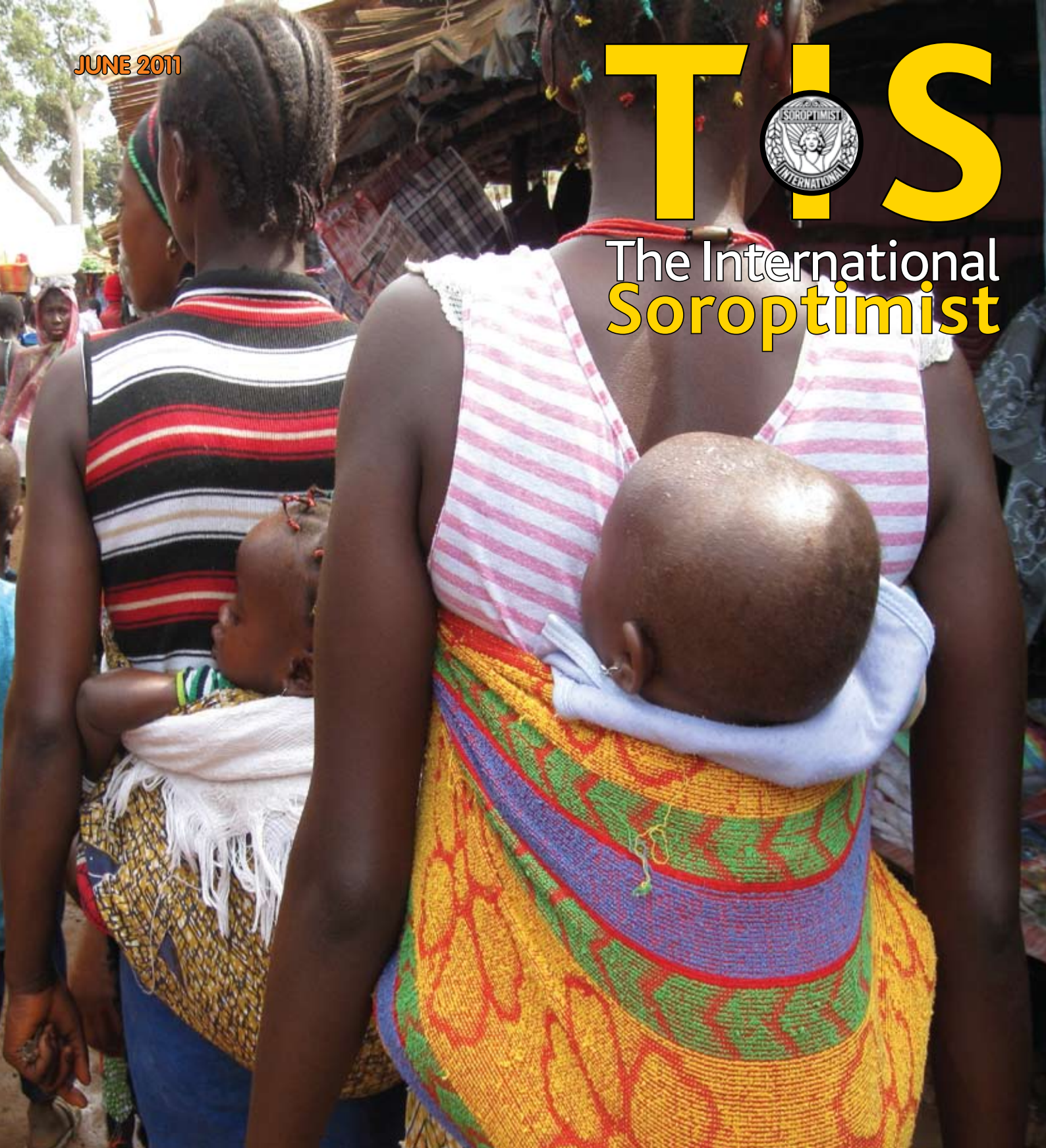


JUNE 2011

T I S



The International
Soroptimist



Celebrating Project Sierra as the quadrennial project draws to a close

a global voice
for women

Soroptimist



International

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President's update

Dear Readers, Dear Soroptimists

In this issue of TIS we have some of the wonderful highlights of Project Sierra, which is coming to an end. I am really impressed by the creativity and great work of Soroptimists worldwide to support this important project and very thankful that we seem to have reached our ambitious financial target.

A very big thank you to our partners Hope and Homes for Children and to HANSI-SL for the cooperation and excellent reporting during the four years that project has been running.

I remind you to register for the SI Convention in Montréal, if you have not done so already. It is a MUST for every Soroptimist to attend a Convention – at least once in your life. Registration is still open, so let a ticket for Montréal be your highlight in your Soroptimist life this year. At the Convention you'll find an interesting programme with excellent speakers and interesting workshops, inspiring social events and the chance to meet old friends and make some new ones.

This issue of the TIS will be the last in my biennium. I use this occasion to thank you all for your contributions to create a lively and interesting magazine with information of what is going on in all corners of the world. More and more of you are getting used to finding and reading TIS on the internet, so I think that it was the right time to change the format of our international magazine.

At the Convention in Montréal, Alice Wells will take over the role of International President. Please welcome her and give her the same support and trust that I have received all over the world.

I have to thank you all for your kindness and hospitality during my two years as International President. I have been impressed to meet so many devoted and inspired Soroptimists. It confirms to me that SI is a fantastic chance and challenge to all professional women.

I also give my warm thanks to the SI board and office holders for their cooperation, which has made my task so much easier, even with so many new initiatives.

Finally I thank Rosie Coutts and the SI HQ in Cambridge for their enormous enthusiasm and hard work. We are lucky to be members of a big international network of women and I have been especially happy to see that so many members have followed me in my personal motto: "Action speaks louder than words".

Hanne Jensbo

Obituary

Anne Yedowitz 1913 - 2011

"The most important Soroptimist you will ever know" writes Dawn Marie Lemonds, International Programme Director

In 1991 I was attending my second International Convention with Del Laine, founder of the Soroptimist Legislative Workshop. Del told me that I must meet a very important woman in Nottingham - Anne Yedowitz; "She has done more for Soroptimist than any of our leaders." This perception was affirmed by Patsy Daniels... I had to meet this woman.

In Nottingham my journey of friendship, admiration and education began with this feisty, straightforward New York Lady from Yonkers and opened my eyes to the potential of Soroptimists being "change agents" that positively affected the human condition for woman and children.

Anne talked about women having a place at the table of every decision affecting them; about having a voice and making our work count! At SI Board meetings with Anne we enjoyed her pearls of wisdom, insightful analysis, challenges to get "on with it" and reminders that our work was for women!

"Governments now are trying to say that we don't need a women's bureau we haven't reached that stage yet. We haven't finished the fight."

Anne's journey with Soroptimist International began in 1955 as a Charter member of the Yonkers Club. She said, "For five or six years I did nothing but go to meetings. When there was a vacancy in a position on our Club Board my friend Mary told me that I needed to step up and be President. I was President of SI Yonkers in '68, District Secretary, District Director in '70, Region Secretary in '72, Region Governor in '74 and Federation Secretary for Dottie Kissinger in '76!"

Anne remembered getting her first passport because she was singing in a Soroptimist Choir at an International Convention in Lausanne, Switzerland in 1964. "I've been to every one since – except Sydney"

Her "no nonsense" style helped pave our way from being mere observers in the NGO arena of the UN community to being viewed as leaders and facilitators.

Anne said, "My first UN event was in the late 1970s. It was about population in Mexico City. I got



my official SI appointment as a UN Rep. in 1982. I had already had a taste of being on the International Board as a voting board member for SIA, taking Dorothy Kissinger's place because she became International President.

"I had been putting up displays on projects with the UN for years. In those days many of our projects were partnered with UNICEF. There were no "terms of reference", we just figured it out somehow. We had a Where We Stand position book, which identified the issues important to Soroptimists."

"In the beginning we focused a lot of attention on issues for kids and UNICEF activities. Then at the onset of UNIFEM I got involved. A big issue for me was children in the military zones, war zones, post war and violence against children.

"UNICEF was initially started to help children in emergency situations. It has evolved to help women as well which makes sense, you can't help the children without helping their mothers.

"What is the message you want Soroptimist members to hear? We are international. We are all interconnected. We're a global voice. We don't live on an island. Everywhere we are concerned with the social and physical environment. Local when you join, you automatically become international and your work is international.

"Soroptimists are not only working at local level, they are helping women around the world. Their progress helps women achieve their goals for themselves and their children. Their donations are affecting the International work that we are doing. We must keep this global mission going."

Anne had a million stories and you rarely heard the same one twice. She played as hard as she worked; everyone she met seemed to love her and everyone that knew her can smile at the great sharing times we had together.

Anne reminds me that we are so blessed to stand on the shoulders of Soroptimist leaders - not just those we have elected - but women like Anne who tirelessly and continuously held their membership and commitment to the work we do as their standard of operation.

Anne was 97 years old... and 30 years young in her drive and compassion and love of SI. She is forever in my heart and I hope you understand why she was proclaimed to be "the most important Soroptimists that you'll ever know!"



From the editor

Can you believe that it is four years since we launched Project Sierra? Where did that time go? The answer is on pages 5-10; in fact most of this issue of TIS is dedicated to the celebration of this fantastic SI Quadrennial Project.

So many women and girls helped, so much confidence restored, lives rebuilt, careers formed. A triumph of Soroptimist awareness, advocacy and action in a country that has not only suffered so much turmoil, especially for its female population, but also presented massive challenges for the NGOs on the ground.

Project Sierra has certainly captured the hearts and minds of Soroptimists worldwide, raising nearly £900,000 and transforming the lives of 2000 women and girls. That is really making a difference.

This issue also reminds you that the SI Convention is almost upon us, where you will find out what lies ahead in Soroptimism for the next two years and beyond – but you'll have to be there to hear it at first hand! If you really can't be there to enjoy the wonders of Montreal and the excellent Canadian hospitality, we'll have a full report on the event in our September issue of TIS.

Meanwhile, enjoy this one!

President Hanne attends Japan Higashi Region Conference



SI President Hanne, SIA President Sharon and SI UN Representative Yoko Komori Olson attended Japan Higashi Region Conference in April.

Hanne and Yoko arrived in Tokyo, Japan, on April 14th, just one month after Japan was hit by a huge earthquake and tsunami. The majority of visitors had returned home and so Hanne's visit was an inspired action for Japanese Soroptimists.

Hanne showed her friendship and the friendship of Soroptimists around the world, by visiting the Japanese Clubs.

SI Tokyo-Shinjuku hosted Hanne and Yoko and, says Yoko, "their hospitality was wonderful".

After visiting the Shinjuku and Azuma Clubs, Hanne and Yoko joined the conference, with Hanne giving a presentation on SI structure, the four Federations and current SI projects. She also suggested that Japanese Soroptimists should think about establishing their own "Japan disaster funds" website, an effective way to collect disaster funds as Soroptimists around the world want to help Japanese Tsunami victims.

Yoko spoke in Japanese about the work done by SI Representatives at the UN and explained how and why CSW is the most important event for SI at the UN and also the significance of the new entity UN Women.

Melanie Yamauchi from SI Shinjuku said: "I was inspired by Yoko's speech about her liaison with the United Nations and about the formation of UN Women. She is a spokeswoman not only for Soroptimist International but for all women and her artistic expression unites the aspirations of members everywhere.

"Both Hanne and Yoko made us very proud to be Soroptimists and showed us the value of a lifetime commitment to the betterment of women in society."

Hanne's visit to Japan lifted the spirits of all Japanese Soroptimists, and encouraged members during a very difficult time. It was very successful visit for both SI and SIA, and we must continue to promote SI work right across the world.

To donate to the Soroptimist disaster fund for Japan, visit www.soroptimist.org/donate/donate.html

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A global voice for women

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Soroptimist International HQ

International Programme Director and Assistant Programme Director appointed

Rosie Coutts, SI Executive Director, reports

In the last issue of TIS we introduced three new appointments to the SI team who take up office in July: Pat Carruthers, SI Treasurer and Finance Chair; Marlies Hampel, Constitution & Resolutions Committee Chair; and Leigh Ellwood-Brown, Organisational Development Committee Chair. We are now delighted to introduce our new International Programme Director and International Assistant Programme Director, who take up office in July to serve SI for the 2011–13 biennium. With their extensive experience and combined skills, they will make a formidable team to promote SI's programme work. The Headquarters Programme team look forward to working with Hilary and Anusha in their new roles.

Hilary Ratcliffe, International Programme Director



Hilary is a member of the SIGBI Federation. A Soroptimist for 30 years, originally with SI Chesterfield, then with SI St. Albans and District.

She has served as Club and Regional President, Region Programme Action Officer and Chair of the UK Programme Action Committee. She was Assistant Programme Director for Education and in 2007 became Programme Director for SIGBI.

Hilary and her team developed partnerships with Save the Children, Plan International, Water Aid, Book Aid, Maternal and Childhealth Advocacy International, Women for Women International and Fairtrade and worked with agencies working against trafficking.

They also ran workshops, study days and conferences, promoting SI's work at every level.

Hilary is married with three children, four grandchildren and a husband whom, as she tells us, supports her all the way. She is a freelance London Tourist guide. Hilary comments: "So now it is the challenge of working for you all. I hope to meet many of you, to report and celebrate your amazing work and to promote our vision and mission to the wider NGO community and the world at large."

Anusha Santhirasthiam, International Assistant Programme Director



Anusha joined SI in 1994 as a member of SI Petaling Jaya, Malaysia, SISWP Federation, and now divides her time between Malaysia and Calgary, Canada. She is a corporate lawyer; professional mediator and corporate negotiations adviser.

Anusha served her Federation as Constitution Convenor, Publicity Convenor, Foundation Task force member and as a member of a Federation Sponsorship and Fundraising Committee. At

International level, she served for four years as a member of the Constitution & Resolutions Committee, as well as being a member of the SI Foundation Task force. She represented her Federation as a consultant at SI Board Meetings in 2009 and 2010.

Anusha has been a social activist and women's rights champion since the age of 23 and enjoys being a global citizen. She grew up in Malaysia, qualified as a lawyer in the UK and has advised multinational clients all over Asia and Europe.

Anusha's mission is "to get the world to R-A-V-E about SI through Recognition, Appreciation, Visibility and Enlightenment of SI Programme work and Club projects."



Commonwealth Day An American perspective

SI President Elect Alice Wells reports on her experiences on Commonwealth Day on 14 March 2011

Imagine my excitement to learn that my trip to visit the UN Centre in Vienna would also coincide with Commonwealth Day in London.

SI Programme Director, Reilly Dempsey, and I spent four days in Vienna working with Dr. Roswitha Benesch and Dora Vrdlovac; participating in an International Women's Day panel discussion and making a number of significant contacts with key partners at the UN. We attended a wonderful Austrian Union meeting and revelled in the warm hospitality shown by Roswitha and Dora.

On Commonwealth Day in London, Reilly chaired a panel discussion at the House of Commons with participation by the Executive Director and founder of CAMFED, Rebecca Munro from WAGGS and Alison Sutherland, SI Technical Advisor on Governance for Sierra Leone.

The topic was "Working Locally to Impact Globally: the practicalities of education in the community". There were two other panel discussions focusing on breaking through the glass ceiling (overcoming barriers to education) and achieving educational equality.

This event took place in mid-March and the weather was still fairly cold. Imagine my surprise, however, to see the London parks wildly abloom with daffodils. When I commented on this to my taxi driver, he replied, "Oh, ma'am, we are getting ready for the Royal Wedding.

In fact, they are even scrubbing all of our statues." And indeed, they were... work was underway to make everything sparkle!

That evening, SI Executive Director Rosie Coutts had arranged for me to receive an invitation to attend a Commonwealth Day reception which Queen Elizabeth II would be attending.

I was given very specific information about not having a camera or even a cell phone to take pictures... what time to arrive, etc.

The orange postcard which was to be my 'ticket' to this great evening just had 'Marlborough House' - no address, but with Google's help, my taxi got me there safely.

There were 300 guests invited to the reception and I had a lovely time "working the room" talking about Soroptimist International to whomever would listen. I met a lovely woman from Pakistan who is a university professor and a Member of Parliament there.

I thoroughly enjoyed meeting and talking with the Commonwealth staff who were working that evening. They took me under their wing and when it was time for the Queen to make her entrance, they put me in a location where she would walk right next to me.

What a thrill that was! Queen Elizabeth II is truly a beautiful woman and so very gracious. As she approached, she looked right at me and I immediately smiled and said, "Good evening!" She smiled right back and said "Good evening" to me! A moment that I shall always treasure... an awe-struck American "meeting" the Queen!

Advocating for Change

A Global Voice at the highest levels

Anna Aiken, SI Programme Officer, reports

Soroptimist International has a team of representatives based at each of the main UN centres in Geneva, New York, Paris, Rome, Vienna and Nairobi. SI is also affiliated to the Commonwealth. Here is an update of activities since the last issue of TIS.

London

As the last issue of TIS was going to press, SI was attending an event in London to celebrate Commonwealth Day and the theme of 'Women as Agents of Change'. We are pleased to report that



it was a great success!

Kamla Persad-Bissessar, Commonwealth Chair-in-office who is the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago gave the opening address.

As one of only three female heads of Government in the Commonwealth she recognised that there was still a long way to go to get women into the highest positions. But she added: "People say 'There's only three women heads of government in the Commonwealth?' But there used to be none. That change is coming and there's no way to stop it."

SI led a session on the practicalities of education in the community. SI's Programme Director, Reilly Dempsey, led a very informative panel discussion with Ann Cotton (Camfed), Rebecca Munro (WAGGGS) and Alison Sutherland (Project Sierra).

Vienna

In April, Roswitha and Dora attended the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Criminal Justice in Vienna.

Disappointingly, it was noted that the UN Convention dealing with trafficking, especially women and children, has still not been ratified by all Member States. This means that a far reaching, coordinated global approach to trafficking is still some way off.



The colourful flags of the United Nations in Vienna

New York

In New York, Lois and Carol attended the Civil Society Hearings on the Least Developed Countries (LDC). NGOs were very critical of the advances made. In the last ten years, only three out of 51 countries have been moved out of the designation of LDC. NGOs recommended that the UN consider complete and total debt relief, equitable trade agreements, a curb on military spending and a larger allocation of resources to the LDC. These are big but necessary "asks"!

Paris

In May, SI Representatives in Paris attended a day of learning and debate on international migration. SI submitted a statement detailing our work in Moldova. 58 State Representatives received a copy!

Nairobi

In Nairobi, Alice was invited to attend a workshop on the importance of gender issues in agriculture, organised by the International Centre for Research on Women. Particular attention was paid to the underlying challenges women face when trying to access resources, such as cultural resistance to change and gender blind programme design.

Geneva

In Geneva, a main area of work has been on Human Rights Education and Training. This is hugely important in ensuring that women and girls enjoy equity and equality in education and leadership opportunities. Wilfrida is part of the NGO working group set up monitor the progress of a UN declaration on Human Rights Education and Training. Most recently they met to review the progress made in the drafting process of the declaration.

As this report goes to press, our Geneva reps are dividing their team between the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the 100th Session of the International Labour Organisation. In Rome, Cinzia is preparing for an SI coordinated side event on "women in agriculture: microcredit, land tenure, cooperation" and here at SIHQ we are preparing to deliver a great workshop schedule at Convention. Visit <http://www.si-montreal2011.org/workshops.html> for full details!

Monthly Focus

If you are a frequent visitor to the SI website you will have noticed an exciting new resource appeared in April: The Monthly Focus. Each month, SI will focus on a particular issue affecting women and girls. Through the Monthly Focus, SI hopes to provide an international point of connection for your existing work, linking SI's UN work to issues you may be working on, or perhaps inspiration to take action on a new international issue. We launched in April with a focus on women and girls in the aftermath of disaster. In May we looked at women and criminal justice and in June we are focussing on women and agriculture. Once the month is finished, the file can be found on the resources page:

<http://www.soroptimistinternational.org/resources/the-monthly-focus-files>.

For more details on any story mentioned here, visit the news pages of

www.soroptimistinternational.org.

Finally, if you want to receive monthly updates on the latest advocacy, action and awareness news, please visit the SI website to sign up to our newsletter, Global Voice!

Forthcoming UN Rep Meetings

June:

May 30th – June 17th: Committee on the Rights of a Child (Geneva).

1st - 17th June: 100th Session of the International Labour Organisation (Geneva)

25th June – 2nd July: 37th FAO Conference on rural women and agriculture (Rome)

July:

10th – 14th: SI Convention (Montreal)

August:

1-6th: Open-ended Working Group on strengthening the protection of the human rights of older persons. (New York)

September

3rd – 5th: Annual DPI/NGO Conference in Bonn.



Project Sierra

Celebrating our success!

Alison Sutherland, SI Quadrennial Project Liaison reports

As we come to the end of the four year Quadrennial Project partnership, Soroptimists all around the world can surely be happy that they have directly transformed the lives of well over 2000 women and children in one of the world's poorest countries, recovering from conflict.

Project Sierra is giving access to education, health care, life-skills, business enterprise training, and encouragement to develop practical and leadership skills and employment opportunities. Women and girls are supported to live in safer, healthier environments. The most marginalised – single teenage mothers, lone female household heads caring for their children in desperate poverty – have become role models and integrated into their communities. Many, many more have benefited from initiatives undertaken through Project Sierra though not enrolled full time on the programmes.

The Project has had a wider long term impact on entire local communities – and on Government and other agency policies within Sierra Leone. Programme models have been adapted to have greater impact and secure sustainability, and experience sharing with Hope & Homes for Children's (HHC's) work in other African countries is building a legacy of replicable programmes for community based child and vulnerable family welfare.

By the end of last year (that is almost three and a half years into the Project Sierra partnership), 142 out of 200 families had graduated from being direct beneficiaries of the ACTIVE child and family support programme.

These families included 492 children registered as beneficiaries with the project but many more children within these families benefited directly from the programme due to new-found family stability, increased self-sufficiency and sharing with siblings. Some services were also provided at the family or 'whole village' level, such as health initiatives, community counselling and engaging neighbours and community artisans in home renovation and business support initiatives.

Elizabeth's story

Through Project Sierra members of Soroptimist International across the world

have given new hope to a frail, elderly grandmother Elizabeth, caring in poverty for her three grandchildren in Matru, in southern Sierra Leone. She is in extremely poor health. After her daughter died and her son-in-law disappeared, she took on full responsibility for her three grandchildren, aged 6, 10 and 15 years. For many years, Elizabeth struggled to raise the children on her own, and could not afford to repair the family home which was set alight by rebels 15 years ago. She was isolated by her circumstances; no one visited or spoke to her.

The children attend school sporadically, but have threadbare uniforms and are ridiculed by their peers. They were accepted into their community only because of services they provided to some wealthier residents, such as fetching water and peeling cassava.

Local partner HANCI-SL worked hard with the Matru community to highlight everyone's responsibility to look after the more vulnerable among them and to avoid



excluding them. As a direct consequence, Elizabeth and her grandchildren were identified for the ACTIVE Family Support programme. With this, Elizabeth receives medication and her home will be fixed to make it safer for her and her children. The family will have a market table outside the home so they can start selling their garden produce and generate some income. The children will get school uniforms and books so that they can attend school regularly.

Most importantly, working with the community, the Project will ensure that Elizabeth and her grandchildren are no longer ostracised, and they are welcomed back into community life.



A mother and child in Kamakwie

Young mothers

164 vulnerable young mothers had completed the Young Mothers programmes in Freetown, Bo and Makeni by the end of 2010, and were confident, equipped with education and skills to make their living independently, to care for their babies and lead a stable family life reconciled with their families. 59 street children ('children living alone') had been successfully reconciled with their family, and a further 69 children were receiving counselling, education and behavioural support, along with their mother or carer who, if the circumstances warranted, also receive support to secure a livelihood for the family.



Hairdressing trainees planning a better future



IAPD Maragert Cook, IPP SIA Cathy Standiford and SI President Elect Alice Wells enjoy a dance with the girls in Kissy

Community hubs

From January 2011, these support programmes have been transitioning to work within a 'community hub' approach, which will extend the reach to many more vulnerable children and their families.

Individualised services will be provided, but the 'hub' will be a centre point for communities, and for coordinating services from appropriate agencies. Services will be tailored to local need, such as counselling, mentoring, basic health care and vaccinations, day care, life-skills and income-generation training, all aiming to prevent families falling into destitution, and empower local people to care for the most vulnerable children themselves for years to come. This will be another significant legacy for Project Sierra.

All the project area teams have undergone training. Monitoring tools have been developed to track the impact of the hub activities on the beneficiary communities.



2011 study Group meets Sierra Leone's First Lady, Her Excellency, Sia Nyama Koroma

Consultations with community leaders, other organisations and stakeholders on the community hub principles have received very positive support. In Kamakwie, a rural area where the partner did not run a 'project centre' building, the local elders have offered land for a building, and local residents volunteered to help with the construction. In Mattru, a site is being found it help from the chief.

In Kissy, east Freetown, two communities that are currently experiencing increasing incidences of anti-social behaviour and teenage pregnancies, are targeted for support through the community hub. School and street children can take part in recreational

activities and share new experiences.

30 young mothers from each community, who have no parental support and are being victimised in their homes are also already benefiting. They have very limited knowledge of childcare, and will learn the skills that will enable them to become happy, confident mothers. Sharing experiences with other girls in the same situation helps to create strong friendships for mutual support.

In Bo, the project centre is being upgraded with facilities to benefit the whole community. The larger space has already enabled a further 40 young mothers from the local community to access its services, and in February 73 girls attended a special session on childcare and immunisation. Services have been extended to help single mothers who are struggling to look after their teenage daughters in Bo, and also in the Mattru area where 25 single mothers of teenage daughters attend the community hub centre, receive individualised support package and guidance to gain an understanding of teenage issues. Teenage pregnancy and drop-out rates are high in these areas, so this is a vital new service.



SI President Hanne with a young mother graduate – who is an army mechanic

Recreational facilities have also been improved in Bo, including a volleyball court to international standards and indoor games facilities. Young mothers now enjoy these, and some natural sport abilities have been revealed! Also, separate literacy and numeracy classes are helping those who had difficulties in school and lack confidence in academic learning; they are being taught to exam standard in an environment that supports their learning.

In the rural areas, the remaining families who had not previously been fully ready to graduate from the ACTIVE family support care they were receiving, are gaining the confidence to live independently. The children's progress at school is monitored and guidance given to the parent to ensure that the importance of them gaining education is accepted. Families are still monitored after leaving the project, their business enterprises are assessed. Most are doing well, and extra training is given to those who have struggled to have struggled to create a profitable business.

HANCI-SL has also organised training with the government Ministry for Social Welfare Gender and Children's Affairs in all the Project Sierra operational areas for members of new Child Welfare Committees. The Child Rights Act 2007 requires these Committees to monitor child rights, the advancement of education for young girls

and prevention of domestic and gender-based violence.

It is a tribute to the Soroptimist International Quadrennial Project and its local partner that they are partnering with government to improve the working of these community based committees as well as delivering welfare services.



SI IPP Margaret Lobo visits a community in the village of Tambakha

Soroptimist International: Awareness, Advocacy, Action!

Soroptimists in all four Federations have engaged with Project Sierra in so many ways.

Generating funds for our Project has been linked by Clubs and members around the world with awareness-raising and advocacy for SI Programme priorities - support for women and girls in post-conflict societies; improved health, life-chances, providing education and leadership opportunities for women and girls.

On the next few pages of TIS you can read about some of the inspirational local and international fundraising initiatives and partnerships that have supported both Project Sierra and the core principles of Soroptimism: service and friendship to improve the lives of women and girls.

Your Federation Liaisons and their teams have given fantastic service to Project Sierra and Soroptimist International in leading support for our Quadrennial Project in each Federation. Thank you Anne, Chris, Lisbeth and Hafdis, Tes and Lori!

Astonishing results

Thank you all! By mid-May 2011, a total of GBP£876,634.05 has been remitted to our partner – that is almost 90% of our Quadrennial target of GBP£1 million!

We believe we will hit the target, but what an achievement this far. Well done Soroptimists! Well done, our dedicated partners! And, well done – to the women and girls whose lives you have touched through Project Sierra, who are now equipped with confidence and skills to nurture their families, be active citizens and role models for their peers and in their communities.





Ruth Healey and Sally Curtis raised almost £3000 running in the Brighton marathon

From the outset SIGBI members embraced Project Sierra and have worked with tremendous enthusiasm, organising events to raise funds and awareness of the project. These have included a wide ranging series of activities including:

- Concerts and other musical events
- Sponsored sporting challenges, such as bungee jumping, abseiling and marathons
- Fashion shows and the sale of jewellery
- Creative crafts, ranging from the design of notelets and calendars to fabulous quilts and embroidered pictures for raffles.
- Events held in prestigious venues such as The Home Office and House of Lords
- Donations and bequests
- Auctions and Car Boot Sales
- The publication of a very moving poetry anthology 'Voices in Verse'
- Numerous functions involving that favourite pastime – eating and drinking!

In this short article I will describe four very different initiatives that we have supported during the last year of the Project.

One of the most innovative has been that of SI Northwich who have spent a year working with women in prison. As part of this the women carried out a sponsored event for Project Sierra. It was extremely moving to stand in the prison gymnasium watching these vulnerable and marginalised women raising money for some of the young mothers in our project who are similarly vulnerable. During these activities the

Project DVD was playing on a continuous loop, drawing attention to the realities of life for women in Sierra Leone.

Recycling jewellery: a great fundraiser

Recycling old/unwanted jewellery has been another great success story, capturing the imagination of members who have distributed collection bags around their work places and to local shops and businesses.

Already Clubs have raised £6,500 and money is still coming in. We have also been able to involve schools in this project and the picture (below left) shows children at a Primary School in Northern Ireland with their collection bags. Their teacher is a member of SI Newry and Mourne Club.

The 27th April 2011 was the 50th anniversary of independence in Sierra Leone and, to mark this occasion, Soroptimists in the Regions of Cheshire, North Wales & Wirral and South Lancashire organised a special event at the International Slavery Museum in Liverpool. This event was also in support of the '42' Women of Sierra Leone photographic exhibition by Lee Karen Stowe, launched on International Women's Day. As well as a presentation on Project Sierra, we invited two external speakers. Professor Tunde Zack-Williams, a Sociology Lecturer and trustee of Hope and Homes for Children, gave a fascinating account of the history of Sierra Leone during the last fifty years. We also heard from



Dr Fred Nye of the Waterloo Partnership (a collaboration between people in the Waterloo and Crosby districts of Liverpool and their namesake community near Freetown). The event (photo above) was well attended by members of the public, as well as Soroptimists and generated a number of questions and interesting discussion. We hope that it has also raised awareness of Soroptimist International.



And finally, we like to keep up to the minute in SIGBI! Angela Edwards of SI East Grinstead (above) knitted two Royal Wedding dolls, which were raffled for Project Sierra and also attracted some excellent publicity in the local press.

And now we are nearly at the end of this amazing journey. SIGBI members have to date raised £331,953, 28. We urge Clubs to have one final push for Project Sierra and see if, together, we can reach our target of £1million.



As we reach the end of our amazing journey we are thrilled that SIGBI members have raised at least £331,953, 28.

C. Anne MacDonald OBE
SIGBI Project Liaison

SI/E: Where art meets sport, yoga and gifts to help women

Lisbeth Hass, SI/E
International Liaison Project Sierra:
A Family and A Future



Yoga class by SI Vallauris-Sophia Antipolis-Mougins

The Unions and Clubs of SI/E have organised many successful activities for the benefit of Project Sierra - A Family and A Future. Since October 2008, members have donated nearly €2,000,000 to transform the lives of young mothers, street children and families in Sierra Leone.



Smiling mothers and children in Project Sierra

Soroptimists across the European Federation showed their support for Project Sierra through a wide range of fundraising activities. From awareness-raising events resulting in a donation from Switzerland to wellness, music and dance events in Finland and Spain, from golf tournaments in Italy to a "Count Your Steps" walking project throughout Sweden, from yoga sessions and fashion shows in France to celebrations of a Friendship Day in Turkey – countless Soroptimists got involved.

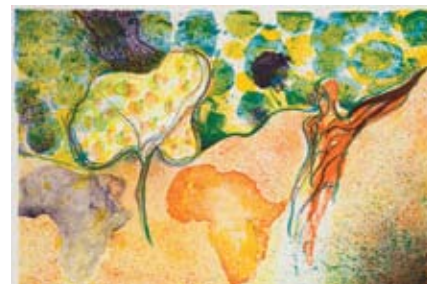
In Austria, the proceeds from coffee sales at meetings were donated to the Project. In addition, members, for example from Italy and Belgium, participated in Study Tours and thus made direct donations. Soroptimists from Slovakia, Israel and Romania also raised money for the cause. And the activities are continuing in these final months of the official partnership with Hope and Homes for Children.

Thanks to the untiring work of Norway's Project Sierra ambassador Gerd Stenberg, the Norwegian Union alone raised €48,000 for Project Sierra. Norwegian Soroptimists sold Christmas stamps and gift postcards.

Project Sierra Federation highlights!

Indeed, the gift letters and postcards produced by Gerd and I (Lisbeth Hass) were an important means of raising money. The Danish Clubs purchased an enormous number to use on special occasions, and the Turkish Union also ordered 250 postcards.

Another outstanding activity worth highlighting is the Danish Club, Tonder's, original art sale. After hearing about Project Sierra, Hans Tyrrestrup, one of Denmark's most renowned artists, enthusiastically agreed to produce lithographs called "The African Quartet"



One of the Africa Quartet lithographs

in support of the fundraising efforts. More than 480 lithographs have been sold to benefit Project Sierra. The Danish Union's contribution has now reached approximately €48,000.

I am deeply grateful to SI/E members for their efforts, solidarity and friendship shown towards the women and girls in Sierra Leone. Although the partnership with Hope and Homes for Children is coming to an end, under the future long-term theme "Education and Leadership" we can continue providing aid to the disadvantaged women and girls in Africa.



Postcard sales for Project Sierra



Gifts presented on Project Sierra Study Tours



Australia Day celebrations with members and friends

Over the past four years Soroptimist members in the SISWP Federation have used their creativity to support Project Sierra and to educate others in their local communities about the plight of the Sierra Leone people to rebuild their country.

Members arranged forums, dinners and social events to raise funds as well as reaching out to local Sierra Leone communities who migrated to countries within our Federation under the refugee resettlement scheme. Their involvement in our fundraising campaigns has been significant as many shared personal stories of they struggled to start a life in a new country after many years in refugee camps. They in turn have been overwhelmed at the generosity of SI members around the world who have given so much to their families and friends back in Sierra Leone especially the focus on providing education for the children and supporting teenage mothers to gain vocational skills.

HHC and HANCI DVDs

The brochures and DVDs produced by Hope and Homes for Children and HANCI have been excellent resources that enabled people to see for themselves the transitions that took place and the brighter future that now awaits the families that have been supported through this project.

The regular progress reports from HHC and our SI International Liaison Alison Sutherland on the individual case studies have taken us on an incredible journey over the four years to witness the transformation in the lives of these women and girls.

It is very difficult to highlight just a few examples of how SISWP Clubs have contributed to this project. Many successes have been largely attributed to individual members and Clubs that held annual events. A special mention and thanks to IPP Margaret Lobo, Sandra Mottram, Paula Siddle, Gina Olivieri, Chris Knight, Robynne Paget and Siew Yong Gnanalingam who represented our Federation on Study Tours to Sierra Leone. Their personal experiences have been shared with members and have significantly contributed to the funds raised and the understanding of how we are contributing to the social and economic independence and empowerment of women in Sierra Leone.

Visionary members

Optometrist Jenny Marsden of SI Bayside, Australia (photo below) was one of the first members in SISWP to engage her professional skills to raise funds for Project Sierra through the special labelling of bottles of Lens Cleaner which was sold by Clubs throughout the Region of South Queensland Australia.



Other special people who have excelled in their personal commitment as Project Sierra Ambassadors include Paula Siddle (NZ, photo below) who tested her own endurance to the limits by competing in a triathlon (bike riding, swimming and running). Paula sought sponsorship from family and friends and raised NZ\$900.



My own Club members Audrey Martin and Pat Pain (SI Moreton North Inc.) have tirelessly supported me. We have made thousands of belly button dusters and hundreds of huggy bears, knitted toys and coat hangers raising in excess of \$12,000 (AUS) through these craft sales and other activities including catering for functions, public screenings and sale of The Jammed DVD (human trafficking) and book sales.

However the most successful partnership to raise funds and improve the lives of

SISWP: Visionary members, endurance testing and Thai embroidery

Chris Knight, SISWP
International Liaison Project Sierra:
A Family and A Future



women around the world was the joint project (photo above) with SI Bangkok Thailand and the hill tribe women living in remote villages in Wiang Kaen, Chiang Rai, a mountainous province located at the northern tip of Thailand. With the help of SI Bangkok members Sara and Margo Waramontri these ladies designed special hand embroidered cross-stitch patterns exclusively for Project Sierra. The proceeds have provided an income to the local women, much needed funds for SI Bangkok to continue with their local projects as well as supporting the women and girls in Sierra Leone thanks to the many hundreds of Soroptimist members and friends that purchased these items.

As single threads we join this world, as single threads we leave. In between we're stitched together by the lives that we each weave.

Leslie Walters – The Red Thread:
A Love Story

Continuing the good work

As our Soroptimist International involvement in Project Sierra draws to a close at an international level, many members in SISWP will continue to support the women and young girls from Sierra Leone that have resettled in our countries through mentoring and leadership programmes and access to further education and training.

Thank-you SI, Alison, HHC, HANCI and SISWP for giving me this unique opportunity to be a part of the SI Quadrennial Project Team – it has been a life changing experience and an affirmation of the blessings of our Soroptimist International Friendships to improve the lives of women and girls around the world.

SIA: A box of blessings, white elephants and a travelling quilt

Lori Blair, SIA
International Liaison Project Sierra:
A Family and A Future

The Clubs and members of Soroptimist International of the Americas have supported Project Sierra since it was first launched in July 2007—recognising the importance of the project to support women and girls in Sierra Leone.

The project has been an opportunity for members to learn more about the situation in Sierra Leone, educate others in their communities and raise funds to support the SI Quadrennial Project.

SIA is very pleased that its Clubs have donated more than \$500,000 to the project to date. Although donations and support have come from all 19 countries and territories of the Federation, the work of one member, one Club and one Region is highlighted below.

Sandy Shultz: a blessing!

Sandy Shultz, a former SIA board director and currently an SIA fundraising council member, had the life-changing opportunity to attend a study tour to Rwanda for Project Independence. She had long experienced what Soroptimist International did for women and girls at the local level “but Rwanda took me to the next level. When Project Sierra came into being I had such a passion for what we do internationally.” She answered the call in Camino Real Region, USA, to support the project and bring it to life for Clubs and members. In the past four years, she has given presentations to nearly every Club in the Region.

“Sandy thinks that it was a blessing to be a part of this project, but she has also been a blessing: the Clubs in the Camino Real Region donated more \$10,000 to the project.”

Lori Blair SIA

In addition to educating the Club about the project, she kicked off their fundraising efforts. She used a cute decorated box given to her by a member that says “I Care” on the top with lots of positive sayings and sparkles and for a raffle. Sandy would auction off an SIA logo necklace or glitter stick pin and return the funds to the Club saying this could be the start of their donation to Project Sierra.



This fabulous quilt made by SIA Founder Region raised \$3000 for Project Sierra

The positive feedback was that members enjoyed hearing about what SI is accomplishing on an international level. Sandy really enjoyed the presentations as well, “I truly loved presenting to our Clubs about Project SIerra and sharing what a little help does for these women. When I showed the video I was able to help them see the difference in eyes of the women from the beginning of the programme to the end. In the end, their eyes shine with hope and promise.”

SI Kingman, AZ, USA: Selling elephants!

In 2007, as Project Independence was coming to an end, a presentation given to SI Kingman, AZ, USA ignited interest in international projects and supporting women around the world. When Project Sierra was announced, the Club was committed to continuing support for international projects.

Linda Miller has served as the Club’s International Goodwill and Understanding Committee Chair or Co-Chair for the past four years and stated that prior to 2007,

SI Kingman had been focused on helping women and girls in their small community. But the SI quadrennial projects taught them the importance of supporting women worldwide. A simple idea - a white elephant accessory sale was launched and brought Club and community understanding and support for Project Sierra.

The first year, the sale was open to the community and included presentations about the project and a meal made from recipes from Sierra Leone. In the years since, presentations have been made to give updates about the project and how women and girls were being helped. The sale grew to include books. The members of the Club solicited donations for the sale from community members and one-on-one explained the importance of the project and how it was helping women

and families rebuild their lives following the civil war. Another highlight for Linda was that anything leftover was donated to community organisations so the Club’s efforts supported local projects too. Linda said that she was “happy to hopefully be affecting people’s lives; that is best for women and that is what we are all about.”

The Club has recognised the quality of the quadrennial projects and is confident that their donations are making positive changes in the participants’ lives. With donations over \$6500, the members of SI Kingman certainly made a difference.

The travelling quilt!

Finally, the Founder Region raised money and awareness using a travelling quilt raffle. The beautiful quilt was made with fabric presented to Bobbi Enderlin from Past Soroptimist International President Lynn Dunning.

Lynn purchased the fabric from a woman in Sierra Leone. Founder Region Governor Linda Sue Hansen, an accomplished quilter, made the fabric into a quilt. The quilt travelled many miles from Club, district and Region meetings, including back and forth to Hawaii last year for the Founder Region conference. The raffle was completed at their Region conference in April 2011 when a recipient was chosen.

The Region raised more than \$3000 to make a difference in the lives of women and girls supported by Project Sierra.

It is often said that Soroptimist International is a woman-to-woman organisation. We raise awareness about our organisation and our mission and attract members to our Clubs by talking to one woman at a time. In each of these cases, the work of individual members, Clubs and Regions brought Project Sierra to life for other members and communities. By doing so, the members of SIA have helped the women and girls of Sierra Leone live their dreams of a better life.

Montréal 2011

Almost there!



Soroptimist International Convention July 10-14th 2011

With only a few weeks to go until the 19th SI Convention in Montréal, the question we all want to know the answer to is: Will you be there?

So far we have over 1100 Soroptimists registered from 50 countries. Truly international! This is an opportunity, which only appears once every four years, to meet and mingle with your international Soroptimist sisters. This is why SI Conventions are a must for every Soroptimist.

Programme **Inspiring the women of today**

Normally conventions have one fabulous keynote address; but Soroptimists always go the extra distance. We will be having 7 speakers addressing various aspects of the main theme "Women: Leaders in Civil Society". The keynote speaker is the Right Honourable Adrienne Clarkson. She will address the main theme.

The 6 plenary speakers will then explore various sub themes which include human rights, the environment, entrepreneurship, the arts and media, and health, science and sport.

The programme of plenary speakers includes Dr Samantha Nutt, the founder and Chief Executive of War Child Canada. She will be speaking on women as catalysts of change in Human Rights, drawing on her experience as a medic in some of the world's most violent flashpoints with War Child Canada, the UN and NGOs in Darfur, The Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Ethiopia and the Thai-Burmese border.

Anna Maria Tremonti, a former foreign correspondent and war correspondent will be addressing women as role models in

the arts, entertainment and media. Her coverage of major international stories includes the breakup of the former Soviet Union and the war in Bosnia.

Maude Barlow is the National Chairperson of The Council of Canadians, Canada's largest public advocacy organization, and the co-founder of the Blue Planet Project, working internationally for the right to water. She is also a Senior Advisor on Water to the President of the United Nations General Assembly. She will be addressing the theme of women as stewards of the environment. To find out more about all seven of the speakers, who are all Canadian and international women of note, visit the Convention website.

Workshops **Inspiration into Action**

The Programme Team has finalised the workshops and is delighted that so many Clubs from around the world will be involved in delivering a packed schedule. Many thanks to everyone who has contributed! To help you get the most out of your Convention experience, the workshops will be categorised to enable you to easily identify the workshops which are most helpful to you and your Club.

The categories are:

1. Be an Advocate
2. Environment and Security
3. Breaking Stereotypes/Positive Role Models
4. Ending Violence
5. Life Course
6. Train the Trainer

The format of the workshops will vary so you can pick the ones most suited to you – interactive presentations, Q&A sessions, films, dance workshops, 'UN style'

caucuses, external workshop speakers and practical sessions which address project design and monitoring. There will even be an opportunity to input into SI's 2012 statement for the Commission on the Status of Women.

Home from Home:

If you have yet to make your hotel arrangements, please do make your bookings soon. The Intercontinental and the Delta Centre Ville are now almost full but there is space at both Le Centre Sheraton and the Marriott Chateau Champlain. Please remember to book through our dedicated housing provider, Tourisme Montréal, to take advantage of the rates and to be put into the Soroptimist block. Visit <http://www.si-montreal2011.org/accommodation.html>.

Social events

Having fun, meeting up with old friends from around the world, and making new friends is a part of any Soroptimist experience. This is one of the few times Soroptimists from all Federations can gather together to celebrate achievements and traditions collectively, to build new friendships whilst cementing old ones.

The Convention Committee have a full schedule of social events, including dinners, lunches, tours and concerts including a delicious Convention banquet of Quebec cuisine, and a stunning concert in Notre Dame Basilica just for Soroptimists which 650 of you are already booked to attend!

The SI leadership, the convention organising committee and I are all looking forward to seeing you in Montréal, Québec, Canada July 10-14.

Yvonne Machuk, Convention Chair

Register: <http://www.si-convention.org> | **Accommodation:** <http://www.si-montreal2011.org/accommodation.html>