Club, Region/District, National levels. We request a recent photo, so we can recognise you on arrival at Melbourne Airport. We in turn will arrange accommodation and facilitate outings to meet your requirements.

The recipient will be given a list of accommodation and contact details before they leave their country of origin and an outline of the programme.

SIE Congress in Berlin

REGISTRATION HAS BEGUN!



The Congress hotel will have bicycles available for rent which will allow guests to organise their own personalised Berlin tours. Photo: visitBerlin/Scholvien

As we hope most of you already know, registration for the 20th SIE Congress from 12th-14th July 2013 in Berlin began on 1st July 2012. The attractive and motivating invitation has long been distributed. Many of you have no doubt already discovered it on the website www.soroptimist.waterandfood.eu.

We are thrilled about each and every participant who makes her way to Berlin and is keen to learn more about the important SIE biennium theme, 'Soroptimist go for Water and Food'. Of course, we are excitedly waiting to see how many Soroptimists will follow SIE President Kathy Kaaf's invitation to visit our vibrant and multifaceted German capital. To save on costs, we encourage you to take

advantage of our less expensive early registration offer.

At the request of numerous Soroptimists, we have arranged for the possibility of exploring Berlin by bicycle. The Maritim Hotel will offer our more sporty guests bicycles for hire for a modest fee. So, why not tour the city on two-wheels!

If bicycling is not your cup of tea, the Accompanying Programme will include several interesting city tours by coach, boat or foot. On Friday evening club members from Berlin and Potsdam will have loads to tell and show us about their cities! They are already planning to make the Hosting Friends evening truly unforgettable.

As exciting as the touristic programme and the opportunities to make new friends will be, the true essence of this event is the actual Congress programme. For up-to-date details please go to the website. You will see that the Congress Committee has engaged many interesting speakers and organised some special surprises as well! So, do join us in Berlin! We look forward to welcoming you there!

Heide Ibach, Chair Congress Committee Berlin 2013

A MESSAGE FROM MALI

For SI Timbuktu Alliance, the Governors' Meeting, which we sadly could not attend, was going to be a special occasion to acknowledge the effort made by our Soroptimist sisters from the Mali Espoir and Lumiere Clubs who, with help from the European Federation and using their own funds, gave us invaluable support.



Displaced Soroptimists and their families were given food thanks to an SIE donation.

This support brought enormous relief to all the displaced or resident Soroptimist families in Timbuktu. We would like to thank all our sisters who have offered their compassion. In

difficult times, one sees who one's friends are, and our club members are glad to be Soroptimists and have great faith in the organisation and its members. We pray that the events we are living through will soon be consigned to history.

Dr. Kadidia Adiaiwakoye Bokar, SI Timbuktu

SI Germany and SI Frankfurt am Main celebrate 60 years

WOMEN'S POTENTIAL MATTERS

SIE President Kathy Kaaf, Supervisory Board Member of the Commerzbank Klaus-Peter Müller, then Mayor of Frankfurt Petra Roth, Gabriele Strecker Award winner Steffi Jones, Chair of the SI Förderverein help Angelika Amend, IPP SI Hanne Jensbo, President of SI Frankfurt am Main Dr. Rosa-Maria Krämer and President SI Germany Roswitha Briel.

Some 300 Soroptimists from Germany and Europe debated the theme 'Women's Potential Matters - Illusion and Reality' as part of the 60th anniversary celebration of both SI Germany and SI Frankfurt am Main in June.

Animated discussion

No doubt the highlight of the weekend was a discussion chaired by Karen Fuhrmann of the Hessischer Rundfunk broadcaster with the panelists Eva Maria Welskop-Deffaa, German Ministry of Family, Seniors, Women and Youth; Jella Benner-Heinacher, President of Euroshareholders and a member of SI Meerbusch; Professor Norbert Walter, a former chief economist of Deutsche Bank AG; and Herbert Mai, the Board member responsible for Human Resources at Fraport AG. The main topics of the discussion were:

- * How can businesses better unlock and utilise women's potential?
- * How can women be motivated to take on more responsibilities within their corporations?
- * What support is provided for women to these ends? Does our society need a quota for women in leading positions or greater commitment and understanding of the potential by the employers? Or could a more family-friendly work-environment achieve the same goal?

Sharing different viewpoints

According to Mai, Germany needs more and improved child-care facilities to enable women to better plan and balance their careers. Welskop-Deffaa supports a more formal approach to increase the amount of women in business, i.e. a quota for women. Benner-Heinacher would like to see more women on the supervisory boards of larger companies. Participants contributed real-world experience and support to the different viewpoints.

Guests were also treated to a broad and interesting programme, organised by SI Frankfurt and its President Dr. Rosa-Maria Krämer. Included were visits to Frankfurt skyscrapers and the Städel museum, a guided city tour as well as a genuine Japanese tea ceremony.

The event concluded with a formal dinner, featuring speeches and greetings from many supporters and Soroptimist leaders, including SIE President Kathy Kaaf, IPP SI Hanne Jensbo and SI Germany President Roswitha Briel.

Gabriele-Strecker Award

On Sunday, Angelika Amend, Chair of SI Frankfurt's Förderverein help, presented the Club's Gabriele Strecker Award to Steffi Jones, the Director of the German Soccer Association. The award is named after Dr. Gabriele Strecker, a well-known German journalist and physician who founded the Club. Klaus-Peter Müller, Chairman of the Board of Commerzbank AG, held the laudatory speech.

As past president of the committee that organised the Women's Soccer World Cup in 2011, Jones received the award for her commitment to young women and against social exclusion. After a long career as a professional soccer player, the witty 38-year-old has been serving in her current position since 2011. She has worked tirelessly to promote women's soccer in Germany.

The award ceremony, which Mayor of Frankfurt and honorary club patron Petra Roth also attended, concluded with words by Kathy Kaaf, who underlined Jones' contributions and stressed the uniting and emancipatory aspects of women's soccer.

Kristine Zimmermann, SI Frankfurt am Main

SI Denmark

AWARD RECOGNISES AIDS INFORMATION

At the presentation of its Information Award 2012 on 1st June, Director of the Danish AIDS Foundation Jan Fuochard remarked that Soroptimists fully live up to the Latin meaning of their name: The Best for Women. Since 2004 SI Denmark has been a loyal partner on World AIDS Day, when they collect funds for the benefit of the Danish AIDS Foundation. Soroptimists have also supported the AIDS Foundation's local partners in Kenya who help HIV-infected women. 'The commitment of local clubs is exceptional, and the AIDS Foundation is very grateful having ambassadors of that standard,' said Director Jan Fuochard. 'Soroptimists take responsibility for their fellow human beings and have made a big difference for the AIDS course.' It is in recognition of this motivation that SI Denmark received the award. Her Royal Highness Princess Marie of Denmark presented the award to Union President Hjoerdis Hansen, who was accompanied by Programme Director Maj-Britt Scholz Andersen and PD elect Thea Dalsgaard.



(From the left): Union President Hjoerdis Hansen, PD Elect Thea Dalsgaard, HRH Princess Marie, Programme Director Maj-Britt Scholz Andersen.

In 2004 Danish Soroptimist clubs all over the country started selling the AIDS bow on World AIDS Day, 1st December. This campaign has made Soroptimists more visible both locally and nationally, while at the same time supporting a good cause.

Each year the Danish AIDS Foundation hands out four awards for achievements in Science, Information, Patient Care and Business. We are especially honoured to have received the information award because it perfectly matches the objectives of SI Goal 2 on advocacy at all levels, intensifying partnerships and raising our Soroptimist profile and visibility.

Birgit Aarsnes, Governor, SI Denmark

Salamanzar Rally

CHARITY EVENT FUNDS NIKLAS' THERAPY

Twenty old-timers and convertibles converged on a weekend in late May in sunny south Styria to support a project of SI Golde Südsteiermark and SI Club Vaduz Liechtenstein. Funds raised from entry fees and donations are to provide Niklas with necessary treatment.



The participants enjoyed beautiful scenery and culinary delicacies throughout the day as well as a challenging competition. Through the generous support of participants and club members, a sum of € 24,000 was collected. This is in addition to the € 8,000 which was donated previously for Niklas first two treatments. The Soroptimists are already looking forward to the second Salamanzar Rally in May next year. For more information on club activities, see SI Golde Südsteiermark (www.clubgoldes-soroptimist.at) and SI Vaduz Liechtenstein (www.soroptimist-vaduz.li).

Participants in the Salamanzar Rally of old-timers pose for a group photo with Niklas, whose treatments will be funded thanks to generous donations.

SI Erfurt

HELPING MIGRANTS MAKE GERMANY THEIR HOME

Ludmilla Zeitseva has arrived at a place, where she feels at ease, which she now calls her home. The place is Erfurt in Thuringia. When the native Ukrainian moved to Germany four years ago, she had to fight all the difficulties known to many migrants: a lack of language skills, little experience in day-to-day life, insecurity with regards to legal matters and, above all, little or no contact to Germans.

That Germany has now become her second home is also a result of the project 'Together not alone - get out of your four walls', initiated by *Brennessel e.V.*, a centre addressing violence against women that is sponsored by SI Erfurt and the Soroptimist Hilfsfond (charity fund) e.V. The project is directed specifically towards women migrants and offers various services, such as a language course, a meeting circle for singles, job application

training and a culture café. Currently, participants are mainly from the former Soviet Republic, Afghanistan, Vietnam, Mexico and the Dominican Republic.

According to Annette Taube, a pedagogue overseeing this project, for some women the project is the only chance to do something on their own, without their families. Besides exchanging cooking recipes and tips on daily life, topics such as tenancy law and contraception are discussed. Particularly popular are the shared hikes through Thuringia, where new contacts and friendships, also with German women, are forged. Language skills and cultural understanding can thus be enhanced, which boosts self-esteem and helps overcome barriers.

The close cooperation between SI Erfurt and the *Brennessel* organisation is long-standing. Thanks to the funds contributed by the club and grants from the Soroptimist Hilfsfond e.V. amounting to € 1500 the successful work of the 'Together, not alone' project can continue - much to the joy of *Brennessel's* head Uta Reber.

The donation will be used to purchase materials for application documents and a laptop. It will also help cover travelling expenses for shared leisure activities. And, to top it all off, some club members spontaneously agreed to give speeches at *Brennessel* events.

Friederike Franz, SI Erfurt



Joint excursions with participants in the *Brennessel* programme are rewarding intercultural experiences.

SI Rwanda

AN APPEAL FOR SOROPTIMIST MENTORS

With six clubs, SI Rwanda is a small but very active union working on a variety of projects, from building schools and training centres to setting up women's cooperatives for income-generating activities, helping AIDS-affected families of orphans and installing water purification units with solar panels. Rwandan members are now asking Soroptimists to help them with a mentoring programme specifically focused on sharing business knowledge and entrepreneurship skills.

Rwanda is very aware of the potential of entrepreneurship in the country's development process. Its Vision 2020 aspires to transform the country into a middle income, knowledge-based society that builds on a growing middle class of formal and informal entrepreneurs. Policies particularly emphasise human resource development through education and capacity building, as well as equal rights and opportunities for men and women. As a result, Rwanda is benefitting from a quickly growing private sector in which female entrepreneurs play an important role.

Many Rwandan Soroptimists have started a small business as well and hope to benefit from the

improving business climate in the country. Their enterprises include a bakery, a hotel, a restaurant, a brick factory and a construction company. Despite the growing attention to women entrepreneurs and equal participation, many challenges remain. A lack of managerial capacity, business training and technical skills are a major obstacle, especially for female entrepreneurs who seek to grow their businesses.

The Soroptimists of Rwanda have therefore recognised the need for mentoring, specifically focused on sharing business knowledge and entrepreneurship skills and are thus appealing to other Soroptimists with extensive business experience as an entrepreneur or manager for help. In collaboration with Eos Visions Rwanda, a social organisation, the Rwandan Soroptimists invite you to travel to their country and start a mentoring relationship with a business owner or manager. After an 11-day acquaintance programme, planned for November 2012, the mentoring relationship will continue online for the period of one year, during which mentors and mentees will work on a set of predefined business challenges and capacity-building needs, while forging friendships and acquainting themselves with different cultures. This is a wonderful opportunity to strengthen your Soroptimist commitment and to actively contribute to a Rwandan entrepreneur's personal and business development, while at the same time broadening your own horizons and business skills.

Programme details may be found on the website, www.soroptimisteurope.org. For additional information please contact SIE VP Gerda Huisman, g.c. huisman@rug.nl, or Carolien Vos of Eos Visions Rwanda, carolien@eos-visions.com, who will also be happy to send registration details.



Rwandan Soroptimists are keen to improve their entrepreneurial skills with the help of Soroptimist mentors.

SI Spittal/Millstättersee

TUTORING CHILDREN IN READING



SI Spittal member and initiator of the project Heidi Konrad tutors a young boy in reading.

Inspired by a programme in Germany, Past SIE President (2003-2005) and member of SI Spittal Heidi Konrad had the idea of tutoring pupils in reading in autumn 2011. Children, teachers and parents all reacted positively to the idea.

Club members were already aware of the deficiencies in reading abilities among some schoolchildren and were equally concerned about the later effects in the professional development and the social life of those affected. Within its capabilities SI Spittal therefore unanimously decided to take responsibility for the future of the children in its city and surrounding areas.

Preparations began with a talk by an educator for reading and a presentation of the project to the directors and teachers of the schools to be involved. The club also discussed their project with the respective school administrators and superintendents as well as the teachers who would decide which children required help and were willing to receive it. A letter to the parents was drafted, as was a consent form. The club even thought of insurance.

There were not enough Soroptimists to cover the demand for tutors so they invited other services clubs in Spittal to participate in the project. They also recruited among friends and family. A further 21 mentors volunteered after reading a newspaper article about the project.

In February, we began tutoring 48 of the 51 children earmarked for the programme at various local schools. Every week the volunteer tutor spends an hour reading, talking, playing and laughing with the child - and praising him or her for the progress - no matter how small. And the children are happy to participate. Either we choose the books, or the children themselves make suggestions to stimulate greater interest. I gave my 11-year-old pupil a book of fairy tales, which she reads with great pleasure. It is the first book in her very 'own library'.

Gerlinde Drewes, SI Spittal

Grant of Friendship

SPANISH CLUBS ROLL OUT THE RED CARPET



Spanish Soroptimists welcomed Nora Vicuña from SI Lima (left) at their Interclub Meeting in Madrid.

At the following Spanish Interclub meeting in Valle d'Arán it was agreed that each club would entertain the chosen Soroptimist for five days. The stay would begin in Madrid, to coincide with the Interclub meeting there on 21st April 2012.

After numerous e-mails criss-crossed the world, the grant was awarded to Nora, who wrote an inspiring application about her life as a Soroptimist. She travelled first to Madrid where she was welcomed by everyone at the Interclub meeting. From there she visited the Valle d'Arán, then on to Sitges-Vilanova, Marina Baixa and, finally, to the Costa del Sol.

The five Spanish clubs offered their first Grant of Friendship to Nora Vicuña, President of SI Lima (Peru). The idea developed from a Spanish Interclub meeting at Sitges-Vilanova in 2009.

Ellen de la Reguera of SI Costa del Sol was extremely enthusiastic about her experience in New Zealand, where she had an unforgettable time after being awarded one of their Friendship Grants. With her inspiring words ringing in our ears, we decided to offer a grant to our sisters in Latin America (SIA) for 2012.

It was a thoroughly rewarding experience for us, a project at national level, and easy and quick to organise. As we were all able to take part, the already good spirit of cooperation and friendship among the clubs has been further enhanced. And we have discovered that a Grant of Friendship is an ideal way to develop and promote friendship and union among Soroptimists of every country, often resulting in joint projects.

We can only encourage all Soroptimists to participate in a Grant of Friendship!

Rosa Cotta, SI Sitges-Vilanova

Support for Nepalese children

A GARDEN TOUR WITH A DIFFERENCE

The garden tour through South East England, organised by Club President Marietta Hageney (far right) and Andrea Hoffmann (far left) of SI Aalen/Ostwürttemberg, was not only an unforgettable experience in itself, but also generated funds for the construction of an orphanage for disadvantaged children in Nepal. More than 30 Soroptimists from all over Germany participated in the weeklong tour. The proceeds and their donations allowed the club to present Petra Pachner of the Children's Future Organisation with a cheque for € 10,000. Plans are already underway to organise another garden tour to England in May 2013 to see the azaleas in bloom!

Photo: opo



Inspiration for the visually impaired

AN INSTRUCTIVE CONCERT FOR CHILDREN

Peter Michalica, the Slovak virtuoso violinist who has himself experienced problems with his sight, decided to give blind and visually impaired children a gift of music.

As educators say, music helps both to strengthen the sense of hearing as well as to promote artistic expression in visually impaired children. So, under the patronage of SI Bratislava, a special concert called 'Light for the Soul' was held in Cikker's Museum in April for about 50 students from the Boarding School for Visually Impaired Children. They were treated to the beautiful works of classical composers and at the same time enjoyed Peter Michalica's interesting accompanying comments.

To further inspire them the maestro cited examples from history, such as the brilliant Austrian composer Maria Theresia von Paradis, who was born blind. Despite this challenge she composed some 40 pieces for piano and established a music school for girls. Both Handel and Bach suffered from cataracts and eventually went blind, but this disability never stopped them. The young people also heard compositions by Mikuláš Schneider Trnavský and other great composers such as Antonio Vivaldi, Nikolay Rimsky Korsakov and Ilja Zeljenka. Viera Bartošová accompanied maestro Michalica on the piano. After the concert club members served the children tasty homemade cookies. Everyone agreed this first concert of Peter Michalica was a real success and a true joy for the children.

Barbora Laucká, SI Bratislava

Peter Michalica captured the attention of his young audience with his virtuosity as a violinist and for his accompanying comments as well.

Photo: Zuzana Onderiková

Drug prevention campaign

HOW HALF A TABLET CAN CHANGE A LIFE

Drug prevention is extremely important, especially for young people. 17-year-old Giorgia Benusiglio went to a disco in Milano with friends one night, and they decided to see what would happen if they took half an ecstasy tablet. What followed was a week of hell. After undergoing a liver transplant involving a lot of complications, she made a vow: if she came out of hospital alive, she would campaign against drug use at schools.

SI Bellinzona was contacted about organising public meetings and immediately decided to provide financial support for the project. The club contacted the media, and the results were amazing – television coverage on TSI and TeleTicino, Italian language channels in Switzerland, and half or full pages in all the daily newspapers.

Giorgia Benusiglio met pupils from the Giubiasco secondary school in May and later spoke about her dramatic experience in front of an audience of about one hundred people. The impact of her words was chilling: 'Sooner or later, anyone who takes drugs has to pay for it. I paid immediately.'

Giorgia Benusiglio has since written a book about what happened to her, titled *Vuoi trasgredire? Non farti!*, which has been translated into several languages.

Emma Brugnoli, SI Bellinzona and Valli

After her dramatic experience with half an ecstasy tablet, Giorgia Benusiglio has campaigned tirelessly against drug use – with Soroptimist support.

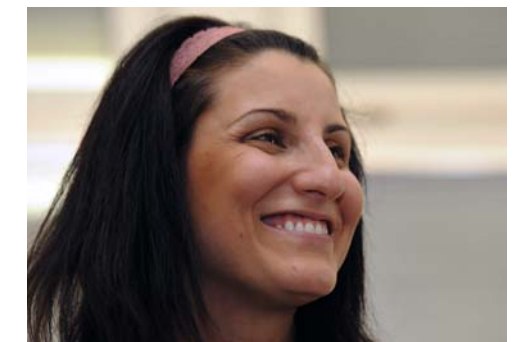
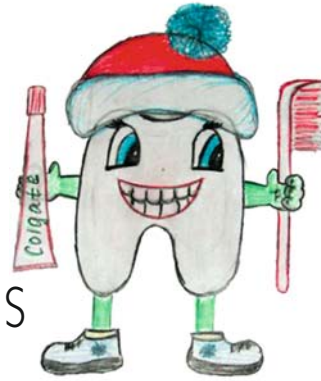


Photo: Corriere del Ticino/Nicola Demaldi

SI St Petersburg-Neva

LONG-TERM ASSISTANCE FOR ORPHANS



Above: The children of St Petersburg's orphanages produced pictures themed on oral hygiene for a competition.

Below right: The Russian magazine *Earnest* reported about the photo exhibition with MASHA children.

Already in existence for 13 years, SI St Petersburg-Neva has implemented many projects, some short-lived and others lasting for years. Among the latter projects is the patronage of the MASHA orphanage, which is under the aegis of St Petersburg Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, and was initiated in 2005 with the support of Finnish and Swedish Soroptimists. The club works in close cooperation with Alla Amelichkina, the headmistress of the orphanage, to determine the needs of the girls.

Friendship Link clubs SI Pforzheim (Germany) and SI Helsing (Denmark) have also supported the project. For example, the Danes contributed to buying winter boots for girls, something we do every year. Another project was translating into Danish the book *Favourite Residences of the Empress Maria Feodorovna in Russia and in Denmark*, written by club members Galina Korneva and Tatiana Cheboksarova. After the Danish version was published in 2008, Soroptimists from SI Helsing organised a book sale, resulting in a donation of more than € 2000 to the orphanage.

On Alla Alyoshina's initiative and thanks to the sponsorship of the company Sanesta Metal, the club held a photo exhibition called *Common Miracle* in 2011. Professional make-up artist Elena Bundas prepared the girls for the photo session. Professional photographer Olga Andriyash

took the photos, which were exhibited at a gallery, created and headed by club member Tatiana Radygina. A report about the photo exhibition with lots of photos of the girls was published in Russian magazine *Earnest*.

In collaboration with The St. Petersburg Parents charity, our club realised a two-part *Dentists for Children* project to improve oral hygiene in five orphanages of St Petersburg and surroundings. Some 100 children took part in this project, which included a cartoon demonstrating correct oral hygiene as well as practical training with dentists. In the second part, the children were asked to draw pictures on this theme. The best pictures were selected by voting in one of the social web communities. Prizes provided by Colgate-Palmolive were awarded to all participants. In line with the biennium theme, the final challenge was devoted to the topic of water with a visit to Aqualand as the grand prize.

In March 2012 MASHA celebrated its 15th birthday. The girls received badges made by a college, which is headed by club member Galina Gabriel. The performance of the talented 16-year-old violinist Nastya Golovina and her 10-year-old cousin Maxim was the highlight of the event. With the support of SI Pforzheim, our club took Nastya Golovina under its patronage five years ago. It was a fitting celebration of a long-standing and worthwhile project!

Alla Alyoshina, Tatiana Cheboksarova and Juliya Kulkova, SI St Petersburg-Neva



Raising money for cancer research

CLIMBING MONT VENTOUX FOR A WORTHY CAUSE



In Belgium alone, 37,000 new cases of cancer are reported every year; that means someone is diagnosed every 15 minutes. The organisations *Inspire2Live*, *Ven24Cancer Private Stichting* and *Alpe d'huZes* have set the goal to get cancer under control in the next 10 years. The hope is that people diagnosed with cancer should be able to live with

this dreaded disease, just like any other chronic disorder. However, extensive research is necessary to fulfil this ambitious goal. As this is very expensive, the *Ven24Cancer Private Stichting* decided to help finance this work through a co-operation with the *Vlaamse Liga tegen Kanker* (Flemish League against Cancer).

For the fourth time *Ven24Cancer* is staging a cycling tour to raise money. On 7th September 500 cyclists will climb the Mont Ventoux in Malauene, France – one, two, three or even four times! This year, for the first time, one hundred sponsored hikers will walk the 23-kilometer long slope with the cyclists.

This event is bound to gain the attention of the media and collect thousands of euros towards raising awareness of cancer and helping to find treatments. SI Bruges is supporting this campaign. Contributions – great or small – are welcome. For more information, please see the website www.ven24cancer.be.

With the support of SI Bruges Boudewijn Verhelst, the husband of Belgian Governor Marthe Claeys, will once again cycle for cancer research in September.

From Italy to Bulgaria

A CELEBRATION OF FRIENDSHIP

A group of 40 Italian Soroptimists celebrated three club anniversaries in Sofia in early June. Representatives from 14 Italian clubs, including the oldest, *Milano Fondatore (1928)*, attended the gala dinner. We enjoyed the warm atmosphere, exchanged presents and pennants, drank the good Bulgarian wine and danced together!

The programme for the visitors was eventful and interesting. We enjoyed the history, culture and nature of Bulgaria at the best time of the year, when the roses are in bloom in the valleys at the foot of the Balkan mountains. We discovered a nation with an ancient heritage ranging from the Thracian people, the 'Golden Knights' with their treasures, to the Greeks and Romans, like in Plovdiv, the former Philippopolis/ Trimontium, where we also met the members of the club of 'Ancient Plovdiv'.

One could almost call it the Soroptimist Travel Club. It is a wonderful way of sharing visits, experiences, friendship and know-how. We can talk about our programmes, our difficulties... our dreams! This is an excellent way to understand why and how Soroptimist is truly International!

Wilma Malucelli, IPP SI Italy



The group photo was taken in front of one of the historic façades visited during the stay in Bulgaria.



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

NEW SI/E CLUBS TO BE CHARTERED

6th October 2012

Tarsus Selale (Turkey)

Charter to be presented by

Kathy Kaaf, SIE President

Club President

Nuray Okyay

Muaffak Uygur Cad. Emek Apt.

No: 6/12

TR - Tarsus / Mersin

Phone: +90 532 545 6354

E-mail: nuray_okyay@hotmail.com

6th October 2012

Chernihiv (Ukraine)

Charter to be presented by

Ursula Sury, Deputy Governor

SI Switzerland

Club President

Oksana Kovalenko

6a Polubotka str. app. 20

UA - 14000 Chernihiv

Phone: +380 504 655 999

E-mail: nashabulochka@

rambler.ru

27th October 2012

Struga (Republic of Macedonia)

Charter to be presented by

Leena Viitaniemi

SIE Vice President

Club President

Katerina Vasileska

Budva 34a

MK - 6000 Ohrid

Phone: +389 778 551 55

E-mail: katerina.vasileska@gmail.com

12th January 2013

Gstaad Saanenland (Switzerland)

Charter to be presented by

Kathy Kaaf, SIE President

Club President

Franziska Brändli

Gärstereweg 6

CH - 3792 Saanen

Phone: +41 33 744 28 02

E-mail: f.braendli@bluewin.ch

FORTHCOMING EVENTS FOR SIE

14th-16th September 2012

Deutschsprachiges Freundschaftstreffen

Bad Ischl (Austria)

28th September - 2nd October 2012

9th European Friendship Days

SI Nicosia & SI Paphos (Cyprus)

6th October 2012

50th Anniversary

SI Essen (Germany)

3rd November 2012

75th Anniversary

SI Odense (Denmark)

8th December 2012

75th Anniversary

SI Aarhus (Denmark)

10th-11th July 2013

Governors' Meeting

Berlin (Germany)

12th-14th July 2013

SI/E Congress

Berlin (Germany)

INTERNATIONAL AWARENESS DAYS AND EVENTS

21st September

International Day of Peace

25th November

International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

10th December

Human Rights Day (celebrated by Sorooptimists worldwide)

