

# THE LINK

A global voice for women



**EDUCATE & EMPOWER**  
women to lead

**CSW 60**  
Women key to  
sustainable development

A federation for  
**AFRICA**

No. 2 - Biennium 2015 - 2017

**S**oroptimist International (SI) is a worldwide organisation for women in management and professions, working through service projects to build a better world for women. There are currently some 80,000 members in more than 3,000 clubs in 132 countries. Soroptimist International of Europe (SIE) is one of four SI Federations. It has some 34,000 members in 62 countries. Soroptimists inspire action and create opportunities to transform the lives of women and girls through a global network of members and international partnerships. For more information about the aims, activities and projects that characterise our organisation, please visit our SIE website at [www.soroptimisteurope.org](http://www.soroptimisteurope.org).

Soroptimist  International of Europe



*Thank you!*

**Dear Soroptimists**

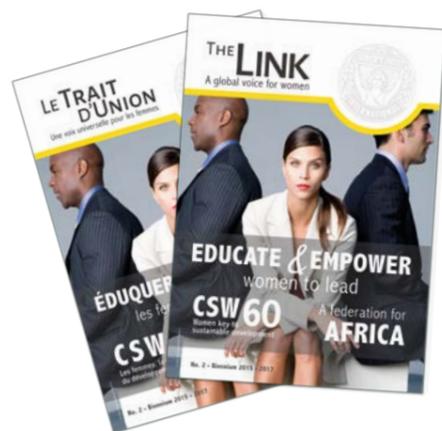
A big 'thank you' to everyone who sent in congratulations and comments on the first edition of **The Link** this biennium. We are very grateful for the feedback. It gives us the confidence moving forward that we're on the right path! Its success is largely due to the quality of the excellent articles written by those of you who agreed to give up time from their already packed schedules in order to share their experiences and thoughts with the rest of us. Their expertise is without doubt hugely appreciated by our readers. We express our deep gratitude and heartfelt thanks for their invaluable contribution.

We hope that this second edition of **The Link** will meet with your approval and enjoy the same level of success. Its main theme is **Women's Empowerment and Leadership**, with topical issues such as **CSW60** (the United Nations 60th Commission on the Status of Women), **International Women's Day**, the **Future African Federation** of Soroptimist International, **French Expression weekend**, and general **Federation news**.

Please feel free to send us your feedback. Our editorial team would love to hear from you.

Meanwhile, happy reading!

Kind regards,



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*Message from the President*

**Dear Soroptimist Friends**



It is with great pleasure that I am sending this second issue of **The 'new' Link** off to the printer: an issue dedicated to a challenging and yet timely subject such as the **Empowerment of Women and Girls**. Although the articles will present various aspects of Empowerment, I invite you to reflect on the fundamental role played by education in empowering future generations.

**STEM education and careers key to empowering women**

As a university professor – and as a Soroptimist – I know how important education is in changing the lives of those to whom we offer such an opportunity. Education is a fundamental feature of our mission and, as our records show, we have always invested energy and funds in offering opportunities for better and higher education. Our call now is to make a courageous choice towards the scientific fields. As much as I treasure the value of studying the humanities, we have to recognise that encouraging young women to enter the fields of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) will indeed give them a special stimulus towards true gender equality and leadership roles. Of course, in order to truly succeed on this new path we will need to enter a new battlefield and advocate against cultural gender biases.

**A Federation for Africa**

I further invite you to read the "special reports" on the SIFAF Meeting held in Madagascar last March. This was a pivotal meeting for our African sisters towards the realisation of their own Federation. We at Soroptimist International of Europe believe they are strong enough to stand and walk and decide on their own on this last stretch of their journey towards making the new Federation. Like parents letting go of their teenagers, we will watch their progress in trepidation and always be ready to offer our helping hand if and when they seek our support.

I hope this new issue of **The Link** will be as welcomed and appreciated as the previous one. Our Editorial Team has been working hard and with passion to honour our financial commitment with you in accepting your subscriptions. We sincerely hope that you will be as thrilled as we are with its content.

*Maria Elisabetta de Franciscis*

*President, Soroptimist International Europe*

June 2016

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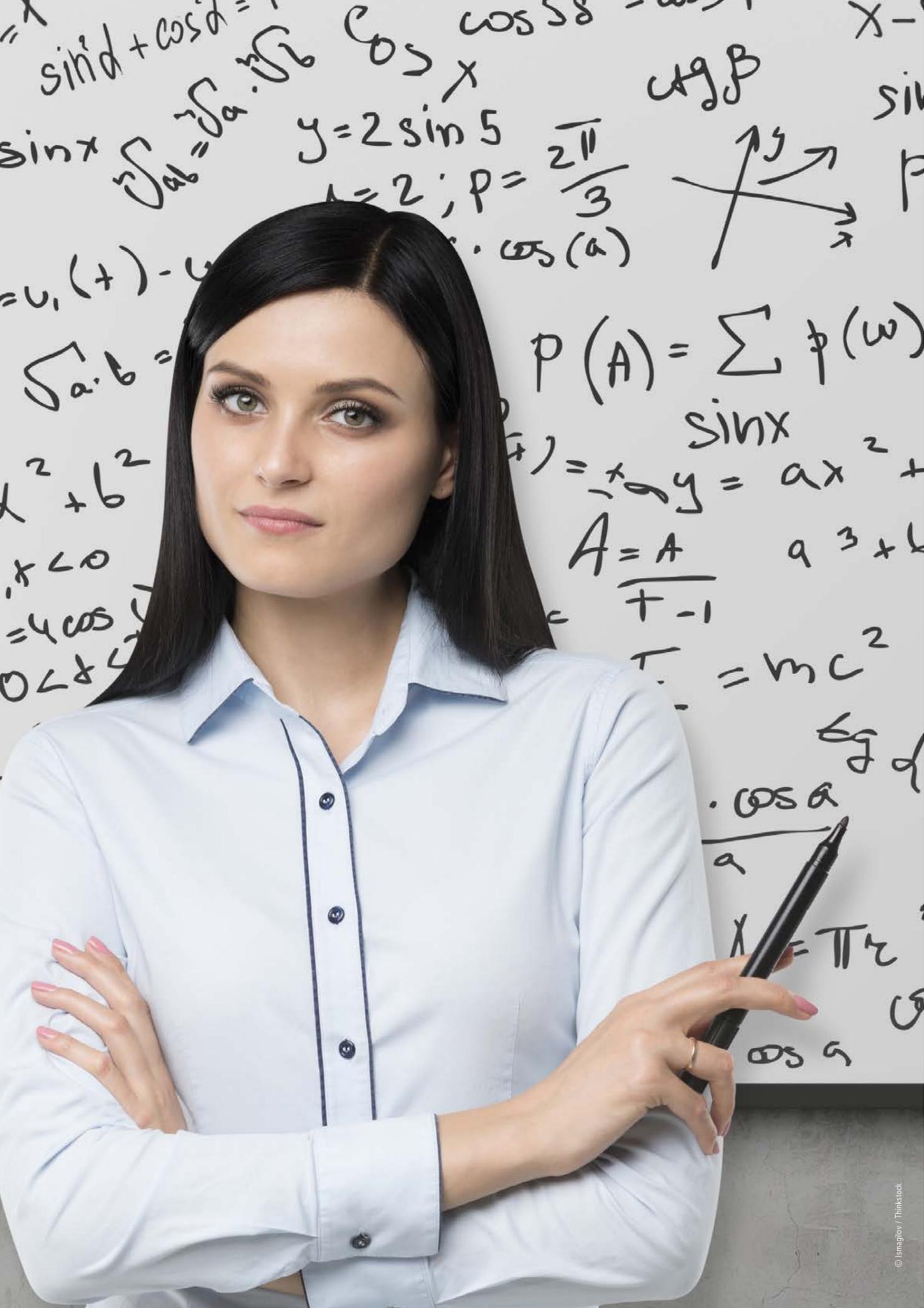
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*“... it is time to create a world where all women can meet their potential without impediment or prejudice”*

Christine Lagarde, Managing Director IMS



## Education and Empowerment

Maria Elisabetta de Franciscis, SIE President

As a university professor, I have dedicated my professional life to academic research and teaching. It is therefore not surprising that I am passionate about education and its benefits, and this passion prompted me to choose an education-related theme for my biennium. Clearly, many Soroptimists share this commitment with me because many Unions and Clubs of our Federation already spend thousands of euros every year to fund a wide range of projects in the fields of education and mentoring. The reasons are obvious.

Educating women and girls is the key to the development of a country and to the betterment of society. Education is also essential to freeing the world from gender oppression and economic constraints. Educated women are empowered and can reach leadership positions in the workplace as well as within the civil society. Let me substantiate this claim with some simple facts. In terms of economic growth, each additional year of schooling raises average annual gross domestic product by 0.37 per cent. On average, this additional year of schooling increases personal income by up to 10 per cent. Providing basic reading skills lifts some 171 million people out of poverty.

### Learning helps build equality

As we all know, the cards are stacked against women in the workplace in the best of conditions. The global labour force participation rate among 25-54 year-olds is 90 per cent men and 55 per cent women. Globally, women earn only three-quarters as much as men – even with the same level of education and in the same occupation. Sadly, there is no simple solution to remedy this situation because some of the problems are political and cultural. However, education is at the very least the foundation upon which change is built. Learning empowers women to help themselves and break the shackles of inequality. Therefore, promoting and supporting education are two very concrete ways that our organisation can offer to improve the lives of women and girls – whether it be teaching a young girl to read or providing a grant to a PhD student.

### Literacy creates a better world

UNESCO is a beacon for these principles by declaring that access to quality education is a fundamental human right and a prerequisite for human development. Its message and policies are totally in line with our own vision and mission: literacy empowers individuals, families and communities, and it improves their quality of life. Because of its “multiplier effect” literacy helps eradicate poverty, reduce child mortality, curb population growth, achieve gender equality and ensure sustainable development, peace and democracy.

### Invest in education to empower women

For all these reasons, I encourage Soroptimists to invest in education, and more specifically in the STEM disciplines. I can think of no better legacy for this biennium than the knowledge that we helped even more women and girls achieve their full potential.

As head of IMF Christine Lagarde puts it, *“Whether we are talking about providing primary education for girls in a village, or executive positions for women in business, it is time to create a world where all women can meet their potential without impediment or prejudice.”*

Let us be known for helping create this world.

## Empowerment - Leadership styles

Experts have identified three main characteristics that distinguish the leadership styles adopted by men and women. Which is yours and which works best?

### Transformational leadership

Where 'leaders and followers raise one another to focus on higher levels of morality and motivation'. This practice is characterised by idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration. Transformational leaders focus on emotions, pursue professional relationships with open lines of communication and share fully in their responsibilities.

### Transactional leadership

Emphasises exchanges and bargaining between leaders and subordinates that are typically economic, political or psychological in nature. Its primary characteristic is that nothing holds leaders and followers together. Transactional leaders motivate their followers by appealing to their self-interest. This style of leadership is built on the premise that team members or subordinates agree to obey their leader completely.

### Laissez-faire leadership

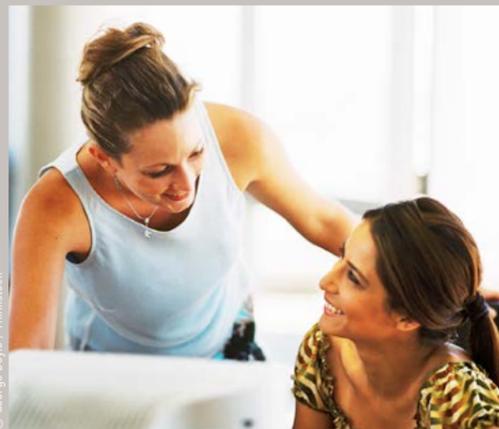
The laissez-faire type of leadership is marked by an overall failure to take responsibility for managing. In this case, leaders or managers leave subordinates to their own devices and provide little direction.

### Which is your leadership style?

Women tend to adopt the transformational leadership style, which encompasses being more kind, conscientious, emotionally flexible and open to experience than men, and because they are generally more relationship-oriented. Male leaders, on the other hand, are more likely to manifest transactional and laissez-faire leadership styles.

Management styles most closely associated with women tend to be better suited to the 21st century. These styles, which focus primarily on communication, cooperation, relationship building and team play, adapt better to high stress environments.

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# Soroptimist leadership

## A fundamental virtue

**Marie-Jeanne Bosia Berberat,**  
Past SI and SIE President / Honorary President of the Swiss Union

An entrepreneur throughout my entire professional life, founding President of the group 'Women, small and medium-sized businesses in Switzerland', founding President of the Soroptimist International Club of Lugano, later elected President of the Swiss Union, later on as President of the European Federation and finally as International President, I have always cared about worldwide entrepreneurial dynamics and even more so where they concern women. But how do they benefit a volunteer organisation?



Let us look at this from a wider point of view. Today, the themes of International Conferences on women and their status, centre on:

- Parity
- Women's rights
- Economics in relation to women
- Women in power and decision-making
- Education and training of women
- Women's enhancement and its institutional mechanism
- Women in the media.

These are also the essential topics addressed by Soroptimists.

During my SI presidency, I maintained that women's education was the key to progress. In fact, this became the theme SI brought to Beijing in 1995 for the Fourth World Conference on Women.

Let us now take a look at leadership in the Soroptimist environment and the responsibility of Presidents at all levels.

The role of a President, at whatever level of our organisation, is vital. Future candidates need to be aware that their

organisational skills will be a determining factor in the successful outcome of their tasks.

Every Soroptimist must be aware that she is the guarantor of the values for which our organisation stands.

Our motivation, our enthusiasm and our conviction that we have a positive part to play in society, are of utmost importance.

Every two years, a new President must bring her own personality, her dedication, her desire for action and her innovative spirit to the fore and at all levels.

Thanks to her amiable character and her availability, she will be able to enthuse, direct and inspire the voluntary work of members. She will need to build a network that will work in harmony with the needs of our Soroptimist society of today.

Good communication, through dialogue, transparency, attentiveness and contact is elementary for the unity of our organisation and for its future.

Still, she must never forget or neglect the friendship and solidarity that are and have always been the fundamental pillars of Soroptimist International and without which nothing would ever have been accomplished.

# Women's leadership

## Where are the women?

Anne Simon, SIE Executive Director

If you ask around you what people understand by leadership and what characterises a good leader, you will hear a different answer every time. Everyone has his or her own idea of what makes a good leader, but a common characteristic could be that 'Leaders are people who know how to achieve goals and inspire people along the way'.

### Why are there so few women leaders?

These days, women start their careers in business and other professions with the same level of intelligence, education, and commitment as men. At entry level, more than half an organisation's employees are female.

Yet, around the world, we see that the higher women climb up the corporate ladder, the more they seem to disappear. At the CEO level, worldwide, we are left with only three to four per cent who are women! So, what goes wrong?

### Is it a skill problem?

When looking at senior female managers, studies and experts all acknowledge women's excellence in efficiency and recognise their competence in leadership.

Women leaders also seem very capable of developing highly important competencies, such as developing others, inspiring and motivating others, building relationships, collaboration and teamwork. Women, in particular, also tend to be skilled in taking initiative, displaying integrity and honesty, and driving for results. Studies show that women are actually seen to be more effective than men in getting things done, being role models and delivering results.

Interestingly, the consulting firm McKinsey – which has done large studies on women and leadership – highlights that the higher women move up an organisation's ladder, the more positively they are perceived!

### So where is the gap?

Experts tend to agree that current work policies and practices, which have been around for years, favour the mismatch between how women are perceived compared to the qualities people tend to associate with male leaders.

Indeed, these organisational structures and work practices were designed long ago by men to respond to men's lives and development – as the family's only breadwinner. Remember that in those days women only represented a very small percentage of the workforce.

Since then, society has also changed. Technology and modern tools created an accelerated path to competitiveness, speeding up decision-making processes and generating increased stress for leaders.

McKinsey also notes that a crucial survival element for leaders is to manage their energy levels – be they men or women. Today's executives work hard: 60 per cent of senior executives toil more than 50 hours a week, and 10 per cent more than 80 hours a week. When it comes to women, many then come home from work only to sign onto a 'second shift': 92 per cent of women still manage all household tasks, such as meal preparation and child care.

What is known as 'work-life balance' is certainly a myth. Until we re-address the question as a societal issue at large and revisit our approach to work – and to leadership – society will continue to lack women leaders.

#### KEY FACTS

- 60% of executives work over 50 hours a week
- 10% of executives work over 80 hours a week
- 92% of women still manage all household tasks

Source: McKinsey Global Survey results – 2014 – "Moving mind-sets on gender diversity"



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# A key to gender equality

## Eliminate stereotypes and change social norms

We cannot address the question of women's empowerment in the same way everywhere. Women's position in society varies depending on whether they live North, South, East or West, in highly developed or low-to-middle income countries, or in rural or urban areas.

**But globally, one thing is clear: Women and Girls still lag behind men and boys in most key areas such as rights, opportunities and capabilities.**

Thanks to continuing pressure by institutions, such as the United Nations or Council of Europe – and of Women's movements – most states now recognise 'empowerment' to be fundamental to the rights of Women and Girls. Yet, gender inequalities, even in the most developed countries of the globe, still persist.

### World leaders mobilise

At the last G7, world leaders agreed that empowering Women and Girls and achieving gender equality are key to the development of open and prosperous societies.

They identified key barriers to global gender equality: discriminatory laws; gender stereotypes in societies; low levels of education; lack of access to health care; and the disproportionate effect of poverty on Women.

*"{Women's empowerment}....is a fundamental right, but what is often overlooked is that societies and economies cannot be successful without gender equality"* - Angela Merkel

### A matter of social justice?

Around the globe, opportunities for Women and Girls are either enabled or limited within their own countries. In essence, social norms are shaped by national and local culture, which, in turn has an impact on groups, individuals and the relationships between them. Empowering Women and Girls is therefore the only way to promote greater equality in their relationships with men and boys, within their families and in society.

Improving the lives of Women and Girls starts with reducing gender gaps. But most importantly, it means challenging very deeply rooted cultural and social norms.

Empowering women and girls and achieving gender equality is a long-term process that requires change at a number of levels. It is the responsibility of national states to design proper policies and of the private sector to create equal opportunities in the workplace, but also of civil society which can help change those norms and stereotypes. Last, but not least, it is up to Women and Girls themselves – as well as men and boys – to drive change. Aren't we, as mothers and fathers, the key agents of change?



“ Cardiovascular disease kills more women than cancer ”

## Empowerment and health

**Rita De Groot**, Belgian doctor and member of SI Belgium's Antwerp Club, answers our questions on the impact of health on women's empowerment – and vice versa.

**The Link:** *Health development has seen incredible progress over the last decades and has been key to the development of women's status and at the heart of their empowerment. Yet we see more and more women affected by non-communicable diseases such as heart problems. Could gender equality at work be to blame?*

**Rita:** Non-communicable diseases – by definition not passed on from one person to the next – make up the world's number one cause of death: three in five people die as a result of cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, or chronic disease of the respiratory tract.

### Cardiovascular disease kills more women than cancer

Women-specific risk factors include smoking, especially in combination with the contraceptive pill, physical inactivity and being overweight. Relatively well protected until menopause, heart attacks are less frequent in women, but more fatal. When women reach the age of 55, the rate of cardiovascular events reaches that of men, and then exceeds it.

Is this linked to the emancipation of women? Equal work, equal pay, equal diseases? Over the last few decades, our way of life has changed considerably. With the steady increase in the number of women taking up smoking since the 1970s – a habit then more reserved for men – the number of associated diseases has gone through the roof. Besides cancer and respiratory diseases,

such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, we must not forget cardiovascular disease, which causes the largest number of deaths. Smoking is responsible for half of heart attacks in women under 50. The 'female' warning signs tend to be nausea, 'cold sweats', breathlessness and feeling faint: the same symptoms seen at times of stress or during menopause.<sup>1</sup>

**The Link:** *Soroptimists in Belgium are very involved in health projects. Do you believe civil society organisations need this?*

**Rita:** Soroptimist International Belgium invests a lot in national health and worldwide projects. Like the United Nations, we believe that: "Giving everyone across all age groups the means to live a healthy life and to promote their well-being is essential for sustainable development, and the best way to improve the lives of the world's populations."

The health of the entire population – and women in particular – is something we care about very deeply.

<sup>1</sup> - Sources: [www.belgium.be/publication\\_and\\_research](http://www.belgium.be/publication_and_research) / [www.doctissimo.fr](http://www.doctissimo.fr) / [www.ewl.org](http://www.ewl.org) / [www.liguecardioliga.be](http://www.liguecardioliga.be) / [www.news-medical.net](http://www.news-medical.net) / [www.researchportal.be](http://www.researchportal.be) / [www.un.org](http://www.un.org)

“ ...be determined ... take initiatives ... dare! ”

## Self-awareness, determination, initiative and daring:

### Viorica's tips for reaching the top



**Viorica Aniculesei**, member of the SI Club Bucharest since 2005, shares her views on barriers to leadership for women in Romania. Viorica has worked as an accountant, auditor and tax consultant and has been CEO of her own private accountancy firm in Bucharest since 2000. She is married and has two grown up children.

**The Link:** *While Romanian women attain a very good level of education, the country as a whole seems to have a very low number of women attaining leadership positions. As a successful business leader yourself, what do you see as the major barriers for women today?*

**Viorica:** Contrary to some current misconceptions, there are many women in leadership positions in Romania, at all levels of the professional hierarchy, in state-owned, private or freelance businesses. I presume Romanian society owes this to former communist policies regarding the advancement of an equal number of men and women to management positions. Paradoxically, the post-communist 1990s upset the gender balance, although not too dramatically.

I would say that, overall, the major barriers for Romanian women today are less related to gender discrimination and rather more to economic and cultural factors. I remember the tall 'barriers' I myself had to get over when I started my firm: lots of costs, expenses and taxes related to setting up and running the business; no support for young entrepreneurs from governing professional bodies; administrative bureaucracy; the nail-biting waiting process to obtain legal approvals; and high commission and interest rates at banks.

A greater obstacle for most women today though is the community's attitude to male and female social roles. Romanian

society is still very traditional and a woman is seen as a 'must-be' wife and mother, meaning she must spend time on cooking, house cleaning, babysitting or entertaining her husband. But I believe that women themselves are the greatest barrier of all: the way they see themselves, the way they understand their status and how they chose to play their role in society.

To conclude, I would say that I think a good level of education is only the pre-requisite of attaining a leadership position but not a guarantee that this will be achieved.

**The Link:** *What advice would you give to younger women interested in climbing the career ladder to leadership?*

**Viorica:** It is so hard to choose the best advice to give them, but firstly I would tell them **to be determined** because determination involves hard work, development of abilities and building self-confidence. I would also advise them to **take initiative** – since initiative is a measure of self-sustainability based on a person's own judgement and the ability to act and make decisions. These are both essential qualities for a leader. I would further suggest that they should **dare**, and daring means having the courage to look for opportunities and new challenges all the time. Finally, I would tell younger women never to forget that they themselves are the limit to how far they can go or reach in life.



“Women in Iceland form 47% of the labour force”



Gudbjörg Linda RAFNSDOTTIR, Professor of Sociology, University of Iceland



Gudbjörg Andrea JONSDOTTIR, Director, The Social Science Research Institute, University of Iceland

# Why is Iceland the best country for women?

The Link interviewed **Gudbjörg Linda Rafnsdóttir** and **Gudbjörg Andrea Jónsdóttir** – both leading academics and members of the Soroptimist Union of Iceland’s **Reykjavík Club** – to discover why their country has such an excellent record in women’s equality and empowerment.

**The Link:** *The Global Gender Gap index*<sup>1</sup> ranks Iceland as the best country for women, with outstanding economic participation by women and women’s empowerment in general. What makes Iceland so successful for gender equality?

**Andrea and Linda:** Iceland shares its welfare model and gender regime to a large extent with the rest of the Nordic countries, which also score highly on the Global Gender Index.

The Nordic Welfare model is known as an active welfare and gender regime. It promotes ‘defamilisation’, which has been defined as the degree to which individual adults can uphold a socially acceptable standard of living, independent of family relationships, either through paid work or through social security provisions. Thus, **Iceland has moved away from a male breadwinner model** by supporting a range of policies to strengthen women’s positions in the labour market, economic independence and the reconciliation of work and family. Parents get nine months’ paid-parental leave; fathers and mothers are each given three months, and together they get three months to share. There are inexpensive municipal childcare facilities for pre-school children, a legal right for parents to return to their jobs after parental leave and to stay at home if their child is sick.

**The Link:** *Soroptimists are very active in projects that support the empowerment of women. Is the Civil Society recognised as a key partner to the State?*

**Andrea and Linda:** Women in Iceland have the highest labour force participation rate among OECD countries; they form 47 per cent of the labour force, and work on average 35 hours a week. Nevertheless, a gender segregated labour market remains in Iceland and there is still a lack of gender diversity in business leadership. As a response to that, the Icelandic government has implemented a 40 per cent gender quota on the boards of corporations and pension funds (2013) and on government committees, councils and boards (2008).

Overall, **Iceland has progressive legislation on gender equality and was one of the first countries in the world to pass general laws on gender equality.** The Civil Society and political context are crucial if a gender policy is to succeed. These conditions exist in Iceland.

1 - <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2015/economies/#economy=ISL>

# Women empowerment SIE Union and Club projects



## UKRAINE

**Soroptimists from Uzhgorod in Ukraine** have initiated the ‘Soroptimist Mother and Child (M&C) Educational Centre’ project with the objective of empowering **240 women and 300 children in 2016.**

Currently, they are providing seminars on personal and professional development along with business start-up workshops for 25 women. Three of the women trained will be eligible for microloans for their start-ups, as well as coaching to help them excel in their field. Loans will be repayable in a year which will in turn provide microloan funds for other women’s start-ups. This will also allow women to get a good knowledge of business and training experience.

**The M&C club will provide training, mentoring and support to 240 women and girls.**

The M&C educational centre’s mission is to:

- empower women in their personal and professional growth through training and personal support
- welcome and nurture all children
- assist mothers and others to meet the challenges of parenting
- offer classes, workshops and mentoring opportunities.



## THE NETHERLANDS

Members of the **Dutch Soroptimist Club of Apeldoorn** organised a series of **14 empowerment-training sessions for teenage mothers.** Each session welcomed a group of 8-10 girls, and sought to **help them build confidence in order to pursue their studies and gain access to better economic opportunities.**

The trainers’ **professional expertise** was a key factor as, for various reasons, many of the young mothers taking part came from positions of social isolation. The goal was, therefore, to help them improve their lives for the better by helping them **build confidence and ambition and create a more positive view of their future.** Apeldoorn Club members **raised an impressive 22,500 Euros** for this project, from which some **140 teenage mothers have already benefitted!** The project itself received significant local media coverage.

## HAÏTI

**Port au Prince Soroptimists in Haiti** initiated a project to build a shed housing a **grain mill for women.** This mill will enable women of the MPCs Association (Mouvement Paysan Chambrun Sarazin /Peasant Movement Chambrun Sarazin) to grind their grain locally. Before, they had to pay transportation costs to travel to another city to do so. Their expenses will decline and they will have more time to devote to their business and family activities, so the project will improve income, as well as women’s working hours and conditions.

The project includes training sessions to teach them how to manage the mill, maintain the facilities, meet environmental sanitation standards, and manage production and product sales.

Funds generated will cover operating costs and pay employees while future profits will be used to finance other MPCs Association activities such as building a poultry facility.





## The CSW

The **Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)** contributes to the establishment of global standards for equality between the sexes and women's empowerment. Every year during its annual session, the representatives of the United Nations member states, United Nations entities, and representatives of civil society (NGOs accredited by ECOSOC) evaluate the progress made and gaps in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 1995 (reference document for the struggle for women's equality at the international level) in order to achieve the objective 'Planet 50-50 by 2030'.

*"According women absolute parallel status would be the surest mark of civilisation, and it would double the intellectual forces of mankind."*

Stendhal 1783 - 1842

'SO LONG AS THERE ARE WOMEN'

# Conclusions

## 60th Commission on the Status of Women 2016

Marie-Claude Bertrand, SIE Vice President Communication

The conclusions of CSW60's 14-24 March 2016 session, with its headline theme of 'Women's empowerment and the link to sustainable development', highlight that if the 2030 50-50 agenda is to be achieved, it is vital to address the multiple needs - humanitarian, economic, social, educational, cultural, and health - of women and girls. The commission also agreed on the importance of a specific urgent approach to call for an end to violence against women and girls.

The commission repeatedly reiterated that **realising full human potential and sustainable development will not be possible if we continue to deny women and girls their human rights, including the right to achieve their potential.**

The commission reaffirmed that implementing **the right to education is helping** to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, human rights, sustainable development and the eradication of poverty. Girls must receive **quality education** and be able to easily access not only primary school, but also higher education and vocational training. This is the **key to achieving gender equality, the empowerment of women and girls and the realisation of their full potential.**

The findings **urge Governments to strengthen the leadership and participation of women** in all areas of sustainable development decision-making, to strengthen

normative, legal and political frameworks, to adopt laws that criminalise violence against women and girls, to ensure they are applied, and to **promote and protect the human rights of all women and girls** including their sexual and reproductive health and rights.

The commission **invites men, boys and community leaders to fully commit to change** and to be strategic partners of gender equality, the empowerment of women and girls and the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls, both in public and in private.

With regards to financing, in order to achieve the objectives set out in the 2030 Agenda, **governments agreed on the need to increase investment.** Developed countries must not only honour their commitment to help developing countries but increase it substantially.

The Commission recommended four draft resolutions to ECOSOC including measures relating to: fighting against the impact of HIV/AIDS on women and girls; women and children hostages - including those imprisoned during armed conflicts; Palestinian women: urgent gender data needed for the 2030 Agenda Planet 50-50.

We now must hope that states will quickly take measures to put an end to violence, abductions and human trafficking, and that women and girls receive equal human rights to men and gain the freedom to access their full potential on par with men.

# Making an impact at CSW60

Sigrid AG, SIE Vice President Advocacy

CSW is a unique arena for leaders in gender equality and women's empowerment, such as Soroptimists, to influence the UN agenda and ensure that the Beijing Platform for Action is integrated to the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

Article 71 of the UN Charter<sup>1</sup> guarantees to civil society the right to intervene and work with governments. Soroptimist International (SI) has consultative status with the UN's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), which oversees UN activities and policies promoting human rights. SI representatives can request agenda items, submit written statements for circulation to all members of the council, make oral statements at meetings, and contribute to other UN gatherings and seminars.

President Elisabetta headed the delegation of 20 European Soroptimists to CSW this year. Soroptimists from Italy, Iceland, Germany, the Netherlands and Norway attended daily morning briefings, seminars, meetings and other events, and were also

able to meet their respective country delegations to advocate for the Soroptimist mission.

SIE is uniquely positioned with UN centres located in Geneva, Nairobi, Paris, Rome and Vienna. Our UN representatives are appointed by SI, and work as volunteers spending long hours at UN centres giving a collective voice to improve the lives of women and girls.

1 - The Charter of the United Nations - Article 71: The Economic and Social Council may make suitable arrangements for consultation with non-governmental organizations which are concerned with matters within its competence. Such arrangements may be made with international organizations and, where appropriate, with national organizations after consultation with the Member of the United Nations concerned.



From left to right :  
SIE President Maria Elisabetta DE FRANCISCIS  
SIE President Maria Elisabetta DE FRANCISCIS with SI President Elect Mariet VERHOEF-COHN  
SIE Past President Kathy KAAF (2011-2013) and SIE Vice President Sigrid AG at one of the UN Women morning briefings  
SI's two UN reps in New York, Bette LEVY and Marie D'AMATO-RIZZLI. SIE is in the process of appointing two more reps to NY



**UNITED NATIONS** SIE priorities highlighted in UN Italy website article on CSW60

## Education and working with institutions

Leading the SIE delegation, our President emphasised to CSW60 delegates and participants how Soroptimists support the Commission's goals through their focus on Education. **"We promoted two main messages"**, said Elisabetta, **"Educate to Lead"**, (demonstrated by an existing project to rebuild schools in Nepal), and **'Educate to eliminate violence against women'**."

She also highlighted the active role played by Soroptimists in Italy, particularly their successful collaboration **with institutions**, such as: providing courtrooms for hearing minors who are victims of violence; drawing up a protocol with the Italian Ministry of Education, Universities and Research (MIUR) for training teachers on gender issues in schools, and another with Unioncamere on women's education; and their support for the introduction of the **'White Rose Code'** in emergency departments, bringing together a network of local health

authorities, public prosecutor's offices, police forces and voluntary associations for prompt intervention to protect victims of violence.

Other examples included the promotion of **job opportunities** for women, and the implementation of **'dedicated rooms' in Italian police (Carabinieri) stations** for handling reports of violence in privacy. **"I believe it to be the first time that the General Command of the Carabinieri has given specific instructions as a result of working with an association like ours"**, says de Franciscis.

We look forward to reviewing SIE's progress on these issues in July 2017 at the 21<sup>st</sup> Congress of the European Federation at the **Fortezza da Basso** in Florence.

Read the full article here: <http://www.onunitalia.com/2016/03/28/soroptimist-e-avanzamento-delle-donne-de-franciscis-formazione-e-collaborazioni-con-le-istituzioni>

# Soroptimists influence CSW60

Soroptimists had the opportunity to promote our goals and actions to inspire over 8,000 delegates attending this year's 60th UN Commission on the Status of Women and to advocate how best to include and empower women through sustainable development, eliminating gender-based violence and promoting the human rights of women and girls.

**CSW60 primary theme: Women's empowerment and its link to sustainable development**

Already a key issue for SI, women's empowerment is increasingly important for sustainable development. Our delegates were able to highlight Soroptimists' strategic '3Es': 'Educate, Empower and Enable' that underpin project work done by our clubs across the globe.

Empowerment can be thought of as a multi-dimensional process that helps people gain control over their own lives, as contributors and leaders in their communities. For women and girls without empowerment, it will be impossible to achieve gender equality.

By better involving women at all stages, gender mainstreaming will become almost automatic and drive the empowerment of women and girls.

**CSW60 review theme: The elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls**

This year's SI statement to CSW60 focused on actions that can be taken to eliminate violence against women and girls across all countries and communities. You can read the full statement on our website: [www.soroptimistinternational.org](http://www.soroptimistinternational.org).

By advocating the elimination of violence and empowering women and girls, Soroptimists at CSW60 contributed to actions that will be taken by NGOs, civil society, government and international agencies over the next fifteen years.



Top : Soroptimist International UN Representative Bette LEVY, Vice Chair of NGO CSW New York, during the Consultation Day for CSW60 in New York.  
Middle : Sam CHERITON, Cheri FLEMMING and Soroptimist International President Yvonne SIMPSON  
Left : Infographic courtesy of UN Women

## INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

# For Soroptimists, every day is International Women's Day

On the occasion of International Women's Day, Soroptimists renew their pledge to combat any form of violence against women and girls, and to support women's and girls' education and empowerment. This year again, Soroptimists have been very active as you can see here in this impressive list of our Union and Club actions!

### FRANCE

The **Union of France** participated in an interactive session on 'Who are the industriElles?' which is the culmination of a yearlong drive to encourage women to pursue careers in technology. SI France has presented three 'Women & Technology' prizes. This activity is in line with the biennium theme 'Soroptimists Invest in Education' with particular focus on women and girls choosing career paths in STEM fields (science, technology, engineering, mathematics).



### AUSTRIA

**SI Austria Clubs** planned a wide range of public events from self-defence training and film viewings to talks on subjects such as women in business, equal opportunities for women and single parenting.



### DENMARK

**SI Denmark** took this opportunity to raise awareness of its work to stop trafficking. They have financed a health clinic for victims, offered vocational training before the women return to their respective countries and funded medical treatment and education for young victims who have gone back to Lithuania.



### SLOVENIA

**SI Ptuj** has organised its eleventh International Women's Day concert, featuring well-known musicians who support the Club's projects. Proceeds from ticket sales and donations are given to causes aimed at improving the position of women and helping socially vulnerable families.

### RWANDA

**SI Rwanda** organised marches in areas where SI Clubs are located as part of the national celebration of the theme, 'Step it up for gender equality, Strive for women empowerment'. They also organised a radio broadcast and supported local child mothers by funding their health insurance.



### BULGARIA

**SI Club Varna** has collaborated with other women's organisations to hold a conference on Women for Development, which will discuss the importance of taking a proactive position on social issues.

### MADAGASCAR

**SI Madagascar** supported women prisoners with children and organised a conference with women magistrates to inform women from slums about their legal rights in cases of domestic violence.



Many more projects/actions are being realised as you read this article! For Soroptimists, every day is International Women's Day and we will continue to advocate for women's rights and to work together with international institutions such as the United Nations, the Council of Europe and the European Women's Lobby in their efforts towards more effective gender equality.

### HAÏTI

**SI Club Port au Prince** sponsored a talk by a specialist highlighting the problems faced by women who became disabled after the 2010 earthquake in Haiti. They have also donated personal hygiene products and toiletries to women inmates of an urban correctional facility.



### ITALY

Responding to an initiative of the Ministry of Universities and Research and the Ministry for Equal Opportunities, several clubs of **SI Italy** participated in special events to encourage girl students to study STEM subjects. Soroptimists addressed the issue of equal opportunities at these events.

# Programme Directors' training Lisbon



## Joint seminar for Union and Single Club participants

Marlène Van Benthem, SIE Programme Director & Caroline Junier, SIE Assistant Programme Director

The beautiful city of Lisbon hosted the SIE Training Seminar for Union and Single Club Programme Directors (PDs) from 20 to May 22, 2016. This first interactive Seminar of the biennium was intended as a platform for exchanges on programme and advocacy practices.

The 39 participants came from 29 Soroptimist European countries, representing 18 Unions and 11 Single Clubs. Anne Simon, Executive Director and Bintou Koïta, Programme and Advocacy Officer at SIE HQ, Marlène Van Benthem, SIE Programme Director (PD), Caroline Junier, SIE Assistant Programme Director and Sigrid Ag, SIE Vice President Lobbying, made up the Seminar's Training team, led by Renata Trottmann Probst, SIE President-elect.

A series of plenary sessions, workshops and discussions took place throughout the day and a half of training in a city centre hotel. Workshops tailored to each participant's specific needs

were held for the representatives of the Unions and Single clubs - the first time the latter had attended such a Seminar.

### Defining and strengthening the PDs' role

The first half-day's training addressed broader themes such as the organisation, its mission, vision and operation, and touched on strategy. During the workshops, participants focused on the role and responsibilities of their function at Union or individual Club level, their scope, and effective networking. The debate very quickly turned to the critical need for the PDs to reintegrate the Board of the Unions and Clubs, in order to better carry out their function at the core of Soroptimist activity.

### Importance of reporting

Programme, advocacy and communication were the main themes of the second day. Discussion took place highlighting the tools available as well as the role and the importance of the PFRs, and then how to adapt the latter to facilitate the work of the editors and correspond to the expectations of the PDs and SIE.

### Soroptimists fight illiteracy in partnership with My Book Buddy – Biennium project

The key topic was the discussion of the Federation Project for 2015-2017. In conjunction with the theme of our SIE President, Maria Elisabetta de Franciscis, **Soroptimists Invest in education**, it aims to give girls greater access to books. In partnership with **My Book Buddy**, a Dutch organisation, the concept is to provide schools, shelters and refugee camps with mini-libraries of books for children and at the same time to show teachers how to administer a loaning scheme. Children also make the library resource available to their families. The workshops helped sound out the PDs with regards to the feasibility of the project and how best to implement it.

### Building networks and sharing expertise

This seminar offered a great opportunity for everyone to come together, to create networks of expertise, to share the many practices and competences spread across the Unions and Single clubs, to raise concerns, and above all to strengthen ties between Unions, Clubs and the Federation.

### Experiencing Lisbon together

There was also some time for a spot of sightseeing. A wonderful tuk-tuk tour of the city and the opportunity to sample some local Lisbon food provided unforgettable shared moments.

### A word of thanks

We would like to thank Anne Simon and Bintou Koïta of SIE HQ, and Alexandra Costa and Ivone Matos in Lisbon for their great organisational skills, and all of the SIE Programme & Advocacy team. To conclude, we extend our gratitude to the participants for their commitment, enthusiasm and creativity.

*"Our Programme is our 'raison d'être', so it's important we invest in the knowledge and skills of the Soroptimists responsible for this work"*



Top - The participants enjoying the fabulous view of Lisbon  
 Middle left - Marlène VAN BENTHEM (SIE Programme Director) and Caroline JUNIER (SIE Assistant Programme Director)  
 Middle right - Caroline JUNIER (SIE Assistant Programme Director) and Renata TROTTMANN PROBST (SIE President Elect)  
 Bottom - SIE Unions and Single Clubs Programme Directors during a breakout session



*“310% increase  
in the number of  
reports submitted  
since 2011”*

# The importance of reporting

## *Why the world needs to know*

Bintou Koïta, SIE Programme and Advocacy Officer

### Don't be shy - tell us about your projects !

How often do we hear Clubs talking passionately about their projects and the amazing experiences they have had helping women?

Sadly, only a small amount of what is actually happening at Union and Club level is reported through the **SIE Programme Focus Report (PFR) system**. Indeed, there is a lot more being done in local communities and the PFR offers an invaluable tool to help Unions and Clubs bring these projects out into the limelight.

Most Soroptimist projects – all *locally* designed, *locally* funded, and *locally* implemented – demonstrate clearly the overwhelming challenges women and girls still face today.

The PFR reporting system showcases the wonderful work women do for other women, and has so many notable benefits:

- It acknowledges the work done at Union and Club level
- It celebrates members' projects
- It lets the world know about members' work
- It helps to attract new members – results of the 2014 SIE Union and Single Club Membership Survey show clearly that 'the quality of projects' is one of the biggest incentives for women to become Soroptimists.

Huge efforts were made during the last biennium to improve the PFR system, which in turn led to a rise of more than 310 per cent in the number of reports posted by Soroptimists since 2011. This is both impressive and positive, and demonstrates how important and useful it is for Clubs to take pride in reporting their efforts to help other women!

### The impact of reporting – acting as a global voice for women

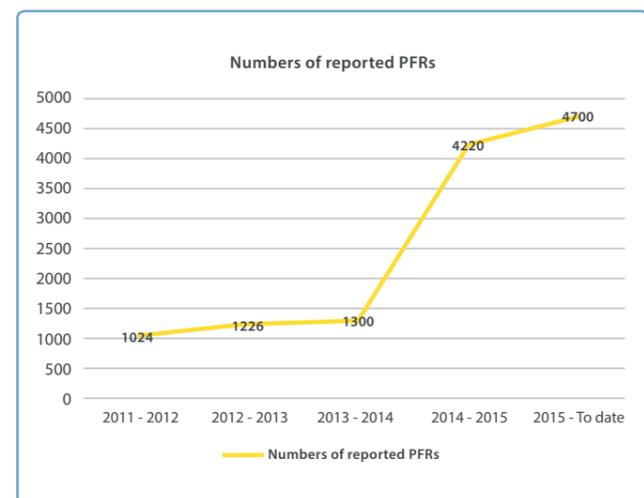
It is important to remember that Soroptimists' responsibility goes way beyond what they achieve in their local communities. They are uniquely placed to provide a realistic assessment of daily changes in society and act as a sort of 'barometer' for women's rights in the countries where they live.

The United Nations granted our organisation General Consultative Status at ECOSOC and participatory status at the Council of Europe. Such privileged status brings with it obligations and a responsibility for our organisation to provide them with evidence that demonstrates what we are actually doing to improve the lives of women and girls.

Indeed, being able to provide such information has allowed SIE to enjoy fruitful collaboration both with the CEDAW Committee and the Commission on the Status of Women in New York.

This is why it is crucial for Soroptimists everywhere to report their activity! SIE representatives at the United Nations and the Council of Europe need grassroots information to report on the challenges faced by women in different countries.

Every project matters and through reporting, Soroptimists can make the difference and *act as a global voice for women!*



# 19th Journées d'expression Française

Marie Claude Bertrand, SIE Vice President Communication

The very first JEF (Journées d'expression Française) event was organised in Lyon in 1980 under the chairmanship of Yvette Brun. It was Rolande Becker, a member of **SI Lyon** and Janine Durand a member of **SI Valenciennes**, both then Governors of the **French Union**, who came up with the idea. The event is held every other year in a French-speaking city and with a specific social theme.

In tribute to the founder, the French Union invited the **SI Lyon** and **Lyon Tête d'Or** Clubs to organise the 2016 weekend – in Lyon.

The chosen theme, **“French of all colours”**, brought together more than 180 Soroptimists from French speaking countries, as well as several British and Dutch friends, all of whom much appreciated the excellent programme of cultural events. Rolande Becker, and Yvette Brun gave a very moving presentation.

The Link interviewed **Marie Anne Thivolle**, a German Professor from Germany and **SI Lyon Tête d'Or** Secretary, who answered our questions on behalf of the SI Lyon and Lyon Tête d'Or Clubs.

### The Link: Why did you choose this particular theme?

**Marie Anne :** We wanted French to be represented through all its cultural, linguistic, geographical, oral and lexical diversity. Its accents and variations enrich our language: as Henriette Walter\* said: ‘... We wanted to show that our language is neither out-dated nor ossified, but rather how it can and should provide a bridge between cultures, countries and continents...’

### The Link: In your opinion has the goal you set been achieved and, if so, how?

**Marie Anne :** These gatherings have confirmed that French opens the door to liberty and integration both personally and professionally. French is a very rich language and each participant, regardless of age and origin, has played a part in proving this.

### The Link: What are your recommendations going forward to ensure the continued success of the French Expression days?

**Marie Anne :** We wish the event a long and fruitful future, and hope that above all it remains a lively, animated occasion, helping to remind us that the language's vitality, and the ability to master it, offer the keys to success, cohesion and fraternity - in all its colours.



Marie Anne Thivolle

Top left - Rolande BECKER, Governor of the Union Française, co-founder of the JEF and Commandeur de l'Ordre National du Mérite Réseau Alliance FFC 1939-45.

Top right - Françoise LATHUILLE SI France President and Yvette LEBRUN

Middle left - Chantal LANGE SI LYON President and slammers : Nelly GABRIEL and Alidéa GALUZZI

Middle right - Micheline CHABANON-COZZONE Présidente SI Lyon Tête D'Or avec Isabelle BARY, Salma KOJOK et Rouja LAZAROVA - francophone literary writers

Above - SI Luxembourg, Switzerland and France Presidents, SI Belgium Vice President, Chair Extension SIE, President Elect SIE, President Elect SI France

\* Henriette Walter linguist professor, Universités de Bretagne

# One continent Towards one federation

**Renata Trottmann Probst,**  
SIE President Elect & SIE Liaison Africa

Traditionally, English-speaking countries in Africa have been part of the Federation of Great Britain and Ireland (SIGBI), whereas French-speaking countries have been part of the European Federation (SIE). Working towards the establishment of an African Federation, a joint SIGBI/SIE Working Group was set up in 2014 to support the African Task Force responsible for this ambitious goal.

Over the past four years, the legal and organisational setup of the African Federation has been successfully completed. A Task Force mirroring a Federation Board, a Constitution and role specifications, financial rules, a logo and strapline, and a clear focus for the Federation's project work have all been put in place.

Our Federation is extremely aware of the great amount of work being done to turn this vision into reality. Bringing together members from two Federations, on a vast continent characterised by great cultural diversity, is no small challenge. SIE is proud to have been part of this process and is now ready to give full ownership to our African members. There is still some way to go, especially in terms of growing membership across Africa. Our fellow African Soroptimists will know best when the time is right for them to inaugurate their own Federation.

## Let us all help grow membership in Africa

**Gerda Rosiers, wSIE Extension Committee Chair**

To ensure the sustainability of the African Federation over the long term, it is vital we gather ideas and views of African Soroptimists on the current state of our organisation and the challenges they come up against in terms of recruitment and retention.

Just as with our European Clubs, it is essential that Africa addresses the challenge of increasing its membership numbers along with the consolidation of its Clubs and Unions. They are aware that without an increase in the number of members, it won't be possible to revitalise the African

Federation in the foreseeable future. We can and we want to help them to recruit and retain their members, taking into account the specificity of the African continent.

At the conference, SIE representatives took the opportunity to share helpful pointers and advice on how best to recruit and retain African Soroptimists - such as lining up good guest speakers for conferences and giving responsibilities to new members.

Recruitment is the responsibility of all Soroptimists.



Top - Official flyer of SIFAF Conference Madagascar 2016

Middle left - The Organising Committee of the Union of Madagascar welcoming the SIE President Elect Renata TROTTMAN PROBST and the SIE delegation

Middle right - SIE President Elect Renata TROTTMAN PROBST

Bottom left - SIFAF Task Force 2016-2018

Bottom right - Gerda ROSIERS - SIE Extension Committee Chair, Chinwe EZENWA MBAH - Past SIFAF Task Force Chair, and Emine ERDEM - SIE Vice President Extension Africa



# Why create an African Federation?

**Nneka Chris-Asoluka, SIFAF Taskforce Chair**

The idea for a Soroptimist African Federation was first mooted in 1987. Many discussions later, our dream is finally within reach.

So, why create an African Federation?

- To create closer ties amongst the African sisters
- The sense of belonging that will drive the challenge to succeed and propel them to greater heights
- To open up Soroptimism in Africa by creating more awareness. This will give rise to more Clubs and increase in membership. More clubs will result in more programmes and projects in African communities.
- Independence breeds creativity.

And, what obstacles and challenges do we face?

- Language barrier
- Communication difficulties – internet and telephone services are a very expensive means of communication in Africa
- Fall in membership making it difficult to reach the 2,000 plus members required to form a Federation
- Finance – Clubs are not paying their dues

When we work together as sisters, we will conquer and we have resolved to do just that!



## A vision for the future

**Emine Erdem, SIE Vice President Extension Africa**

Last March in Antananarivo, Madagascar, we met with the original Soroptimist spirit to discuss the future African Federation: **“To foster the spirit of service as the basis of all worthy enterprises.”** A Pan-African meeting was held with the goal of drawing up a realistic road map for the sustainable development of the Soroptimist network in Africa.

Over the last three decades of establishing SIFAF, we have come to understand that extension in Africa requires a new perspective and strategy for success. African Soroptimists have been doing their best to keep the level of willingness high, constantly busy empowering women and girls with field work by establishing libraries, providing

schools with educational materials, improving public health and working for the environment.

The SIFAF Conference had important significance for the global image of Soroptimists. Africa presents a unique window of opportunity. The very challenge of establishing a Soroptimist Federation is to increase the public profile of our organisation. To this end, it was a source of great pleasure to witness the energy of all African Soroptimist sisters in Madagascar.

**“Stars shine the brightest in the dark.”** Our hope is strong that our African sisters will raise the Soroptimist flag to attain the great ideal of a Soroptimist Federation in Africa!

### HISTORY OF SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL FUTURE AFRICAN FEDERATION (SIFAF)

1987: Proposal to form an African Federation

1993: First SIFAF meeting in Dakar, Senegal

2012: SIFAF General Assembly in Nairobi, Kenya. Task Force established

2014: SIFAF Constitution drafted in Pretoria, South Africa



## Communication: the marketing and branding campaign

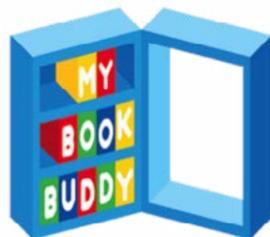
In the last **Link**, we told readers about progress made on the Branding Campaign commissioned by the Governors to the SIE Board. Since then, President Elisabetta de Franciscis, along with a Communications Working Group, have completed the selection process of four Agencies: two Italian, one French and one Norwegian-Swiss. Each either has an office or a presence in several countries, or is a member of a global network of PR agencies, with representation in SIE country locations.

In early May, the agencies made presentations and were interviewed by the Working Group. Very creative ideas were proposed. The Group is currently assessing the various proposals and will submit their choice to the SIE Board soon. The selected proposal and an oral brief of the whole process will then be presented to the Governors and Presidents, during their July meeting in Sofia, at a Forum specifically dedicated to the subject.

## Federation project: Soroptimists fight illiteracy in partnership with My Book Buddy

Within the context of the Biennium theme **Soroptimist Invest in Education**, we hope to have a Federation project to present to the Governors. The project **'Soroptimists fight illiteracy in partnership with My Book Buddy'** was discussed with the SIE Programme Directors taking part in the Training Seminar held in Lisbon in late May (see article pages 14 & 15). The concept is, basically, to set up dedicated libraries for less privileged populations to provide them with books: Books in Schools; Books in Shelters; Books in Refugee Camps.

Marlène van Benthem, SIE Programme Director, together with Union Programme Directors, discussed the possibility of introducing a project like this in their Unions. In a parallel session run, Single Club Programme Directors, together with Assistant Programme Director Caroline Junier, debated the feasibility and benefits of implementing such an educational programme in their own countries. The Soroptimist-branded bookcase would be aimed at women and children. This initial brainstorming stimulated much interest and the project will now be discussed locally at Union level.



## New website in development

Significant efforts were made during the first six months of the biennium to search for agencies to design a new SIE website that could serve our membership and help with branding.

The Communications' team developed a new approach that places our Unions and Clubs at the heart of Communications. The new SIE Website will become a window onto the Federations' presence across its 62 countries. Its design will highlight the outstanding projects done by Soroptimist members each day in their countries.

The 24 Union Presidents and their Programme Directors are currently selecting and submitting their three preferred projects. Single Clubs, showcased country by country, are currently in the process of sending in their best project and loads of photos. More than 160 projects will be on the website by the end of the summer! Such a mosaic of projects and photos shows how creative Soroptimists are! The new website will be presented at the Governors' Meeting in Sofia.



*“It is a great challenge to have a single Constitution that meets the legal requirements of such a diverse set of jurisdictions.”*

## SIE Constitution - do we need a new one?

The current SIE Constitution has been in force since 1992. It has been amended and revised every six years since then. It contains more than 4,500 words, it is organised into 22 Articles, as well as numerous sections and sub-sections, and needs to be valid in all 62 countries where SIE is represented.

It is a great challenge to have a single Constitution that meets the legal requirements of such a diverse set of jurisdictions. In a survey made in 2011 we asked Unions and Single Clubs to inform us of costs and difficulties they had to incur every time the Constitutions (for Federations, Unions, Clubs and Single Clubs) would be amended. They told us how expensive and time-consuming it is for them to adopt a new Constitution every six years.

At the General Meeting (GM) in Budapest we started talking about transforming our long and detailed Constitutions into lean tools, and transferring most of our regulatory instruments into the By-Laws. Finally, at the GM in 2015, the Governors mandated us to prepare a completely new and lean Constitution.

Over the last months, we have worked on a new Constitution that concentrates on the most important issues that need to be regulated, both from a legal point of view and from the perspective of our organisation's values and objectives. It is our aim to leave as much space as possible to Unions and Single Clubs to allow them to develop their own Constitutions in line with the cultural diversities of our Federation.

We will present the new SIE Federation Constitution for discussion at the GM in Sofia and we hope to receive indications for the By-Laws during the Forum that will be held on the Friday afternoon.

It is an exciting time to re-think the geography and structure of our organisation to make the Federation more dynamic and more fit for this century.

## Extension update – new clubs and new members!

Gerda Rosiers, SIE Extension Committee Chair



As of 30 June 2015, SIE had 34,046 members and 1,248 clubs. Since 1 October 2015, 15 new clubs have received their Charter including two Single Clubs in existing countries and one in a new country, Kuwait. Between now and the end of October, six other clubs will be inaugurated, bringing in approximately 550 new members.

professionals in order to grow and develop our organisation. To ensure it thrives from one generation to the next!

There are many different ways to identify new potential members: one of the most effective is to promote our projects since successful projects attract interest and new members.

We should also focus our messages on the benefits of our organisation and draw attention to Soroptimists' very high values, effective and quality projects and its professional network.

Our strategy should focus first on countries where we already have clubs. Extension is a priority. We need to attract young

Together we can make a difference!

## Belgian club celebrates Golden Jubilee

Régine Palmers, President, Soroptimist Club of Hasselt

It was an honour for our 48 current SI Hasselt club members and three founder members to be joined by our SIE President for our Golden Jubilee on 23 April 2016.

Elisabetta started her day meeting our Belgian Committee. She acknowledged our anniversary project 'YAR Flanders' as a prime example of the Soroptimist goal 'to build peace through 'education, autonomy and independence'...! Copies of the cookery book containing members' own recipes – the 'Kookkunsboek' – published to benefit YAR Flanders, were on sale at the celebration.

250 Soroptimists from all over Belgium attended the celebration in the 'Oude Gevangenis', a cosy historical university building. SI President, Yvonne Simpson, surprised us with a Skype call to wish us all good luck, while a 92-year-old club member lit the SI candle.

True to our motto '*conviviality in involvement*', we ended this memorable event with a gourmet reception.



Top - Members of Soroptimist Club of Hasselt  
Middle - All the Soroptimist members of the Union of Belgium  
Bottom - SIE President Maria Elisabetta de Francis addressing the audience



## Announcements

### GERMANY



All the German clubs on bicycles !

On the occasion of the **World Day against Trafficking in Persons** on 30 July 2016, the Soroptimist International Union of Germany is calling a nationwide campaign

to engage all SI Clubs in a common project: ride a bike all together and at the same time. The idea is to be visible on that important day and to set an example.

The occasion will also be used to raise funds to support a school project for Syrian refugees in Gaziantep and Mardin (Turkey).

Further details can be find on the SI Germany website : <http://www.soroptimist.de/home/>

### SWITZERLAND



Friendship meeting

The Soroptimist International Union of Switzerland invites you to a German-speaking Friendship meeting in Thun, in the foothills of the Bernese Alps from 16 to 18 September 2016.

Further information and registration is available on the SIE Swiss and German Union websites :

<http://swiss-soroptimist.ch/>  
<http://www.soroptimist.de/home/>

### NORDIC DAYS



#### Finland

The Nordic Soroptimist Meeting will be held in Imatra and Lappeenranta in Finland, from Friday the 9 September to Sunday the 11 September 2016. The seminar programme will be a combination of serious issues on the theme "Breaking Barriers" and entertaining stimuli for the body and soul. Our keynote speaker will be President Tarja Halonen.

Sign up by 30 June 2016 on the Nordic Soroptimist Meeting website:

<http://nordicsoroptimist2016.fi/welcome/>



**SOROPTIMIST CLUB BRUXELLES DOYEN**  
*Summer get-togethers*  
JULY & AUGUST 2016

**The President and members of the Soroptimist Club Bruxelles Doyen continue their traditional summer get-togethers**

We invite you to join us every Wednesday in July and August 2016, from 12:30 to 13:30, in the lounge-cafe of hotel The Dominican.



RUE LÉOPOLD 9, 1000 BRUXELLES - TÉL: +32 (0)2 203 08 08

You can find a location map on their website:  
<http://www.thedominican.be>

For more information, you can contact our President,  
**Christiane Gittens** - +32 2 736 43 40  
[gittens.deckers@skynet.be](mailto:gittens.deckers@skynet.be)



# Calendar

## New SIE club charters

18 June 2016

### Düsseldorf-Oberkassel (Germany)

Charter to be presented by Gerda Rosiers,  
SIE Extension Chairperson  
Club President - Belinda Steiert  
Phone: +49 211 176 8920  
Email: kanzlei\_steiert@yahoo.de

3 September 2016

### Erwitte-Hellweg (Germany)

Charter to be presented by Karla Greipl,  
SIE Constitution & By-Laws Committee Member  
Club President - Claudia Michalke  
Phone: +49 2943 486737  
Email: claudia.michalke@t-online.de

3 September 2016

### Jura Région (Switzerland)

Charter to be presented by Marie-Jeanne Bosia,  
Past SIE President  
Club President - Nadine Corbat  
Phone: 079 512 11 93  
Email: nadine.corbat@frij.ch

7 September 2016

### Ouest Île de la Réunion (France)

Charter to be presented by Gerda Rosiers,  
SIE Extension Committee Chairperson  
Club President - Marie Dolce  
Phone: +33 6 93 13 44 16  
Email: mayawala@hotmail.fr

30 September 2016

### Beauvais Les Salamandres (France)

Charter to be presented by: To Be Announced  
Club President - Marie Segura  
Phone: +33 6 88 33 18 85  
Email: mary.lasseg@gmail.com

1 October 2016

### Rødding-Gram-Toftlund (Denmark)

Charter to be presented by: To Be Announced  
Club President - Anne-Mette Frandsen  
Email: anne-mette-frandsen@hotmail.com

8 October 2016

### Bennekom & Beekdal (The Netherlands)

Charter to be presented by Anne-Marie Hendrickx,  
SIE Treasurer  
Club President - Helma Nijssen  
Phone: +31 6 133 633 20 / +31 3 184 194 17  
Email: info@nijssenpartners.nl

## Anniversaries

1 June 2016

25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary - SI Bad Nauheim (Germany)

1 June 2016

25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary - SI Madrid (Spain)

9 June 2016

50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary - SI Levanger (Norway)

29 June 2016

25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary - SI Bielsko-Biala (Poland)

29 June 2016

25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary - SI Fricktal (Switzerland)

14 September 2016

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

21 September 2016

25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary - SI Chianciano-Montepulciano (Italy)

21 September 2016

25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary - SI Brno (Czechia)

28 September 2016

25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary - SI Milazzo (Italy)

05 October 2016

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

05 October 2016

25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary - SI Voorne-Putten/Rozenburg  
(The Netherlands)

23 October 2016

50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary - SI Terni (Italy)

26 October 2016

25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary - SI Liechtenstein (Liechtenstein)

## Forthcoming SIE events

9-10 July 2016

Governors' Meeting - Sofia (Bulgaria)

## International awareness days and events

4-22 July 2016

CEDAW's 64<sup>th</sup> session at the UN in Geneva

8 September 2016

International Literacy Day

**THE LINK** : Quarterly magazine of Soroptimist International of Europe, published in English and French.

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Subscription rates (four issues per Soroptimist year starting October to September): Club bulk subscription (minimum five) €10.00 per subscription per language. Individual subscription per language €12.50 (for airmail please add €5.50 per subscription).