

SEPTEMBER 2011

TIS



The International Soroptimist



Flying the flag in Montréal

Soroptimist International Convention 2011

a global voice
for women

Soroptimist International



www.soroptimistinternational.org



Montréal

A wonderful network of Soroptimist friends

Our mission, our passion, our success!

By Alice Wells, President, Soroptimist International

We have just celebrated and connected with a wonderful network of Soroptimist friends at our recent convention in Montréal. Convention Chair Yvonne Machuk, Co-Chair Vicki Hobbs and their committee did an amazing job in planning the programme; every speaker was superb! They all connected with our mission and our vision. The venue was just perfect. If you were unable to attend, I hope that you have been able to follow all the comments on Facebook, Twitter and have had an opportunity to see the photos on the Convention website.

The programme for this convention really emphasised, to me, some very key issues about education and leadership.

- Imagine a world where women and girls are afforded equal opportunities for education and leadership.
- Imagine a world where women can earn a salary comparable to their male counterparts.
- Imagine a world where women are free from sexual harassment and can work in a safe environment.
- Imagine a world where girls can achieve their dreams of greatness.

As Soroptimists, it is our mission to help make these dreams a reality. We have come a very long way over the past 90 years but we still have much work to do.

- 1 girl in every 4 never makes it past fifth grade (10 years of age)
- 8 out of every 10 women is considered to be in vulnerable employment
- 25% of all parliamentary chambers have less than 10% women members

Our long-term theme of Education and Leadership provides countless opportunities for Soroptimists worldwide to engage in projects that will benefit women and girls.

Education and leadership for girls and women of all ages is the foundation for economic growth and for poverty reduction. Many women still lack basic skills in reading and writing. Girls from minority backgrounds or rural communities are far less likely to enroll in school – if they do, they are less likely to achieve the same outcomes as boys.

Our powerful Global Impact Report is an outstanding tool for clubs throughout the world to use to help identify areas where we are helping women and girls and areas of assistance that are still badly needed.

Soroptimists have long supported programmes that benefit women and girls –

not only in our own local communities but throughout the world. There are hundreds of successful local, national, and international Soroptimist projects working to educate and empower girls and women. Our experience illustrates both what works and what we still need to do. It is vitally important to submit your programme focus reports so that we can share with our potential partners, all that you do. Soroptimist International is still the best kept secret in the world. It is through our service that our name will become known in the wider world community. Service is also one of the best recruitment tools that we have. When other women see what we do; when they see the impact of our projects, they want to know more.

Our 2011 December 10th Appeal project, **Birthing in the Pacific**, targets Millennium Development Goal 5: to improve maternal health. This global target aims to assure that at least 90% of births worldwide would be attended by skilled health personnel by 2015. One of the biggest killers of children under five worldwide is the failure of neonatal care, partly due to the lack of skilled birth attendants and appropriate maternal advice.

I first heard about Birthing in the Pacific when I attended the UN DPI/NGO conference in Melbourne last August. What intrigued me was that it could hopefully be replicated in other countries throughout the world.

Although the latest UN statistics reported that fewer women are dying from complications with pregnancy and childbirth, there are still 1,000 women each day dying due to complications with pregnancy and childbirth. Julie Marsaban from SI/SWP says, “This is like two jumbo jets full of women crashing each day... or 41 women dying every hour. Yet... nobody knows about this. It’s not breaking news; if a small passenger plane crashes, the news is broadcast around the globe.”

Only 28 out of every 100 women giving birth have a trained health attendant in the least developed countries. More than 90% of maternal deaths occur in Africa and Asia where the majority of women die from severe bleeding, infections, eclampsia, and obstructed labor.

Let me give you a picture of what these women experience when having a child. If they go to a birthing centre, no food is provided so women have to bring their own

food. There is no waiting area for spouses or family members, they have to sit on the ground outside. Most birthing centres have no water fountains. I won’t even talk about computers or computer technology.

Papua New Guinea has the second worst maternal and infant mortality rate in Asia. What is shocking is that 88-98% of these deaths could be prevented. “Birthing in the Pacific” aims to minimise and reduce the risk of maternal and infant deaths by improving maternity skills of birth attendants in Papua New Guinea. Most maternal deaths occur in the first 24-48 hours after delivery. Women who have no treatment can die within 2-12 hours of delivery from post-partum hemorrhage; women also die from obstructed labour.

This project is rolling out four levels of training and support for nurses and midwives, community health workers, and village birth attendants. In addition, birthing packs are being provided along with increased access to pre-natal and reproductive health education for women. As education is used to save lives, the project also ensures that resources and facilities are equipped with the necessary tools that skilled birth attendants need to do their jobs.

Your donations to this wonderful project will go a long way to saving the lives of women giving birth. It is all about education and leadership. Another aspect of the programme is that clubs and individual members can “Adopt a Midwife”. For \$300 a midwife can receive the training she needs to help women in childbirth. This is an investment to ensure these women are well-trained and equipped to be successful.

Here is my challenge to all of you. Imagine the possibilities. Imagine what your federation, your union, your region, your club can do. Don’t be afraid to be innovative. Now is the time to look to the future. As Soroptimists, we have a vision which we all share; we are committed to a world where women and girls together achieve their individual and collective potential, realise aspirations and have an equal voice in creating strong, peaceful communities worldwide.

This vision is one where we, as Soroptimists, can make a difference in the lives of the women and girls throughout the world. Won’t you join me and **IMAGINE THE POSSIBILITIES!**

Alice Wells



Montréal

From the editor

Sounds like you all had a swell time!



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I'm so sorry that I couldn't be in Montréal, every single report and comment that we have received has been glowing!

1100 women from almost every part of the globe converged on Montréal, excited and apprehensive at the same time; would it be as good as they had hoped? Would it be worth their journey? Well, it sounds as though it most definitely was worth the journey, and the cost, and the time to visit Canada to enjoy their famous welcome and hospitality.

I saw the photos first, hundreds of happy faces; faces deep in concentration during the presentations, faces lit up with friendship as they met old friends and made new ones, faces that were full of energy, inspired by the speakers, the sisterhood and the brilliant event.

Then came the reports; filled with positivity, respect, empathy for their fellow Soroptimists, for the speakers and for the organisers.

No negative comments, no sense of disappointment in any aspect of the event. The social events sound wonderful; varied,

balanced, enjoyable and interesting. From the very first photos of the reception, everyone looked as if they were delighted with the whole shebang! The gala banquet looked fun, with a very relaxed atmosphere, a lively and fitting finale for a wonderful convention.

If, like me, you missed it this time – and wish that you hadn't – look ahead four years and make sure you are able to go to Istanbul for the next one!

The only sad news to come out of Montréal was that the Board has decided that this magazine, TIS, is to be discontinued after the December issue. It is a great disappointment to me and to many others who championed the new style and digital production of TIS, but the decision was taken.

I'd like to make the last issue a real cracker, so if you have any comments, suggestions or contributions to add to the December issue, published on December 15th, please let me know as soon as possible!

Email: editor@soroptimistinternational.org



Delegates at the Montréal Convention





Montréal

Views from the SI Presidents 2007-2011



Margaret Lobo AM, SI President 2007-2009

The buzz words in Montréal were 'Lead, Leaders, Leadership', while, as we already know, the main theme was "Women: Leaders in Civil Society", Well, the Organising Committee convened by Yvonne Machuk certainly portrayed their leadership skills in making the excellent decisions that brought the Convention together. Congratulations to each of them, as each member of this Committee took on a responsibility (some without much prior experience) and extended themselves to achieve far higher than was expected.

The speakers as we know were all Canadian Leaders in their field and they spoke of issues that were global and relevant to all of us. The workshops were excellent, once again Leaders sharing their experience. For those of you who could not be there it was an opportunity missed, but the reports in the online Newsletters which are easily accessible will make you feel part of this Convention even if you were not there.

The Sub-Themes each day displayed what we as Soroptimists can do to initiate and achieve change and the Organising Committee once again took the initiative to introduce subtle but effective changes throughout the Convention.

As 'Stewards of the Environment' we had notebooks and pens from recycled material, registration was online, there were computers available for participants to read the Daily Newsletters online or check their email – the Convention was as paperless as one could make it. The gifts in the Convention bags (very useful reusable and washable bags) were thoughtful and small for travellers to take home and yet useful – well done!

The Changeover ceremony involved the Past Soroptimist International Presidents – six of whom (excluding myself) were there – once again a subtle but very welcome change to the Changeover and gave all participants the opportunity to recognise our Past International Leaders.

Despite a very full programme there was time to mingle with members, meet friends and have a coffee or lunch together as these times were free, once again thank you to the Committee for this opportunity. The scheduled sessions were perfectly timed and the prior briefings and rehearsals made this Convention a well organised and enjoyable one.

I know that each of us will be proud to say I participated in 19th Soroptimist International Convention in Montréal as it is each of you that was there that made this Convention memorable – thank you for being there!

Hope to see you in Istanbul!



Hanne Jensbo, SI President 2009-2011

It has been said before, but it has to be repeated: It is a must for every Soroptimist to participate in a Convention. When you have participated, you really understand the spirit of Soroptimism and of Friendship and the Convention in Montréal was no exception:

It had all ingredients: Pleasant surroundings, excellent speakers, interesting workshops, good social elements, good performance and technique, professional leadership, international atmosphere and most of all, overwhelming friendship.

Rose, from Kenya, whom I met a month after the Convention expressed it this way: "What a fantastic, strong organisation we have in Soroptimism. Let the whole world know about our power."

I was extremely fascinated by the keynote speaker Senator Mobina Jaffer. I very much liked her life story, particularly that she is the first African born Senator in Canada. She is working so hard with immigrant communities and minority women all over the world, so that they are informed and aware of their human rights. Another highlight was Samantha Nutt from War Child Canada who spoke about human trafficking and about coltan, the mineral from Congo, where the mine owners exploit their workers and children to mine this expensive mineral; used for mobile telephones and computers.

All the keynote speakers were women and all were from Canada, so we really got a good impression of the status of women today in Canada. I also liked the presentations of the four federations about

the excellent work the clubs are doing. Wow! It is amazing!

Yvonne Machuk and her team had done a tremendous job to make the Convention a success and we owe them a big thank you for their work and enthusiasm.

So let us meet in four years in Istanbul; please invite all your Soroptimist friends to have the experience of a Convention in their own lives.



Soroptimist International Past Presidents at the Montréal Convention



Board Meeting

Rosie Coutts, SI Executive Director

The SI Board Meetings in Montréal from 6 – 9 July were the culmination of many months of preparation by the Officers, post holders and SI HQ. It was a great privilege to welcome 80 Programme Voting Delegates and over 60 silent observers to the meeting, in addition to our main board group.

Programme Voting Delegates from the four federations attend SI Board Meetings at the beginning of each quadrennium to take part in discussion, set the direction of programme and vote on SI's programme goals and objectives for the next four years. This year's meeting saw a lively debate, led by the SI Programme team who were delighted to hear the voices, opinions and experiences of so many engaged and committed members from all over the world.

The SI Strategic Plan is reviewed at each annual meeting. After discussion and board approval of the Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives for Programme, Organisational Development and Strategic Leadership, it was agreed that accompanying strategies would be developed after the Board Meeting and submitted to the Board for approval by postal ballot in October. An overview of the Strategic Plan is available at: <http://www.soroptimistinternational.org/who-we-are>. The full version is also available in the members' section.

Under President Hanne's leadership, the three days of Board Meetings included a number of fruitful opportunities for participation by the Board, post holders and Silent Observers in addition to the group work undertaken to establish the Programme goals and objectives. The board committee appointed to review structure and governance invited contributions from the meeting on 'how best to structure and govern SI to support a collaborative business model'; a lively discussion took place on the minimum number of members required to charter and maintain clubs; each federation delegation discussed the role of SI; and the floor was opened for discussion on SI's corporate identity.

As one Silent Observer put it, when asked what she had gained from the meeting: "As my first ever board meeting attendance, I have been amazed at the work that goes on, on our behalf. I have learnt so much, I couldn't list it!"

Some of the key decisions approved by the Board:

- December 10 to be adopted as a Soroptimist day of action for education and leadership for women and girls, linked to an annual global advocacy and awareness raising campaign.
- Future December 10 Appeals to benefit Soroptimist projects in education and leadership
- New Programme Goals and Objectives adopted for the next quadrennium and inserted into the SI Strategic Plan
- Annual SI budgets to be approved by postal ballot after the Board Meeting to ensure alignment with strategic planning priorities
- SI Treasurer allowed to renominate for a second 2 year term (subject to ratification of required constitutional change)
- Establishment of expert group to conduct review of SI's internal operations, structure and activities
- Terms of Reference approved for new Audit Committee
- Review of Convention Guidelines to be undertaken
- SI to continue progressing global impact reporting and produce annual reports

The SI Board meets to set the future direction for our organisation. Headquarters staff and SI post holders alike are now looking forward to developing and implementing the agreed strategies in the course of the new biennium – as we work to ensure that Soroptimist International remains at the forefront of international women's service organisations and fulfils our vision as 'a vibrant, dynamic organisation for today's professional and business women'.

C'est le fun!

Yvonne Machuk
Convention Chair



There were many opportunities at Convention to meet new friends, greet former acquaintances and enjoy the joie de vivre of Montréal.

Before and after the Convention, delegates were able to take tours to parts of Montréal, Quebec and Ottawa. Those attending the board meeting were invited to a reception outside on the terrace of the Mairie (City Hall) which was hosted by Tourism Montréal and Le Palais des congrès de Montréal. Exquisite hors d'oeuvres, specially made drinks and wonderful hosts made this a terrific transition from meeting to Convention.

The Friendship Reception on Sunday featured food from across Canada and a variety of strolling entertainment (the good-looking coureur de bois in the tepee was a hit!) which created the excitement for the next few days.

On Monday evening Soroptimists were entertained by Tocadéro whose voices filled the Notre Dame Basilica and inspired most to get up and dance. This was an exclusive concert for Convention participants and over 700 visitors enjoyed the evening.

The Gala Banquet on Wednesday evening began with the Change of Insignia – the formality recognising the outgoing and incoming leadership. During the meal, Cirque Eloize demonstrated their exceptional skills and enviable flexibility.

Two luncheons were also part of the experience – the Open Hearts Open Door luncheon and the Chatline luncheon. Both events saw Soroptimist from all over the world talking, laughing and sharing.

Cynthia Ullmark, President of the Banff National Park and Canmore club in Alberta, Canada had these words about her experience: "After sitting for hours reflecting on my experience at the Convention, I have summed it up in one word – Unforgettable. Those five days, with 1100 like-minded women from all over the world, listening to amazing speakers, attending wonderful presentations and enjoying the summer weather in a beautiful city, have made an indelible impression on my heart and on my mind.

"Events such as the evening concert at the spectacular Notre Dame Basilica and the Gala Banquet, where we were entertained by circus artists performing seemingly impossible feats, inspired me even further. The women at our table, that night, were from Nigeria, Kenya, Scotland, Canada and the United States. Imagine the lively and interesting dinner conversation we enjoyed! I am convinced that every one of us went home with a greater resolve, more confidence and a stronger commitment to help make the world a better place. Istanbul, 2015, is already marked on my calendar. See you there!"



Soroptimists from around the world enjoyed the Gala Banquet



Montréal

Forward to the future

Soroptimist International's new Programme Goals and Objectives

Hilary Ratcliffe,
International Programme Director 2011-2013

At the board meeting in Montréal, programme voting delegates from all four Federations took a leap forward in "faith". They agreed new programme goals and objectives that will enable us to drive forward the vision and mission agreed in Glasgow.

We should be an effective global voice for women and girls and play our part in civil society influencing decision makers. This is only possible if you have a clear message. To achieve this, the delegates agreed to narrow our goals and objectives and create a focus that really defines who and what we are.

Goal 1: Soroptimist International will improve the lives and status of women and girls through education, empowerment or enabling opportunities.

Increase access to formal and non-formal learning opportunities: Members will be able to engage in many of their current projects, such as building schools, providing equipment or sponsoring a child. It also encourages non formal education opportunities to mentor, get involved with out of school activities, work with organisations such as the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS), run award programmes to allow women to return to education and many more. Creative thinking will show the enormous scope of this goal.

Improve access to economic empowerment and sustainable opportunities for the employment of women: Returns on investment in women seen in the family, community and countries are high – if we can educate women and girls, empower them with skills and confidence, working within the wider community to enable opportunities then we are working towards the achievement of this ambitious goal.

Eliminate violence against women and girls and ensure women's participation in conflict resolution: This encompasses the work that we do in the area of violence against women – through prevention, protection, prosecution, and partnerships. It recognises that we not only believe in, but demand, that women are involved in conflict resolution.

Ensure women and girls have food security and access

to the highest attainable standard of health care.

Unless women have food, water and appropriate sanitation, they cannot fully participate in society. Soroptimists commit to using education, empowerment, and enabling opportunities to ensure that women and girls are no longer denied their basic human rights to water and health.

We also acknowledge that access to these fundamental resources are critical to achieving their fullest potential.

Address the specific needs of women and girls by improving environmental sustainability and mitigating effects of climate change and disasters.

Involved in this is our attitude to climate change, our environment and our help in rebuilding lives after disasters. We know that climate change and environmental issues affect women and girls more than their male counterparts, we also know how critical it is that women are included in the development and implementation of mitigating solutions.

All this comes under the remit of goal one. Surely enough choice for all us to find something to do and to find some area that we can really engage with.

Such inspired programme delegates!

Goal 2: Soroptimist International will be a global voice for increasing access to education and leadership for women and girls.

We do the work and this goal tells us to shout about it in the UN and any other forum where we can get a voice, locally, nationally and internationally.

As part of this goal we need strategic partners. We are influential and important, but numerically we are a small player in the global NGO (Non-Governmental Organisation) community. So we have to "punch above our weight", working with other likeminded organisations to greater effect. Into that context we can put our advocacy partnership with WAGGGS, but there may be others; we may find funding partners, campaigning partners and others. This goal allows us the flexibility to look.

Our work will only have the credibility that the voting delegates envisaged if it is based

firmly on the work that we actually do.

Our theme is Education and Leadership; agreed by a worldwide members' vote. They felt this is where we can all work together and make that key difference.

To enable this to happen the Board decided that progressing our work by reporting on our global impact is the way forward. This clearly shows the effect we are having in areas of formal and non-formal education. It also records the times we have been able to report and make statements in the United Nations and other fora at which we are represented.

Our agreed title is "Educate to lead"; the key words are

• Educate • Empower • Enable

Taking this report together with the agreed goals and objectives we have our plan. This then allows us to create strategies. These will include enhancing systems for reporting our work; developing materials to increase knowledge of our work; enabling us to advocate from a strong knowledge base. This will give us credibility and make our voice/work relevant.

So decisions made in Montréal will impact on all that we do. We have the standard against which to evaluate our work:

- It must improve the lives of women and girls
- It must be accurately reported
- It must feed into the annual global impact report
- It must educate to lead
- It must educate, empower and enable.

Most of all it must be something that we all buy into. Clubs can now look at their projects and evaluate them against this benchmark. Is it doing what we say we do? If not, should we be doing it? If it does, how can we do it better?

If we do this we will have that key niche that we need in the NGO community. We will be a valued member of civil society and we will get new members because we will be seen as relevant, exciting and fun to be with. Therefore we will go forward into the future with a strong presence enabled by our forward thinking delegates who met at the board meeting in Montréal.

Thank you to them all!



Montréal

On your marks, get set, go!

Gearing up for the International
Awareness and Advocacy Event

**Anusha Santhirasthipam,
International Assistant Programme Director**



On Your Marks

Soroptimist International launched the Global Impact Report at the International Convention in Montréal to recognise and celebrate achievements of Soroptimist clubs worldwide.

The report helps to reinforce our global mission and goals, draw attention to our collective strength in awareness and advocacy programmes and highlights areas of opportunity for us to further our cause to transform the lives of women and girls through education and leadership.

Soroptimist International also launched the Long Term Theme of "Soroptimists Educate to Lead". And what better way to draw attention and celebrate clubs' efforts towards this global theme than to showcase and celebrate our work through a common global effort called the International Awareness and Advocacy Event of Soroptimist International.

It is very significant for Soroptimist International to be able to coincide and correlate our event with International Human Rights Day on 10th December of every year.

How meaningful for Soroptimist clubs to use this globally recognised occasion to identify and portray a project or programme that champions the right of a girl child and woman to be educated and/or to show how our club work is empowering and enabling women to be leaders in their local community in decision-making roles of their choice!

The SI President's December 10th Appeal 2011 is a project called "Birthing in the Pacific" managed by SI South West Pacific Federation. Details of this project are available on the SI website as well as SISWP Federation website. This project aspires for Soroptimists all over the world to help fulfill UN Millennium Development Goal No.5 to significantly reduce maternal mortality by ensuring that women receive antenatal care and skilled assistance during delivery.

If your club does not have a specific advocacy project, you may wish to consider organising an event to create public

awareness and education on a woman's right to universal access to reproductive health and safe childbirth to avoid mortality or long term health complications.



Get Set

What do Soroptimist clubs need to get started with planning and preparation for this high impact "global ripple effect" event? Look at your club's role in your local community over the years in the areas of education and leadership. There must be a powerful effect from the cumulative efforts by your club; how you reached out to women and girls to improve their lives and status, what you did to influence positive changes in your local community or in Government, the partners and supporters whom you attracted to this mission.

Some important questions to discuss in your upcoming club meeting to ensure this event is immensely successful:

1. What are your club's key awareness building and advocacy messages to your local community?
2. What aspects of a woman's human rights

does your club champion at a local level?

3. How will you best showcase your club's initiatives?
4. Are there local partners, local educational institutions or local government authorities that could be invited to participate in this upcoming event to create a powerful endorsement "ripple effect"?
5. How can your club attract media support and publicity build-up to this event in your locality?
6. Where are the best locations to carry out your club's awareness and advocacy event to attract large public participation?

December 10th 2011 is a Saturday and as it is close to Christmas holidays, shopping malls would be excellent locations to stage your event and attract a big audience of spectators!

Also, consider the unique value of publicity and visibility gained by organising a local drama or film festival or evening of song performances with a theme that tells the story of your club's advocacy project coupled with a programme booklet or exhibition in the venue foyer to introduce your campaign.

For those clubs based in locations with warm climates during December, outdoor venues like parks and stadiums would be great places to organise your club's awareness and advocacy campaign together with a popular woman's sporting activity like women's football or hockey game or a Marathon or Cycle-a-Thon challenge.

Any such event offers opportunities for sporting participants to wear caps, wristbands or clothing items with your advocacy message and this can be powerfully reinforced with the display of prominent street banners and venue signage to attract public interest in the event.

Go!

Once you have planned your event, let the entire world know about it via your club website or Facebook pages or any other form of social media or conventional mass media. Please share all your news with us too!



Montréal

Speaker Programme: Be a catalyst for change

Reilly Anne Dempsey, SI Programme Director, reports



Maude Barlow: get involved and stay involved in whatever way you can!

Though the keynote and plenary speakers came from a wide variety of backgrounds, championed many different issues and worked through diverse channels, one single message resounded in the auditorium day after day – in order to be a catalyst for change, to be a leader in civil society and to transform the lives of women and girls, we must be willing to stand up, speak out and fight for what we believe.

And fight we do (and, hopefully, bathe as well)! All of the speakers spoke about the importance of Soroptimist work through action, advocacy, and awareness-raising. But we can always learn and do more.



The convention keynote address from the **Right Honourable Adrienne Clarkson**, former Governor General of Canada, eloquently

inspired us to welcome different perspectives and all kinds of individuals into civil society. “There has to be a place for everyone. Everyone has a right to live and create as we do.”

It is only through compromise, consensus, negotiation, and discussion that we can lead civil society to positive change.



Dr. Samantha Nutt, a medical doctor with more than fifteen years of experience working in war zones, moved the crowd to action when she said that

the increasing level of complacency in the world is the greatest threat to social justice. Dr. Nutt shared a story from her experience in post conflict Somalia. She and a local midwife travelled the country to speak to women about the dangers of

female genital mutilation. With them, they brought an educational tool – a book depicting normal genitalia. Dr. Nutt and Miriam arrived at a remote village to speak to the women, but before doing so they were obliged to spend six hours convincing the village elders that it was important to educate the women. The men were astounded that two women had travelled without male escort – but eventually did allow them to meet with the women.

The men stayed outside the hut, but were talking loudly, peeking into the room, and distracting and intimidating the women... until, finally, an elder woman stood up and shouted something to the men, who suddenly scattered.

Apparently she told them “we are going to talk about VAGINAS” and if they wanted to stay, they could. The men ran away. Sometimes we have to say the things that no one else will say to get to where we want to be. Even if it does mean saying VAGINA as loudly as possible.

“Fighting for social justice is like taking a bath. Do it every day or you stink.”
Maude Barlow quoting a colleague

Maude Barlow fights for water as a human right; among other distinctions, she is notably the co-founder of the Blue

Planet Project. She too called upon each and every Soroptimist in the audience to get involved and stay involved in whatever ways we can.

Finally, if we still hadn't got the message, there was no escape from the call to action from the **Honourable Senator Mobina Jaffer**, Senator for British Columbia.

Senator Jaffer truly is an agent of change and a leader in civil society – she travels the world advocating for the needs of the most vulnerable women and girls, using her position of power and influence to affect change.

To her, all of the issues on which we work – maternal mortality, domestic violence, FGM, 'honour' killings, financial abuse, forced marriage, pay equity – it's all violence against women, plain and simple.

Senator Jaffer challenged Soroptimists to continue to fight and to take action, be advocates, and raise awareness.

This was a really wonderful, fascinating and inspiring programme which was enjoyed by all the delegates.



Panelists **Lee Graff** (president and co-founder of a woman-friendly cosmetic company), **Dr. Kirsty Duncan** (MP and public health expert) and **Anna Marie Tremonti** (internationally acclaimed journalist), together presented their unique perspectives and experiences, leaving the audience with these nuggets of wisdom as we fight for women and girls: Those who have nothing to give often give the most. Keep asking questions until you get the answer you want. Work to leave the world a better place.



Montréal

Workshop Programme: Inspiration into action!

Anna Aiken, SI Programme Officer, reports



The workshop programme aimed to showcase the best of what it means to be international. We certainly felt like we'd been round the world twice by the time Convention closed; with Soroptimists from Norway, Zimbabwe, India, USA, UK, Denmark, Belgium, Switzerland, Germany, Kenya, Nigeria, Canada, Australia, Rwanda and Belgium, an amazing array of workshops emerged.

The theme of advocacy ran through several workshops. "SI, the UN and other Global Acronyms" sought to clarify the confusing world of the UN. Margaret Cook and Lois Beilin explored how SI advocates at this level and how SI's UN work could inform the work of your club.

"Your Voice at the UN" was about CSW. Dawn Marie Lemonds and Yoko Komori Olson led UN caucus style sessions to give Soroptimists a chance to comment on the theme of CSW 2012: Rural Women. These ideas will be used in SI's CSW statement next year.

"Fairtrade and You", presented by Ruth Bruce and Morag Rennie from SIGBI, looked at Fairtrade and the rise of the Fairtrade town. Women are the primary food producers, yet have the least control over prices and are at the greatest risk of poverty. Never forget the strength of Soroptimist buying power! Supporting Fairtrade initiatives

and products makes a difference!

Cathy Standiford, Liv Handeland, Sue Riney and Carell Wingrave from SIA and SIE presented a powerful discussion on "Soroptimist Strategies to STOP Trafficking". This produced some great notes which you can access in the members section of the SI website, including template petitions, tips for awareness raising and papers to expand your knowledge.

It was a privilege to have so many workshops from African Clubs. "A Changing Climate" was co-hosted by SI Denmark and SI Kenya. This showcased strategies for adapting to and mitigating climate change, demonstrating how cleaner production practices are applied in industries employing many Kenyan women. SI Zimbabwe presented "Talking Photos" which explored the life of a girl child in Zimbabwe through photos and posters. "Land Rights and Economic Empowerment: Stories from East and West Africa" was a partnered workshop by SI Kenya and SI Nigeria. They considered economic empowerment and the vulnerabilities faced by women, particularly widows, prevented from inheriting land.

Films were a popular format. SI India had been in film production mode for several months before Convention and the result was an outstanding

film exploring education and leadership, Soroptimists in India and the history of the women's movement. The film is now available in three parts on the SI website, through the resources page. We also showed "Voices Unveiled: Turkish Women Who Dare" which explores the clash of East and the West through the lives of three modern Turkish women, and "Fight for Life" which chronicles the difficulties experienced by women giving birth in Bolivia, Mongolia, Uganda, Malawi and Bangladesh. It was an honour to see Senator Mobina Jaffer at the Fight for Life screening – she subsequently borrowed the films!

Skill Up! Project Management Skills was a two part workshop run by SIE Federation Programme Director Ulrike Neubert, and SI Programme Director Reilly Dempsey, covering project design, stakeholder needs analysis and monitoring and evaluation. This workshop was very popular and we will soon be making a tool kit available on the website.

We welcomed external speakers to two workshops. Leslie Moreland, Programme Officer for WaterCan (a Canadian NGO), joined SIE's session to share her experience in helping the world's poorest people gain access to clean water, basic sanitation and hygiene education. Valerie Roy and Jocelyn Lindsay

from the Masculinities Research Team at Quebec University held a session on their specialism: male centred interventions to tackle domestic violence in Quebec.

And if all of that sounded like too much sitting (!), there was a dance workshop to get you moving! The Joy of Living dance workshop was run by Jacky Simpson, a qualified dance teacher from SIGBI, who runs dance classes for older ladies. Her Convention dance workshop was a big hit - much fun was had attempting the Charleston!

Last but not least, International President Alice, IPD Hilary and IAPD Anusha held an afternoon 'meet and greet' session where they shared their vision for the future and answered questions. Phew! What a programme!

The programme team would like to thank all those who helped to make this ambitious workshop programme a reality – particularly the amazing women from all Federations who hosted the sessions. Thank you for the many hours spent making films, designing presentations, planning dance workshops, writing handouts, and connecting with Soroptimist friends all over the world to bring the best of SI to Montréal!

And thanks to the hundreds of Soroptimists (and Soroptimisters!) who attended the sessions – we hope you enjoyed the experience as much as we did!



Cathy Standiford



Margaret Cook



Dawn Marie Lemonds



Hilary Ratcliffe



L-R: Annette Büssenschütt, Club Wiesbaden; Brigitte Plambek-Rätz, Club Oldenburg; Roswitha Briel, Club Wiesbaden; Sigrid Niebling, Club Fulda and Verena von Tresckow-Bronke, Club Frankfurt am Main

Three German Soroptimists are experiencing their first SI Convention. Two of them have been on holiday in the Canadian countryside and ask themselves, "Do we really want to do this? Return to big city life of Montréal, swap the serenity of whale watching for dreary air-conditioned conference rooms, struggle through speeches in English and demanding workshops?"

Yes! Just 10 minutes into the programme and our Soroptimist hearts are racing. We greet the representatives of each country with thundering applause and revel in the midst of the global SI community.

At the Friendship Evening we meet fellow acquaintances from Germany and from our Link clubs. Well-prepared women attending their umpteenth Convention present us with potato pins from Idaho, candles in the form of roses from San Francisco and koala bears from Australia. We invite them all to Germany to join us in celebrating Club Frankfurt's 60th anniversary in 2012 and to attend the SI/E Congress in Berlin in 2013.



Montréal

SIE: A first timer at Convention!

By Annette Büssenschuett and Roswitha Briel, Club Wiesbaden and Sigrid Niebling, Club Fulda

Over the next three days, we hear Canadian women with amazing biographies and varying cultural backgrounds give outstanding talks on the Convention theme 'Women: Leaders in Civil Society'. They show how a vision can become reality – a truly moving experience. The topics are covered in greater detail in the workshops.

The Best Practice projects demonstrate how our organisation of nearly 90,000 women has done so much good and is now ushering in the new worldwide SI theme, 'Education and Leadership'. As different as the projects are, they all have one thing in common: sustainable change is best achieved through educating women.

It is particularly satisfying to hear SI President Hanne Jensbo specifically mention our German Union Mentoring Programme and encourage other countries to join the European-wide programme.

Making a symbolic journey around the globe, we witness the change of insignia: Hanne from Aarhus, Denmark to Alice Wells

from Phoenix, Arizona. Similar to this passage from one continent to another, the venue of the next SI Convention in 2015 will be Istanbul, the city that links Asia with Europe.

In Canada, German sobriety meets North American enthusiasm. It takes getting used to, but was it a problem? Not at all! We respect each other's differences. After all, we are united in two ambitious goals: to improve the lives and status of woman and girls through education, empowerment or enabling opportunities, as well as to be a global voice for increasing access to education and leadership for women and girls.

Further 'highlights' of the Convention are singing Canadian hymns, friendly hostesses at each escalator, SI on YouTube, marvellous outfits at the gala event including a Scottish kilt, maple syrup galore, breath-taking circus numbers, daily 'Lost and Found' announcements, a toast and colourful balloons welcoming Alice and several generations of former SI Presidents on stage – everything and everyone is excellent.



SIA member Alice Wells, now International President, shares some of her federation members' comments.

Coast: "SI Convention was fabulous - I am especially impressed by ALL our speakers. This was my first international convention - now I'm hooked!"

Christine Duranceau, MD, PhD, SI LaQuinta, Golden West Region USA

"It was inspiring. The keynote address from the Former Governor General of Canada, The Right Honourable Adrienne Clarkson gave nine points that makes a society civil and moral. The point that hit home the most to me was: A civil society is best if it has diversity which leads to friendship, understanding and tolerance. Other lectures were from women who had accomplished so much in their lives that you wonder if they ever slept. The lectures were interesting, deep, sometimes emotional, which brought tears to many of the audience's eyes. By the end of the week, I was raring to continue working towards the goals set by Soroptimist International."

Linda Nixon, Governor Elect, Golden West Region USA: "I met so many new Soroptimist friends and learned about club projects, region/union practices, and federation operations. I would never had discovered this new knowledge without having access to so many Soroptimists from around the world. I have to say that the

Raquel Arreola Ruiz, SIA President Elect, Mexico/Central America Region: "In just a few words, I can tell you that I enjoyed very much this Convention. The Convention Center was a great place. The agenda was always on time, most of all I met wonderful Soroptimists from all over the world."

Myra Lau, Region Governor, Desert

SIA: First timers at Convention!

"water lady" Maude Barlow was terrific!" Her compelling presentation was one I hope none of us will soon forget. I can't imagine that any other convention could top this one! However, the only way to find out will be to do it all again in four years!

President Geneva Taylor, SI-Indy Metro, Midwestern Region: "One speaker quoted Jung; 'The most powerful thing in a home is the unrealised dreams of a parent'. Meaning all of our dreams for the future, whether we have our own children or not, drive the belief of what is possible and the achievement of these possibilities in the people we inspire.

"It was great to hear about clubs across the world and the partnering and projects that they've put in place to help African women. In another seminar we learned about how difficult it is for girls to get an education in Zimbabwe and that a mere \$6 can pay for the fees for a girl to go to school for a year. I even received a \$50 Billion dollar Zimbabwe note, that was basically made "play money" when the country chose to use the US Dollar as its main currency and how many people lost their savings due to this changeover.

"I learned that there is so much still to do in the world; we should continue making a difference in the lives of women and girls in every way we can."



Montréal

SIGBI: A first timer at Convention!

By Rosalie Byrne-Muir (left), National President, SI Republic of Ireland



As a first timer, what did I take away from the Montréal Convention?

I rushed back to broadcast on our national website a proverb I hadn't heard before but summed up the ethos of what we were about in Montréal:

If you are planning for a day, catch a fish
If you are planning for a year, plant rice
If you are planning for a decade, plant trees
If you are planning for a lifetime, educate a woman.

As a Convention first timer I had no idea what to expect and my abiding memories are of the wonderful women I met from all over the world, their warmth and generosity, the quality of the speakers – each one as inspirational as the next.

I know we all talk about the "Friendship" element of being a Soroptimist, but you truly do not get the real meaning of what you belong to until you attend an international convention.

As well as the opportunity to renew old and make new friends from our own

federation, Soroptimist International Great Britain and Ireland (SIGBI), wonderful new friendships were made with many other nationalities.

Because of a special friendship and exchange of cards I was able to convey the sympathies of our National Soroptimist Association to the incoming President of the Norwegian Soroptimist Association on the terrible tragedy that they suffered in their country last month.

This was greatly appreciated by them and that exchange of emails has established a relationship which I hope we can build on.

During the final session when Senator Mobina Jaffer did her presentation on how we change attitudes to prevent violence against women, one lady from the SIGBI delegation told how she had two married sons and her daughters-in-law had thanked her for bringing them up with such respect for women – I almost felt like crying when you think of the violence against women that, with a little bit of education, could be

corrected from birth.

The entertainment during the Gala Banquet by Cirque Éloize was amazing.

From the attendance at the Board Meeting I got to understand the difficult job undertaken by SI and the four Federations – it's quite like what happens in the clubs but on an international scale.

And why the doggy photograph? Well, this is my oddest memory of my trip to Montréal: a very attractive lady sat near me on Sunday morning when I went out for brunch. She asked if she could move a chair at my table to make room from her buggy and I naturally asked if I could look at her baby – the attached photograph shows her baby, Honey.

Honey didn't make a sound all during the meal and smiled for the camera when asked to do so!



SISWP: A first timer at Convention!

By Yvonne Simpson, President, Soroptimist International South West Pacific Federation



The Montréal Convention was exciting, inspiring and challenging. Certainly an experience I would recommend – the opportunity to network with 1100 Soroptimists from 58 countries, make new friends, listen to women who had made a difference in their worlds and yet were human and approachable. What a privilege!

I had the challenge of also being a presenter. I had some concerns about the pitch of delivery. Would this be a formal occasion? My concerns disappeared at the friendship evening – there were cowgirls! There were groups in funky uniforms. I thought, these "gals" are not formal or stuffy – they have humour and are friendly. I felt right at home.

I was very impressed with the organisation; simple, straightforward and seamless. If the presenters had time for questions they took all questions at once and then blended their response to give answers to all those who had asked. This was very judicious use of time. The focus was kept where we wanted it – on the answer.

The calibre of the presentations was very high. Yes, Canadians were showcased this time, but their stories were universal. The presentations were a highlight. I learned that we are running out of water – and why. I was reminded that the basics that prevent

girls from attending school are often linked with water and sanitation. I relearned that those who had lost the most were often those who gave generously. The universality of the female experience in war torn countries stirred me. Once again education was the key to making a difference. We are on the right path choosing education and leadership.

I was impressed with how Canada has addressed the issue of immigration; they welcome a 1% increase per year to their population through immigration. This makes for a diverse and welcoming society.

The workshops enabled us to choose areas of interest – and closely engage with other Soroptimists. We could wander and chat or browse the booths, some retail, others projects and conferences. I had time to have dinner on the Lawrence river boat, attend an enthralling recital of four tenors in the old basilica and wander through the historical town.

I appreciated the opportunity to be updated on programme and to find out more about The Global Impact Report; a major resource for Soroptimists. Our programme team excelled themselves when the objectives were chosen by the Programme Voting Delegates.

A highlight was the gala dinner with past international presidents on stage conducting proceedings. It was heartwarming to connect

in this way to our history and to acknowledge those who had led our organisation.

Hanne gave us her highlights; we enjoyed her engaging manner. We learned from her that Soroptimists prefer to support a specific project. Margaret presented her biennium and we celebrated the challenges and contrasts she experienced. Her appeal for fistula patients once again touched me.

I also enjoyed hearing what the federations had achieved in the past four years. The details may have been different, but the common thread of programme to empower women and girls was very evident.

So, I am planning to go to Istanbul in 2015. I will take a shawl to be prepared for air-conditioning, my camera, and an open mind. I look forward to reconnecting with women who are now friends and being recharged again for programme.

Thank you Yvonne Machuk and your committee - you did us proud.

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.

In June, the UN Women Executive Board was held in New York. SI UN rep Yoko attended to promote the Soroptimist International name to UN Women. She did a fantastic job - as the photo shows! At the end of the first day of the meeting, Yoko was able to give Ms Bachelet an SI leaflet, and share with her who we are.

In Nairobi, our reps have also been doing some excellent networking. As a result of SI's attendance at the UN Environment Programme's Governing Council meeting in February, our UNEP rep, Alice Odingo, was asked to give a paper on Disaster Risk Reduction, Gender and Youth by the Director of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development. Alice has also been successful in securing funding to attend a UNEP consultation in Germany this September. She will be joined by International Assistant Programme Director, Anusha, at this event. We'll be reporting back soon!

Geneva

In Geneva, our UN reps were delighted to see the Convention on Domestic Workers adopted at the 100th Session of the ILO. Domestic work is mainly carried out by women and girls, many of whom are migrants or members of disadvantaged and marginalised communities. Without legal protection, domestic workers are particularly vulnerable to work based discrimination, and to other abuses of human rights. This resolution is therefore hugely significant.

In July, SI was delighted to be selected to deliver an oral statement at the annual ECOSOC High Level Segment. The theme was "Implementing the Internationally Agreed Goals and Commitments in Regard



Soroptimist International UN Rep. Yoko-Komorori Olson with Michelle Bachelet, Director, UN Women

to Education" – a perfect match for the SI theme of education and leadership. Also, for the second year running, our written statement was selected for distribution. Many thanks to our Geneva representative, Sina Stiffler, who attended the meeting and delivered SI's statement.

Rome

In Rome, Cinzia Palmi, UN representative to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), coordinated a side event for International NGOs at the FAO Conference. The meeting focused on rural women, microcredit, land tenure and cooperation. The main speaker was Marcela Willarreal, Chief of the Gender Unit. A number of Soroptimists took part in the event, including SI Past President Marie Jeanne Bosia, who spoke on microcredit and the Swiss Union quadrennial project. The President of the Italian Union, Wilma Malucelli, spoke on the importance of supporting and equipping rural women.

New York

In New York, our UN representative, Lois Beilin, reported back from the 49th Session of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the general recommendation up for discussion concerning the protection of women's human rights in conflict and post conflict situations. The recommendation was presented during the session in New York to allow global consultation and discussion. This recommendation, when final, will allow individuals, NGOs, international agencies and representatives of civil society to report violations to the CEDAW experts in Geneva and New York.

In August, Carol Themm, Kathy Mayer and Lois attended the Working Group on Ageing in New York. One of the big discussion points was whether to have a "new" convention on protection of ageing persons. The debate was not conclusive with approximately equal numbers of states

and NGOs for and against. Because many governments have either not implemented human rights legislation or do not have anything specifically on older persons, the Civil Society and NGO community will be pushing hard and meeting with governments that are undecided between now and the next meeting in early 2012.

Finally, we have a new page on our website all about our UN reps. Visit <http://www.soroptimistinternational.org/si-at-the-un/learn-more-about-our-un-reps> to find out more about them!

Remember - for more details on any story mentioned here, visit the news pages of www.soroptimistinternational.org, and 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 and events

September:

1st – 2nd: UNEP Consultation Event in Bonn

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

5th – 7th: IP Alice and IPD Hilary meet with UNESCO Reps in Paris

October:

25-27th: Commonwealth People's Forum, Perth

26th-27th: Audacia Conference, New York

28 – 30th: Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, Perth

November:

25 October – 10th November: 36th Session of the General Conference of the UNESCO

21st – 25th: 143rd Session of the FAO Council