



SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL



From 'Local to Global'

a global voice
for women

Sorooptimist



International

Transforming Lives with the Prison Reform Trust - SIGBI

Following publication of the Soroptimist International of Great Britain & Ireland report 'Transforming Lives' with the Prison Reform Trust (PRT), in December 2014, clubs across the UK and the UK Programme Action Committee (UKPAC), have been involved in disseminating the findings and encouraging responsible authorities to take action to address the recommendations within it.

The intention is to inspire changes to the way in which women's minor offending is addressed across the UK. More community based solutions with an emphasis on diversion out of the Criminal Justice System (CJS) and into appropriate help for women to address the causes of their offending has been the focus. Soroptimists have been involved in work in each legal administration with early success in helping to dissuade the Scottish Government from building a new prison and subsequent involvement with a review of the current system.

The privatisation of the probation service in England and Wales (E&W) has led to disruption of community services available to women. We have been engaged in discussions about the impact and trying to ensure that help continues to be available. In Wales the Integrated Offender Management (IOM) Cymru scheme is being rolled out. The IOM approach is vital in bringing agencies together to maximise use of collective resources and to tackle crime and reoffending in a consistent way, at the same time allowing for flexibility depending on the type of offender, where they live and the reasons they offend. The plan involves many agencies through multi-agency groups in order to have consistent arrangements across Wales and to reduce reoffending.



The HM Inspectorate of Probation (E&W) is conducting a 'Thematic Inspection of the Work with Women Offenders'. We have representation on the reference group. In addition, a number of clubs and PRT have put in separate reports on the facilities available, or not, in defined areas.

Concerns raised at the first meeting included:

- Concentration on high population areas with an apparent omission of rural areas;
- The lack of stable finances for Women's Centres;
- Little progress on alternatives to prison;
- Sentencers unaware of the facilities available in their areas.

Interest has been shown in the report from as far afield as the USA, Barbados, Kenya and Uganda. The latter one, through the good offices of the PRT and the Penal Reform International (PRI), has led to work with Scotland North linking with Soroptimist International of Masaka to help address the problems there. SI Masaka will develop links with PRI and their partners in Uganda, including in the capital Kampala. The club hopes to raise funds for starting a home for women who have nowhere to go when they leave prison.

The PRT has won a major grant from the BIG Lottery Fund to continue the work of reforming the way in which women involved in the CJS are treated. We continue to be concerned about the effect imprisoning mothers has on their children. This work involves all four countries of the UK and will have to address the differing legal and other systems in place currently. Multi-agency working will be essential in this and Soroptimists across the UK, will be playing their part.



Picture: Courtesy of Prison Reform Trust



SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL

SYRIE 'BACK TO SCHOOL'

More than four years since the Syria crisis began in 2011, stories depicting families desperately seeking refuge have now become common place in the headlines of the worldwide press. Men, women and children cross borders into Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and Iraq, attempting dangerous journeys and facing terrible uncertainty. What is and always has been a human story - a human crisis, is now being portrayed as such, on social media and in the pages of international newspapers. Heart-breaking images show the innocent victims of the ongoing civil war.

As of September 2015 the number of Syrians in Turkey reached 1,938,999. Alarmingly, 1,050,937 are children. (Source: UNICEF). Since the crisis began, Turkey has maintained an emergency response and declared a temporary protection regime, housing refugees or 'guests' in 23 government run camps. The Turkish government coordinates with international aid agencies such as the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the World Food Program (WFP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and private NGOs. Access to education for Syrian children is a challenge. Turkish schools simply cannot accommodate the swell in numbers, and the language barrier is a big factor, with Syrian children speaking Arabic, and the Turkish education system and teaching being predominantly in Turkish.

Many children have not had the opportunity to go to school in recent years, making entry to schooling according to age and ability complicated. As more and more people flee Syria, such dramatic displacement means almost 85% now find themselves living outside the government run camps.

Article written October 2015



IN ACTIE VOOR

unicef 

SYRIE 'BACK TO SCHOOL'



Twelve million people are reportedly in need of life-saving aid inside Syria as the civil conflict enters its fifth year. Close to 4 million people have sought refuge in neighbouring countries. Source: United Nations

Photo: UNICEF/Nicky Jansen

As part of the United Nations, UNICEF has the mandate to work globally for the rights of every child. In Turkey, UNICEF's emergency programme focuses on education and child protection for Syrian children and for vulnerable Turkish children in host communities. UNICEF explains: "At the onset of the Syria crisis response, the Syrian population was housed in camps in Turkey, making it possible for us to reach large numbers of children with educational opportunities."

"However, over time with the crisis in Syria triggering the largest refugee influx in recent history, Syrians are now spread over the southeast region of Turkey, and in urban areas. Since then, the education access rate is much lower, especially outside the camps. Our strategy is to increase access to education by creating extra learning spaces. This is done through the construction of extra classrooms at schools, through the use of pre-fabricated school buildings, through converting existing buildings into classrooms and through refurbishing existing schools".

In 2013, Soroptimists from the Netherlands became aware of the situation and the shocking extent of the suffering. "The Syria crisis was clearly devastating for all those involved", says Margit van Hoeve, SI Gouda, Netherlands. "People were being deprived of so very much and it was important to us that we did not sit back and watch children be deprived of their future". Members of SI Gouda and I made a decision that we must do something".

Doing something for this group of Soroptimists meant actively seeking out opportunities; finding a means to make a difference. A meeting with UNICEF Netherlands and UNICEF Turkey became the turning point and led to a partnership; a way forward for Soroptimists to actively focus their activities and assist those caught up in the crisis. UNICEF fit the Soroptimist targets, providing a concrete plan with which they could focus on providing education to the young generation.

A young girl playing in the UNICEF supported kindergarten in the Nizip Refugee Camp, Turkey. 'The happiest place in Nizip camp'. Photo: UNICEF/Nicky Jansen





Photo: UNICEF/Nicky Jansen

Syria 'Back to School' was launched in 2014 and is set to run until 2016, with the main aim of giving children outside the camps the opportunity to access education. Seventy-six (out of 101) Soroptimist clubs within the Dutch Union have now joined together and are actively involved in fundraising for Syria 'Back to School'. An executive party has been established - a national task force in the Netherlands, with the objective of supporting, stimulating and informing clubs. Sub-teams have also been set up in order to develop activities and communication and expand international reach for the project, so that Syria 'Back to School' remains at the forefront of people's minds.

"Overall winner of the 'Educate to Lead' award for the Soroptimist International of Europe Best Practice Awards 2015, the planned Soroptimist contribution to Syria 'Back to School' is 300,000 euros for the whole period, more if possible. Margit van Hoeve explains: "Our contribution is currently financing teaching materials, teacher training, together with school supplies such as rucksacks, furniture and school books. We'll try to facilitate the education of up to 2100 children, which requires a minimum of 100,000 euros per year". Margit adds: "Through the partnership with UNICEF we aim to improve the situation of vulnerable children in Turkey. UNICEF collaborates with the Turkish government to improve the access to quality education. Our goal is to drive change forward and make education for these children a reality".

UNICEF adds: "**Education in all its aspects is vital to instil in children hope for the future, as well as to prevent a lost generation.** Whilst the number of children requiring support increases, parents and other caregivers are themselves victims of trauma and less able to support their children. Acute levels of stress and insecurity are evident in children and their caregivers. Education is considered fundamental to create continuity, a sense of normalcy and to improve the wellbeing, resilience and access to relevant information by children and their families during times of conflict, early recovery and development".

Emine Erdem of the Soroptimist Turkish Union talks of their efforts: “We witness the turmoil of Syrian refugees every day. Seeing scattered families everywhere whose lives have been torn apart in recent years because of the tragic civil war that has struck their homeland. Yet, the future rests in the children, and I am sure Soroptimist contributions will make a difference in their lives. It was with great admiration that I learnt about the Dutch Union’s Syria ‘Back to School’ project during my term as the Assistant Programme Director of SIE. The Syrian crisis is a tragedy especially for children. Lives are devastated but we still have the future to save in the name of children. The Syrian problem will affect generations so it is truly more appropriate that Soroptimists committed themselves to a long-term project rather than a one-time, in-kind or financial aid”.

Emine continues: “Our (the Turkish Union) inclination has been to coordinate the aid of European Soroptimists through the agency of the Turkish Union. Thanks to SIE and German Soroptimists we could use almost 10,000 euros to provide immediate aid for the refugees hosted at Nizip and Osmaniye Camps, two of the 23 refugee camps officially set up by the Turkish government. The aid was directly put into use with the help of the official regional coordinators of the camps. Women and children were provided food, clothing, shoes, blankets and medical check-up. More than 5000 people benefited from these in-kind donations. Some Turkish clubs near the Syrian border also employed Syrian refugee women in their long-term projects like carpet-weaving workshops”.



Photo: UNICEF/Nicky Jansen

SI Clubs were invited to assist by donating directly to Syria 'Back to School', or by donating through the SIE appeal, through their own fundraising activities, or by taking joint action with other clubs in their country, and setting up similar partnerships to that of the Dutch Union.

In the province of Mardin / southeast Turkey, people arrive daily and the need for schools is high. It is estimated that some 40,000 - 50,000 school-age children now live in this area. In cooperation with the Turkish local authorities, Welthungerhilfe, one of Germany's largest aid organisations, supports the operation of a school in Mardin for 400 Syrian students. Since January 2015, this project is financed by donations from Soroptimist International Germany. Due to the high donations of SI Germany through numerous actions and individual donations (until September approximately 110,000 euros), they are hoping to continue to support the Syrian children into this school year 2015/2016.

UNICEF concludes: "Due to the fact that the Syrian crisis is continuing and there is still no solution, the situation for families and children remains very fragile. Most refugees are being hosted in the region. But funds are drying up. This is one of the reasons why refugees are fleeing to Europe. UNICEF and its partners need continuous funding to support children and their families in host countries like Turkey with basic needs and education. We are extremely grateful that the Soroptimists are helping us two fold. On the one hand by raising funds to educate the Syrian refugee children in Turkey and on the other hand by telling the story over and over again to as many people as possible to make them aware what is happening around the borders of Syria. The more funding we receive and the more people get involved the better. The total emergency education programme of UNICEF Turkey has an appeal of USD 42 million for 2015. By September 2015 only 22.3 million was covered. This leaves a funding gap of USD 19.7 million".

Many Soroptimist clubs around the world are finding different ways of supporting and fundraising for those caught up in what UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon described as "*the worst humanitarian crisis of our time*".



Photo: UNICEF/Nicky Jansen

Soroptimist Margit van Hoeve, adds: “As a result of the efforts of the Dutch Soroptimists, thousands of children have been able to attend school classes. Around 80 clubs have so far participated, and donations were received from Soroptimist Clubs around the world.

230,000 euros has already been collected which has gone partly towards rucksacks with teaching aids such as books, notebooks, pens etc, teachers support, and school furniture for fifteen schools in the province of Kahraman Maras, in the South East part of Turkey. In meetings with UNICEF it is indicated that construction of large schoolbuildings is still needed, however today’s urgency is for ‘fast and flexible’ expansion and a ‘containerclass’ which has two classrooms, can respond to this urgent need.

So the next step is for the purchase of six containerclass which can accommodate, in two shifts per day, around 90 children. In total 540 children can be educated. With the average cost of a containerclass at around USD 25.000 there is an urgency to raise funds. The containerclass will be located in the Akcakala Camp, in the province of Sanliurfa, about 80 km north of Raqqa - the second largest refugee camp in Turkey. In March 2015 this camp accommodated 28,000 Syrian refugees. The school in this camp is named Suleymansah Education Center however increased capacity is required in order to ensure all children in the camp have the opportunity to attend lessons. There are also child friendly spaces established here.

Quite a number of Soroptimist clubs are organizing activities to raise funds including SI Almere who have organized a benefit evening; SI Vught who are supporting the project during their 8th ‘Sisterrun’ and SI Alphen’s successful ‘Dictation’ was also used to raise funds. Many foreign members of the Dutch Friendship Links will be attending the concert of Misha Fomin on 24 April in the Concert Hall, Amsterdam, which will include the additional programme organized by several Dutch Soroptimist clubs.

Hopefully, with the aid of all, we can finish the last project year with great results!”



Photo: UNICEF/Nicky Jansen

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE - 'Doors'

Soroptimist across the world work on projects that seek to help those who in turn, help survivors of domestic violence. Many safe houses and refuges offer a safety net; a place where women can escape from domestic abuse.

This is the story of a survivor.

“At Christmas half a lifetime ago, my daughters and I became refugees in our own country. We were fleeing a violent and tyrannical regime, which controlled every aspect of our lives. A lovely lady (a volunteer) I will never forget, drove the 55 miles round trip to rescue us. We drove away from our old lives in terror, with a large black bin liner which contained pitifully few belongings and my daughters' Brownie uniforms that I had grabbed before we left.

We were taken to a large but unremarkable end of terrace house in a nearby small university town. We entered through the front door into a grubby and cluttered hallway, with a single unshaded light bulb illuminating our future. As the door closed behind us I felt an overwhelming sense of being safe... completely safe ... for the first time in many years. I wanted to fall to my knees and kiss the hall floor in gratitude. The only thing that stopped me was the wide-eyed, frightened and bewildered faces of my daughters who were clinging to me.

We were ushered into a small room with a sofa and a TV, it was little more than a hallway to the kitchen beyond it. The room was full of women sitting on hard dining chairs and on a low tatty sofa; several were smoking. By the TV was a tatty artificial Christmas tree, the only evidence of the season. I sank into one corner of the sofa and my little girls climbed into my lap. I was offered a cup of tea; one of the best and most longed for cups of tea of my life. The girls were given orange squash. A woman came in and told me there was a room upstairs we could put our things in and as it was late, maybe the children would like to get ready for bed? There was no drama, everything was no nonsense. All of the women shared what they had with us; towels, soap and nightgowns were handed to me and I was shown to a large upstairs room at the front on the house. A small baby was already sleeping in a cot in one corner.

The girls had bunk beds at the opposite corner; we tiptoed around getting ready for bed. I sat on the floor holding my daughters hands as they snuggled up together on the bottom bunk and fell fast asleep. I went downstairs back to the room where all the women were. I sat back in my seat on the sofa and was handed another cup of tea and I burst into tears, scalding, healing tears....

I spent the next six months of my life in the 'House'. My memories are all a mixture of lots of happiness and just a little terror. I remember talking, talking, talking and I remember laughing, giggling and howling with laughter. It was cramped, grubby, and primitive. At its worst we had eight women and twelve children living under that roof. Yes there were arguments, but there was the greatest feeling of camaraderie I have ever known. We supported each other, hated the men who had put us there and dried each other's tears when we missed our homes, families and yes sometimes even our exes.

I spent a further 18 months living in a house separated into flats, all occupied by women who had left the 'House'. Eventually I was given a council house, next door to a woman who had also lived in the 'House', but before my time. I was so lucky, as we helped and supported each other too.

And today...? I am still in touch with many of the women I lived with. I still live in that small university town in a cottage. My daughters have husbands, own their own homes, have beautiful families, successful careers and good degrees. They are not unusual amongst the children of the 'House' at least three of them have PhDs so far. It was an unusual childhood but I am thankful their memories, like mine, are mainly happy ones.

I finished my degree and I went on to get a Masters in Computer Science and worked in research for some years. I run my own small company and I have worked around the world as an IT consultant. I am very blessed and as I said... I am a survivor! I am not a victim of Domestic Abuse”.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Rebecca Shuflin is one of the Soroptimist International of the Americas (SIA) past Live Your Dream Awards recipients. A domestic violence survivor, Rebecca is a mother of six, a social worker, and Master of Social Work (MSW) candidate. With her expertise and personal experience, Rebecca helped SIA create a short video containing 'Tips for Survivors Seeking A Protective Order' (restraining order), in honour of Domestic Violence Awareness Month (USA).

"Rebecca is undoubtedly one of the most hardworking, selfless women you could wish to meet" says Nora Blumenstein, Program Manager LiveYourDream.org/Soroptimist International of the Americas. "Her own past hardships and experiences motivated her to pursue a career in social work with a legal perspective".

Rebecca explains: "I rebuilt my life from scratch. Literally. I had left with just a few backpacks and my beautiful children. I had been a stay at home mom for over ten years when I found myself homeless with no money and several children to raise on my own. After enduring heartache and stress while dealing with the court system, I secured a restraining order and sole custody of my children. I wasn't able to get my belongings back or any child support, but we had each other... I find it very empowering to work with homeless families who have endured great hardship. They work hard to pull their lives back together so that they can get back on their feet again. These families represent my own family and what we once went through. Helping these families has helped my own growth process immensely. I feel that I am finally able to give back to the community that once supported me."

Needless to say, Rebecca is one very busy lady. A master's program, career in social work, and single motherhood. Yet when SIA reached out to her about helping with this special Domestic Violence Awareness Month project, Rebecca was more than willing to share her experience. Nora adds: "Rebecca is a true testament to the ripple effect of women helping women".

In the words of one of her past supervisors: "Rebecca will be a true light of hope to all she works with."



Sharing Rebecca's video was part of SIA and LiveYourDream.org's focus on the need for legal aid for domestic violence survivors during Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Nearly 4,000 online community members took action by asking the US Congress to provide domestic violence survivors with free or reduced-cost legal aid, because lawyers can play a pivotal role in reducing domestic violence.

Without legal aid, it can be harder for women to get protective orders, leave their abusive partners, and escape the cycle of violence. In addition to helping with a protective order, a free or subsidized lawyer can also provide critical help with related legal issues that may hinder women from leaving abusive relationships, such as child custody and housing. Several SIA members who are lawyers also signed up to mentor domestic violence survivors in need of legal help.

NATURAL DISASTER

“1 December 2015 recorded the highest rainfall in the city of Chennai - a one hundred year record was demolished. Climate change - a global concern, became a rude reality in a matter of hours for this city of 8.2 million. By the afternoon, the water in Chembarambakkam Reservoir- 25 km from the city, had swollen to a dangerously full capacity. Water was released into the Adyar River already in spate. This river flowing through the heart of the city crossed its banks and submerged all surrounding areas.

The rains came down for the next two days affecting airports and highways; trains were cancelled - all the slums in low-lying areas went under and thousands fled their homes, watching their only belongings washed away by the relentless waters.

With schools, colleges and workplaces closed, the people of Chennai descended into the streets to deliver relief. A huge community kitchen was set up in Aruna Subramaniam's backyard. As Director of NGO Bhoomika, Aruna had more than 100 volunteers of all ages working on food packing. She smiled and paid tribute to the community feeling saying: “You are seeing Chennai at its best.” This was just one of the many community kitchens working 24 hours.

The two Soroptimist clubs in Chennai went into action immediately with the National Association of Soroptimist International of India (NASI) President, Shreelatha Narayanan, leading the collective response to render relief to the people of Chennai. Soroptimists travelling from Pune carried clothes for the affected, members from local clubs spent hours packing food bundles for the hungry and the homeless. Lita Srinivasan of SI Chennai marshalled her local contacts to process the delivery of bedsheets and blankets. Naina Shah of SI Chennai Downtown signaled her friends and family overseas, collecting \$3000 in no time at all. This went to buy grains for the centre where food was being made. Other clubs in India pitched in with monies that went for the immediate relief. Members of Chennai clubs opened their homes for stock collection, for packing food for housing sick people.





Three members of SI Pune Metro East in Chennai, after a NASI meeting, found themselves stranded for eight days in Naina Shah's house. They were cared for, but they also joined in with the food packaging relief work. Visiting UK Soroptimist Sue Waters, bravely set out to help pack food and deliver blankets.

On display was the power of the ordinary citizen combined with the strength of Soroptimism. The most vulnerable people, including many poor women, are most at risk from climate change like floods. For them the impacts are already a daily reality. The UN Sustainable Development Goals have stated several goals with the concern of the environment and clearly combating climate change has come with a clarion call.

Chennai's deluge is a reminder that climate change can spell disaster, yet it is also an occasion to be viewed as a shining example of human resilience".

By Nisha Ghosh, Friendship Link Co-ordinator SI Pune Metro East



In the spotlight - WAGGGS Voices Against Violence

Soroptimist International has a long standing relationship working with WAGGGS at the UN advocating on behalf of women and girls. Here we take a look at the **Voices against Violence** curriculum, which makes up the educational component of the **World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts' (WAGGGS)** global advocacy campaign: Stop the Violence – speak out for girls' rights. The overarching objective of the campaign is to end all forms of violence against girls and young women.

The curriculum was created in partnership with UN Women and is unique in that it uses non-formal education to create a safe and supportive space where young people – girls and young women, boys and young boys, aged from 5 – 25 years – are able to freely discuss what it means to be a girl or a boy, explore why violence happens, what it looks like and be given the skills and confidence to claim their rights and challenge gender inequality, the root cause of violence.

The curriculum was piloted in 2012 in 20 of WAGGGS' 146 Member Organisations across the world and is currently on the way to being implemented in 30 countries through the use of a grant received from Zonta International. The process for this began in December 2014 with a global "training of trainers" ACTIVATE event, delivered by WAGGGS, which was attended by national trainers from select Member Organisations. There will be four of these events in this phase of the programme – the second took place in Zambia in April 2015 and the third in USA in October 2015.

The national trainers who attend these events then return home and replicate the ACTIVATE event by training leaders in their association.



Pictures: Courtesy of Waggs

Above: Shows an activity from the early years age group of the curriculum (ages 5-6)

Far right: Azizah (far left of the picture) during the first ACTIVATE event training discussing child protection

These leaders then deliver the Voices against Violence curriculum with the young people in their units and troops through six hour and a half sessions.

At this point in time 135 national trainers have attended the global WAGGGS ACTIVATE events and these trainers are currently replicating the training events in 12 countries: Fiji, India, Italy, Kenya, Malaysia, New Zealand, Nigeria, Philippines, Portugal, Sri Lanka and Zambia. The impact of the training events, and the curriculum itself, is measured through Knowledge, Awareness and Attitude (KAA) questionnaires that the participants complete prior to and post event/curriculum session. So far, 96% of national trainers have shown an improvement in their knowledge, awareness and attitudes around gender inequality, what it means to be male or female, forms of violence and who is to blame.

Azizah from Malaysia, who attended the first of the four global ACTIVATE events supported by Zonta International, summed up her experience by saying; “Without realizing indirectly, violence is actually happening in Malaysia widely. With the knowledge and ways of approaches [I have] learnt, I have taken the first step to spread the message in my country and I will not stop until I see the results... because I believe CHANGE starts from ME!”



Azizah has been training other trainers and leaders in her country since May 2015 as well as organising a ‘Stop the Violence’ Roadshow to raise awareness of the issue of violence against girls which was attended by over 1000 people.

The Voices against Violence curriculum is a unique prevention tool as it tackles the issue of violence at its’ root and focuses on transforming attitudes and promoting healthy relationships from a very young age. By learning about their human rights the young people who take part in the curriculum not only have a clearer understanding of what constitutes violence and tools to challenge cultural and traditional myths that condone the continuation of violence but they are also empowered to carry out an advocacy campaign in their local community at the end of the six week process and stand up as more than just victims, as agents of change.

THE ROLE OF YOUTH

'Fresh Ideas, Empowering Women' a theme delivered so confidently by five vibrant young women invited to speak at the 20th Soroptimist International Convention. Action by young people in their own communities is vital in ridding societies of deeply entrenched ideals, behaviours and perceptions that lead to gender violence. "The cliché is true - young people are our future. We have to listen and reflect on their opinions. They have their own, original thoughts and that is very powerful." *Soroptimist International Immediate Past President, Ann Garvie.*



At the height of the troubles in Northern Ireland, SI of Northern Ireland and SI of the Republic of Ireland worked together to create a public speaking competition that crossed borders and united people. The competition continues to this day, and is extremely effective, giving a platform to young people to meet and exchange their views.

In August 2013, Soroptimist International Immediate Past President, Ann Garvie, made the value of public speaking a global issue for Soroptimist International, with the announcement that an international competition would be held.

Ann Garvie had attended a recent Northern Ireland Public Speaking Competition at which the topic of cyber violence seemed particularly popular. She said that “giving young people, especially girls and disadvantaged youth, the opportunity to raise their voice is a powerful thing to do. It breeds confidence - shows that others are prepared to listen - qualities that will empower youth for years to come”.

At the 20th Soroptimist International Convention, Sunday 12 July 2015 began with ‘Public Speaking Lectures and Awards’. ‘Fresh Ideas, Empowering Women’ was a theme effortlessly demonstrated by five young, vibrant and highly capable women, setting out on their own paths, from different countries across the world.

Invited to speak at the Convention, this highly inspiring Special Programme, introduced by Maureen Maguire, Past Chair SI Governance Committee, Northern Ireland, focused on the winners of local public speaking competitions: Flora Garner, England, Ciara Maguire, Republic of Ireland, Tan Yan Ru, Singapore, Rose Lakoro Pitoi, Papua New Guinea and Alana Hughes, Northern Ireland. Speaking passionately on the topic of empowering women and gender equality, each of the women inspired their audience with their ambition, conviction, knowledge and vision for their own lives and those of women and girls.

Eighteen year old Alana Hughes asked: “How high can a woman fly?” before saying that we should “reach for the skies and if we don’t have a runway, grab a shovel and build one.”

Tan Yan Ru suggested that “we shouldn’t be afraid of our voice” and Ciara said women and girls should “be as fearless as the women in the stories you have admired.” Flora talked of her passion for ‘He For She’, and as an aspiring actress, made it clear that UN Women Goodwill Ambassador, Emma Watson, was a highly influential role model in her life.

Rose Lakoro Pitoi talked of the stories that inspired her and her dreams and direction, mentioning the importance of advocates for education and the ‘Bring Back Our Girls’ campaign. Rose has since said: “I believe young people can rally their peers and encourage them to break the trend of being ignorant and to start talking openly about issues affecting women and girls in their respective communities. I would tell my fellow peers or maybe just to anyone who is willing to listen, to not be afraid of speaking out and to use their voices to help make a difference, in permanently putting an end to violence against women and girls”.



HUMAN TRAFFICKING

‘Training the Trainer Conference - taking positive action against modern slavery in Bedfordshire’

by Pauline Panter, Soroptimist International of Bedford

“This conference was organised and supported by Bedfordshire Against Modern Slavery (BAMS), which was formed in 2012 to tackle and highlight modern slavery. The founder members were Kristy Adams, previously a Bedford borough councillor, a senior police officer and two members of SI Bedford, Rita and Pauline. The aim of the conference was to continue to raise awareness and assist ‘first responders’ to understand their responsibilities, especially in relation to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), enabling them to begin to cascade information to their work teams, as part of in-house training programmes.

It was fortuitous that the day chosen for our conference was the very day that Kevin Hyland (independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner) launched his strategy to tackle modern slavery. Paul Connop from the UKHTC started the day, giving a splendid presentation regarding the work of his agency and an excellent overview of the Modern Slavery Act 2015. Paul also spoke about the situational and environmental indicators of modern slavery as well as factual and investigative indicators, giving examples of the different types of modern slavery that the UKHTC had encountered and the action taken. We were all moved by his narrative regarding a young very vulnerable man from Wales who was enslaved by travellers on a horse breeding site from 2000 - 2013, before eventually being freed by police.

Diane Payne, Programme Development Manager from the Salvation Army was our second speaker and continued in the same vein, outlining the work of the Salvation Army with regard to Modern Slavery. Diane began by offering a little of the history of the Salvation Army’s work with regard to human trafficking and slavery, which commenced in 1885 with their work with young prostitutes in London and beyond.





Since 2011 the Salvation Army has been the prime contractor for managing the support for adult victims of trafficking in England and Wales, which now includes modern slavery. Diane spoke expertly about the referral timelines, the impact of trafficking, indicators and NFM. Diane engaged with the delegates throughout the presentation and her session was also well received.

DCI David Cestaro from Bedfordshire Police gave a presentation which looked at the current situation in Bedfordshire, including three of the recent police operations undertaken. Two of the operations were conducted at traveller sites in which over fifteen vulnerable men were rescued and the perpetrators given long prison sentences, and the third, a brothel, in which five Eastern European women were rescued recently.

Tatiana Jordan, The Director of Human Trafficking Foundation (HFH), provided an overview of the work of the foundation, especially the networking amongst the various organisation and charities it facilitates. Tatiana also spoke about the modern slavery exhibition that is now stored at Moggerhanger Park.

At lunch time when the delegates were all visiting the anti-slavery exhibition, Kevin Hyland OBE, Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner arrived and we had the chance to catch up with him and hear a little about his future plans. He made particular reference to all the work undertaken by Soroptimists and expressed his thanks and admiration to the organisation. He remembers meeting us at the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in New York and knew of the projects we are involved in across the world. Kevin delivered a brilliant presentation beginning with his view of the International scene and how we must tackle modern slavery at source, and his plans for doing this by working with Governments, NGOs and others across the world. He said: "There appears to be indications of systemic under-recording and misreporting in statistics compiled by the police and other agencies. All of this suggests that the true picture may be even worse than the current figures indicate". Kevin also gave an overview of his new strategy and his work with the Pope, Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe (Commissioner of London's Metropolitan Police), church leaders and police in the Santa Marta Group, tackling human slavery and supporting survivors. Kevin started and finished his session with a William Wilberforce quote: "You may choose to look the other way, but you can never say again that you did not know". We were all inspired and energised by the presentation and we look forward to continuing to work with him into the future in tackling modern slavery. His strategy is well thought out, but will require additional funding and man power resources in order to succeed. Let's hope he achieves this.

Andrew Selous MP Prisons and Probation Minister gave a brief account of the Governments journey towards creating the New Modern Slavery Legislation. We were also unexpectedly joined by Olly Martin, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Bedfordshire who also spoke a little about the work of Bedfordshire Police and the challenges of funding.

In all a great but exhausting day! Rita and I were supported and assisted by two of our SI Bedford colleagues Margaret Badley who did a great job with the technical issues and photography, whilst our President Pauline Stewart assisted in booking in, networking and much more. Our thanks to them both and I hope they realise there is much more to come!"

Enlightening and Preventing Trafficking by Eva Wiksen Næser, SI of Arendal-Grimstad, Norway

“We started out by wanting to enlighten young people on human trafficking, by getting the performance of a play on the subject entitled “What do they Write Home about?” included in the ‘Cultural Schoolbag-Programme’; a programme which offers sixth form college students a variety of cultural experiences, such as concerts, plays, visits to museums and exhibitions and classroom visits by authors and artists. We wanted this play to be included in the proposed list of cultural activities a list that every school in Norway gets to choose from every year. To make ‘our’ play known, we informed the Cultural Schoolbag administrators about it; how well it was written; how well performed, and how engaging it was - particularly as the performers invited the audience to take part in a discussion at the end. When it was confirmed that the play was to appear on the list, we prepared a folder about it with information about human trafficking and also about human rights. We pointed out the relevance it had to the various school subjects and also gave out information about Soroptimist International and our work to combat human trafficking. We were allowed to visit schools, distribute our folder and talk to the relevant teachers.

When we spoke to teachers and others about human trafficking, we realised that people in our area thought that this practice only occurred in big cities, not in our more rural areas with relatively small towns. We therefore decided to enlighten the general public about the occurrence of human trafficking in our area, and try to motivate other NGOs, organisations, local authorities, social workers, churches, politicians and our local university, to also work against the practice. We contacted the police, social workers and the Federation of Trade Unions. All confirmed that human trafficking does indeed take place here, right on our own doorstep. Furthermore they were eager to contribute at a seminar. We just had to arrange one, even though it seemed rather an ambitious project! We booked the county authorities’ conference hall for 11 February, and set to work on the financing of the seminar and an open performance of the play on human trafficking in addition to publicising both the seminar and the performance. We contacted our Soroptimist union, and Inner Wheel and Rotary in our area, to help us with the organising and financing of our project. We had a marketing plan too and we shared the contact and invitation list amongst ourselves, wrote press releases and articles, contacted journalists and reporters at newspapers, together with radio and television stations. We made flyers and posters and established Facebook pages. The newspapers published our articles, the radio and television stations interviewed us and the panellists at our seminar, together with other key persons on the subject and as such, we were able to reach a great many people with our information.

We are pleased to report that ten schools chose the play as their cultural experience. The students discussed its content eagerly with the actors/storytellers after the performance, and some discussed it with us too. 140 people attended our open seminar at which the panellists gave both interesting and engaging short lectures. These were followed by intense discussion in which the panellists and audience participated. We chose to include interviews with two former child labourers, Hafso from Somalia and Reza from Afghanistan in the programme. The audience was moved by their life stories and the newspapers gave them much attention. At the open performance of the play, a local vicar who is strongly engaged on the subject, held a very telling appeal about human trafficking. At both events, Soroptimist International Arendal-Grimstad provided information about our organisation and sold our union’s purple ribbon badge, which shows abhorrence of human trafficking and violence against women and girls. As many people attended our seminar and the open performance, read articles which we or the journalists had written, and heard and saw the practice discussed on radio and television, we hope to have made a contribution towards the prevention of human trafficking.

This Project was completed in May 2015 however the Club is still engaging in work against human trafficking. The latest project is ‘Helping Victims of Human Trafficking in Southern Norway’. The Norwegian Union has applied for and has been granted money from the Norwegian Ministry of Justice to engage two storytellers/ actresses, do research, and write and produce a new play on human trafficking in Norway today. The opening night for this new play with Astrid Else Særerøy and Beathe Frostad, will be on the 27th of September 2016 at The Literature House in Oslo. The Soroptimist representatives at the annual meeting of the union will be presenting information and some sequences from the play on the 27th of May in Sandefjord.



SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL

CHILD, EARLY & ENFORCED MARRIAGE

Wilfrida Hendrickx SI Representative to the United Nations Geneva Centre, interviews Mohinder Watson, Founder of Action on Child, Early and Forced Marriage (ACE&FM).

Mohinder Watson is a British Asian who escaped from an intended arranged marriage in the UK as a teenager. An academic researcher, Mohinder works in the field of child marriage and in 2014 founded Action on Child, Early and Forced Marriage (ACE&FM), an international NGO dedicated to advancing awareness, research and education on child, early and forced marriage, with a view to ending this practice.

In particular the NGO aims to highlight these practices amongst immigrant communities in Europe, Canada and the US, Australia and other 'western' countries where many people are still unaware that such practices occur.

Wilfrida: Why did you become involved in the issue of child, early and forced marriage?

“This issue has personal significance for me because as a teenager I was being coerced into a marriage I did not want, to a young man chosen by my parents. For decades I was unable to speak about my experience but by chance I became involved with women’s human rights organisations in 2012 and realised that women were not speaking out about forced marriage. I then decided that I should share my experience as it had the potential to help improve understanding of the issue and also help prevent girls from going through a similar or worse experience. With the help of an international multi-disciplinary team from Switzerland, USA, Honduras, Mexico, Denmark and England we established an NGO in December 2014 to advocate against child, early and forced marriage”.



Picture: Mohinder Watson, Founder of Action on Child, Early and Forced Marriage

Wilfrida: What do you aim to achieve with your organization?

“Our aim is to advocate to prevent and eliminate child, early and forced marriage because this complex human rights, social, health and development issue affects millions of girls around the world, every year. We plan to do this through changing attitudes and behaviours related to CEFM. This will include advocacy at the UN with the Human Rights Council, World Health Organisation as well as working with grassroots level organisations in different countries with the aim of bridging the gap between the UN and grassroots based organisations. This network will be expanded gradually to include more countries. Other related objectives include producing advocacy and education and training materials and conducting research. A particular focus for us is the problem of CEFM amongst diaspora communities in western countries such as in Europe, (where my own experience took place) as well as North America and Australia. As part of this work, I am trying to connect with other survivors of CEFM to create a platform for advocacy as well as with other academic researchers on the topic”.

Wilfrida: Why do you think child, early and forced marriage is not considered a problem in many ‘western’ countries?

“Firstly I believe we are at a point now where CEFM is increasingly being recognised as a problem in developing countries across Europe, and other places. The UK where I am from, is taking a lead role in protecting girls at risk and has for example established a special Forced Marriage Unit, a joint initiative between the Home Office and the Police. This unit provides services such as a national telephone helpline, direct intervention to protect girls at risk and awareness training to the different professional groups involved. Some groups have also been established to work on this at the European level. The issue of CEFM is already well documented in countries like Canada where the Government is very committed to addressing this issue. More recently CEFM is also being highlighted in the US and Australia. In the UK school children and staff are made aware of the issue and to be vigilant if friends disappear from school.

However one major factor is that we do not yet know the true extent of the problem amongst diaspora communities in western countries due to the lack of reliable statistics. Perhaps this is not surprising, given we are dealing with a long standing, deeply ingrained phenomena which is both sensitive and illegal and is fiercely protected by the communities which practice it.

Despite increasing awareness of CEFM, it remains largely hidden from the Police and child protection agencies.

It must also be recognised that these statistics will only tell us the official numbers of cases reported to the Police, child protection agencies or NGOs. From my personal knowledge of growing up in an Asian community in England, these numbers will only likely represent the tip of the iceberg. Most girls would be too afraid to come forward to seek help or make complaints against their families or take them to court. Many girls may not even be aware that child protection agencies and other support structures exist.

Another factor why CEFM is not considered a problem in many western countries is that the absolute numbers of cases of CEFM in Europe, North America and other western countries are very small compared to Africa and South Asia, so media attention is focused on the areas of highest prevalence. There may also be a lack of investment in research in western countries”.

Wilfrida: What can we as individuals do to ensure girls are not at risk?

“Unfortunately as long as parents and communities attach such high value to a girl’s virginity and family honour and consider the marriage process as a financial transaction, girls will always be at risk. Therefore root causes such as poverty and low levels of education must be addressed. However we can empower girls through education, including human rights training, provide vocational skills so they can become economically independent and encourage them to pursue their dreams, develop their critical thinking and life skills and give them confidence to challenge the relevance today of the customs that have been passed down from generation to generation. We can educate communities to help them see the benefits of allowing girls more opportunities and choices other than marriage. We can ensure teachers, police or social workers can intervene quickly to protect girls. We can educate school children to care about their friends and alert teachers and others if children suddenly disappear from school. Additionally, we can publish articles in the press to keep media attention focused on CEFM as well as highlighting its illegality”.

WOMEN & PEACE

Wilfrida: How can NGOs like Soroptimist International support the work of grassroots groups working to stop CEFM?

“Umbrella organisations such as Soroptimist International can support local organisations financially, especially in times of austerity, provide technical expertise and help to bring national issues to the attention of the UN and global policy makers. They can help translate resolutions etc in a way that will aid their implementation on the ground and keep national NGOs abreast of developments at the UN and interpret and analyse what these mean in real terms for NGOs”.

Wilfrida: What role do you think men and boys have in stopping CEFM?

“Men and boys have a very important role to play in stopping CEFM. In fact I believe the practice cannot change without their engagement and commitment. In my own family, my older brothers largely dictated what my younger sister and I were or were not allowed to do. The rules were very clear as were the consequences if we did not adhere to them. My brothers were very strict about our manner of dress, and going out and wearing make-up were forbidden. They were overly protective to the point that we were not even allowed to join in any extra-curricular activities after school or go on school trips. My nephew who was 10 years younger than me, was trained from a young age to watch me if we were out to ensure that I did not speak to any boys. So boys from a young age should be educated about the harm CEFM does and persuaded that girls deserve the same chances in life as boys. They can help by refusing such marriages themselves if they do not want them, refusing to marry under age young girls or girls who do not openly consent to the marriage. Appropriate channels for this messaging might be to use cricket for example as this is a national sport in the Indian and Pakistani communities, like football and rugby are in other countries. It might also be helpful to involve high profile male celebrities, sports personalities or Bollywood film stars as male champions for the cause. Other popular channels may be the cinema, TV, radio etc”.

Wilfrida: How can NGO's help girls who have experienced CEFM?

“Many NGOs now work on providing services locally to girls at risk of CEFM as well as those who are already married. The types of services provided include everything from psychological counselling, telephone help lines, financial support, help setting up a new life away from the family, education and vocational training, obtaining legal help to enable them to divorce, providing shelter and accommodation etc”.

The **Soroptimist International of Europe Peace Prize** is awarded every two years to honour individuals for their remarkable achievements to promote peace. Edit Schlaffer, Founder and Executive Director of Women without Borders/SAVE was awarded the prize at the 20th Soroptimist International Convention 2015. Edit accepted the award on behalf of ‘all the women who are willing to join us to make the world a better place’, and now joins previous prize winners Silvana Arbia and Carla Del Ponte.



Above and right: Edit Schlaffer receiving her award



Soroptimist Educational Lead
Fresh Ideas in Empowering Women
www.soroptimistbul2015.org

CHILD, EARLY & ENFORCED MARRIAGE

SI Bilston & District writes about its Partnership with Karma Nirvana

Jasvinder Sanghera established the charity Karma Nirvana in Derby, a safe haven and advice centre for young girls affected by the impact of forced marriages and domestic violence. She is an inspirational, passionate speaker who captivates her audience. Jasvinder is known, nationally and internationally for her work and has written three books, 'Shame', 'Daughters of Shame' and 'Shame Travels'. She is in the process of writing her fourth book 'Shame - a Decade on'.

"We were delighted when Jasvinder Sanghera CBE accepted an invitation to speak about the issue of Forced Marriage in the UK, at a SI Bilston & District Charity Evening held on Friday 24th June 2011, at Coven Memorial Hall, Wolverhampton. Bilston club members invited friends, other Soroptimists and professionals including, solicitors, police, probation officers, staff from women's refuges and Women's Aid to join them for what was a very special evening. The room was full of 200 enthusiastic listeners.



The club decided to work with the Karma Nirvana in its bid to change the law on forced marriage, as in 2011 it was not a criminal offence.

The Right Honourable Theresa May MP, UK Home Secretary and then Minister for Women and Equalities, launched the Forced Marriage Consultation in December 2011. She stated: "I am clear that Forced Marriage is a form of violence against women and men. We must do all we can to stamp out this appalling abuse". This consultation finished on 30th March 2012.

SI Bilston worked on this issue and produced a series of responses to the Home Office questionnaire, to help Soroptimists to complete the Home Office Consultation questionnaire. It was of the utmost importance that as many people as possible completed the online questionnaire and many members from the Midland Chase Region as well as Soroptimists countrywide did this. The topic appeared on the UK Programme Action Committee (UKPAC) website, was highlighted in the Programme Action Magazine (PAM) and also within the UKPAC Chairman's report. It is already part of the UKPAC's flagship project 'Violence Against Women - Stop It Now' (VAWSIN).

Karma Nirvana added a postcard campaign to support the Home Office Consultation. Karma Nirvana's staff including Jasvinder gave out the postcards in Derby, Leeds, Bradford and other northern cities. We sent postcards to all UK Soroptimist clubs encouraging individuals to complete and return cards to us. Jasvinder then presented the cards personally at 10 Downing Street, London, the official residence and the office of the British Prime Minister. Soroptimist contributions to the number of cards was significant.

In February 2013 nine Bilston members attended a seminar on Forced Marriage along with over 100 professionals from Wolverhampton. The roadshow was one of a series that had been run countrywide by Karma Nirvana to raise the issues surrounding forced marriage. Jasvinder Sanghera was a key speaker at this event. BBC Midland News reporters were present all day and at lunch time, interviewed many people including several Bilston Soroptimists.

On the 8th June 2012 - the Government announced that forced marriage was to be criminalised. Soroptimists across the country had helped to empower women and girls in the United Kingdom by completing the Home Office Consultation and supporting Karma Nirvana's postcard campaign. Two years later on 16th June 2014 the great day arrived when Forced Marriage in the UK became a criminal offence.

Bilston Club is very proud to have helped with the work of Karma Nirvana in campaigning for this new legislation. The work really started at this stage as it was then necessary to promote the contents of the new law.

In 2013/14 Bilston's work on this campaign was recognised as a Project of Excellence by Soroptimist International, one of 39 worldwide. This was a great honour.

Two Bilston members were invited to attend the launch of a Day of Memory to honour girls murdered in dishonourable killings in the UK. The event was organised by Karma Nirvana in conjunction with Cosmopolitan Magazine. The date marks the birthday of Shafiea Ahmed who sadly lost her life at the hands of her parents at the age of 17. The day, which has cross Governmental support was chosen because it is the birthday of Shafiea. Louise Court, Editor in Chief of Cosmopolitan chaired the day and speakers included, Baroness Cox of Queensbury, Karen Bradley, MP Minister for Modern Slavery & Organised Crime at the Home Office, Scotland Yard's Commander, Mak Chisty, Superintendent Geraint Jones of Cheshire Police, Janice Kovach, Mayor of Clinton New Jersey and Emily Dyer from the Henry Jackson Society.

The day brought together survivors who had experienced honour based abuse and forced marriage. Some of them bravely shared their personal experiences for the first time to raise awareness and showcase that it is possible to survive. Jasvinder Sanghera facilitated their conversations with key themes. There were many tearful moments. At this event the 'Metal Spoon' Initiative was launched.

Karma Nirvana advises girls who telephone the charity help line and who are at risk of being forced into marriage outside the UK to place a metal spoon in their underwear when arriving at an airport causing the activation of the airport scanner and the girl will be taken aside. The airport authorities will be able to offer protection. Karma Nirvana staff are providing awareness training for all airport staff as well as training in a growing number of schools in the UK. To emphasise the strategy, miniature spoon lapel badges have been produced and were on sale during the Day of Memory. This has already created a talking point. Bilston members have all bought lapel spoon badges raising awareness wherever they travel.

At the 2015 Soroptimist International of Great Britain and Ireland Federation Conference in Glasgow, clubs showed great interest in the spoons and the concept and bought the remaining stock. SI Bilston members are collecting orders and selling on behalf of Karma Nirvana. Since the conference several clubs have contacted SI Bilston to place orders. Some anxiety has been expressed about girls being at risk because their parents may be aware of the initiative. However the charity Karma Nirvana is clear that the spoons represent the issue of forced marriage and create a talking point, to raise awareness - it is a tool for advocacy."

Karma Nirvana is a registered UK charity that supports victims of forced marriage and honour-based abuse. It was named in the hope that the work it seeks to undertake would make a positive impact on the lives of individuals who would achieve a sense of peace and ultimately enlightenment.



MEN AND BOYS - AN INTERVIEW WITH MICHAEL KAUFMAN



“Our motivation was simple: women had stood alone too long”.

Michael Kaufman

Michael Kaufman is a public speaker, author, educator, and consultant whose innovative approaches to engaging men and boys in promoting gender equality have taken him around the world. Working extensively with the UN, governments and NGOs, corporations, universities and colleges, Michael wrote the training programme on sexual harassment being used by tens of thousands of staff at the United Nations. Michael is co-founder of the White Ribbon Campaign, the largest effort in the world of men working to end violence against women.

What began as an idea discussed around a kitchen table in 1991, White Ribbon is now a far-reaching education and awareness raising campaign. With a presence in 80 countries, it focuses on engaging men and boys to think about their own attitudes and behaviour, and to speak out to other men in order to challenge all forms of men's violence against women.

Michael explains: “Our motivation was simple: women had stood alone too long. Violence against women is a problem committed by a minority of men - the majority of men do not commit acts of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse. However, the majority were remaining silent and our silence allowed the violence to continue. We see the symbol of the White Ribbon as a catalyst for discussion, soul searching, challenge and change. Men such as myself understand that we are 50% of the gender equation. When it comes to achieving gender equality we have a critical role to play. We understand that our work as men isn't to 'take over', but rather to work in partnership with women. This process starts with listening with humility and respect to the voices of women, and learning from women's experiences.”

When faced with the complexities of delivering the White Ribbon message to men and boys worldwide, Michael describes the challenges and his decision to create a decentralised campaign. “Due to cultural and linguistic differences, it’s difficult to craft messages that have the same meaning or impact around the world. Gender inequality, and its many manifestations including violence against women, has specific expressions in different cultures. Justifications for inequality vary and some forms of inequality and oppression are subtle while others are blatant and horrific. But there is a common denominator: it is the supposition, traditionally held by most men and reinforced by the social, cultural, political and economic structures of our male dominated societies, that men should have power. Power over women, power over children, power over nature, power over other men, and power over our own emotions.

People in their own countries and communities are best placed to reach out to men and boys, so it made sense to decentralise the campaign early on. An NGO, individual or a small group within a workplace, school, community, or a place of worship may choose to start a White Ribbon effort. White Ribbon is completely non-partisan, reaching out to men and boys right across the political and social spectrum”.

Michael works together with others on a broad range of gender equality issues, including two international alliances: The Men Engage Alliance and MenCare. The Men Engage Alliance brings together NGOs, community groups, UN agencies, researchers, and individuals and works to engage men and boys, working collectively in order to promote gender equality and healthy ideals of manhood. MenCare is a global fatherhood campaign active in more than 35 countries believing that true equality will only be reached when men are taking on 50 percent of the child care and domestic work around the world. June 16, 2015 saw the release of the ‘State of the World’s Fathers’ report, launched at the UN and at events in capitals around the world. Produced by the MenCare network, together with various UN and NGO partners, Michael Kaufman was co-author of the report, which examined the importance of transforming fatherhood for gender equality, in order to improve the lives of women, men and children.



MEN & BOYS

“It is critical that boys grow up with models of compassionate men” explains Michael. “This is one reason why the transformation of fatherhood is critical for the achievement of gender equality and positive changes in men’s lives. When a father (or father figure) does the daily nurturing jobs such as changing nappies, cooking, reading, looking after – and they do all this in loving and non-violent ways, then boys will start their lives with strong and positive models of manhood. This doesn’t mean that all homes must have a father present to provide a healthy upbringing for boys, but it does mean that when there is a father present, he has an important, caregiving role to play.”

In September 2014, Emma Watson spoke at the launch of HeForShe, a UN Women global solidarity movement to end gender inequality by 2030. The campaign saw 100,000 men sign up to show their support within three days, sparking more than 1.2 billion conversations on social media within the first week of launch. In her speech she said: “I’ve seen young men suffering from mental illness unable to ask for help for fear it would make them look less ‘macho.’” She went on to say: “I’ve seen men made fragile and insecure by a distorted sense of what constitutes male success. Men don’t have the benefits of equality either.”

This was a sentiment expressed by Michael when he took to the stage as keynote speaker at the 20th Soroptimist International Convention, Istanbul, Turkey. Delivering his message to a 2000 strong, mostly female audience he invited us to challenge men’s power and privilege with determination but also with compassion and empathy. Michael talked of boys being ridiculed for having feelings; of suppressed emotions; of the need to redefine what it means to be a man. Michael says: “This issue is critical, and a key part of my own work. Looking at the negative consequences of our male-dominated cultures on men, including the pressure to always be strong and in control, always succeed, show no fear. In other words, there’s a paradox at the heart of men’s lives. Men have power in male dominated societies, but the ways we define and construct that power is the source of not only privilege but enormous negative consequences for men. Paradoxically, both this power and men’s vulnerabilities are simultaneously sources of men’s violence.”

Michael also talks of the dangers of collective blame. “How can we speak to men and boys about violence against women and have the greatest impact? Successful and evaluated programmes around the world show us that generalities such as “men always...” and “you men...” do not help. Rather, positive messages about men’s role in bringing about change are the way forward. Positive messages and looking at the paradoxes of men’s power are why I use so much story-telling and humour in my talks. They are a way of reaching men and helping men understand we can be part of the solution. Men can be allies with women in bringing about a society of gender equality, gender justice and freedom from the narrow limits we’ve placed on both women and men.”

As the White Ribbon Campaign continues to flourish, Michael is set to explore and develop both new and current projects. Michael will continue to work with UN agencies, NGO’s and service clubs around the world and plans to work more within the corporate environment. The author or editor of seven books, Michael adds: “I am writing a book that focuses on men’s leadership as allies with women, to create a world of gender equality. It’s going to be a popular book, aimed at a wide audience. I’m also doing my best to find more time for my fiction writing; my latest novel, co-written with my colleague Gary Barker is an anti-war story called ‘The Afghan Vampires Book Club.’ Oh, and of course I will be continuing to spend wonderful time with my first grandchild!”



拒绝家庭暴力
top Domestic Violence

北京市妇联妇女热线：
16803838
中国法学会反家暴研究中心
北京君为文化传播有限公司
北京唐韩广告有限公司

反家暴形象大使

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王学兵
反家暴形象大使



**IT STARTS WITH YOU.
IT STAYS WITH HIM.**

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Australia



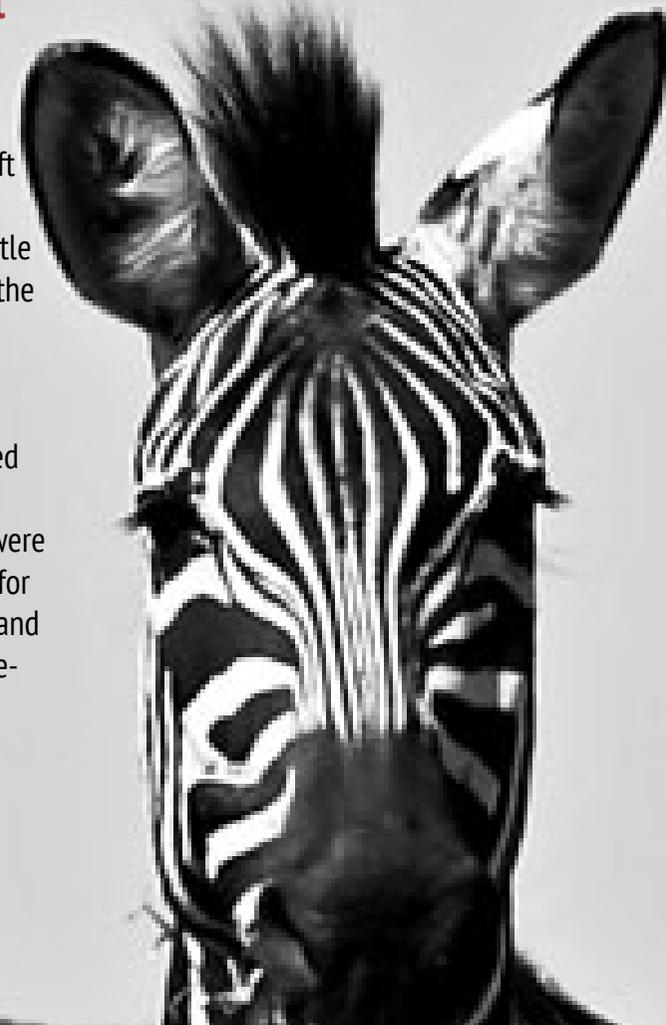
WakeTheLion

an interview with Sonyanga Ole Ngais

Sonyanga is Captain of the Maasai Cricket Warriors, coach of the Maasai Cricket Ladies team, and one of the stars of the highly acclaimed 'Warriors', a powerful documentary directed by Barney Douglas. Through the vehicle of cricket, Sonyanga, together with a group of young Maasai men, is taking a stand in the fight against FGM.

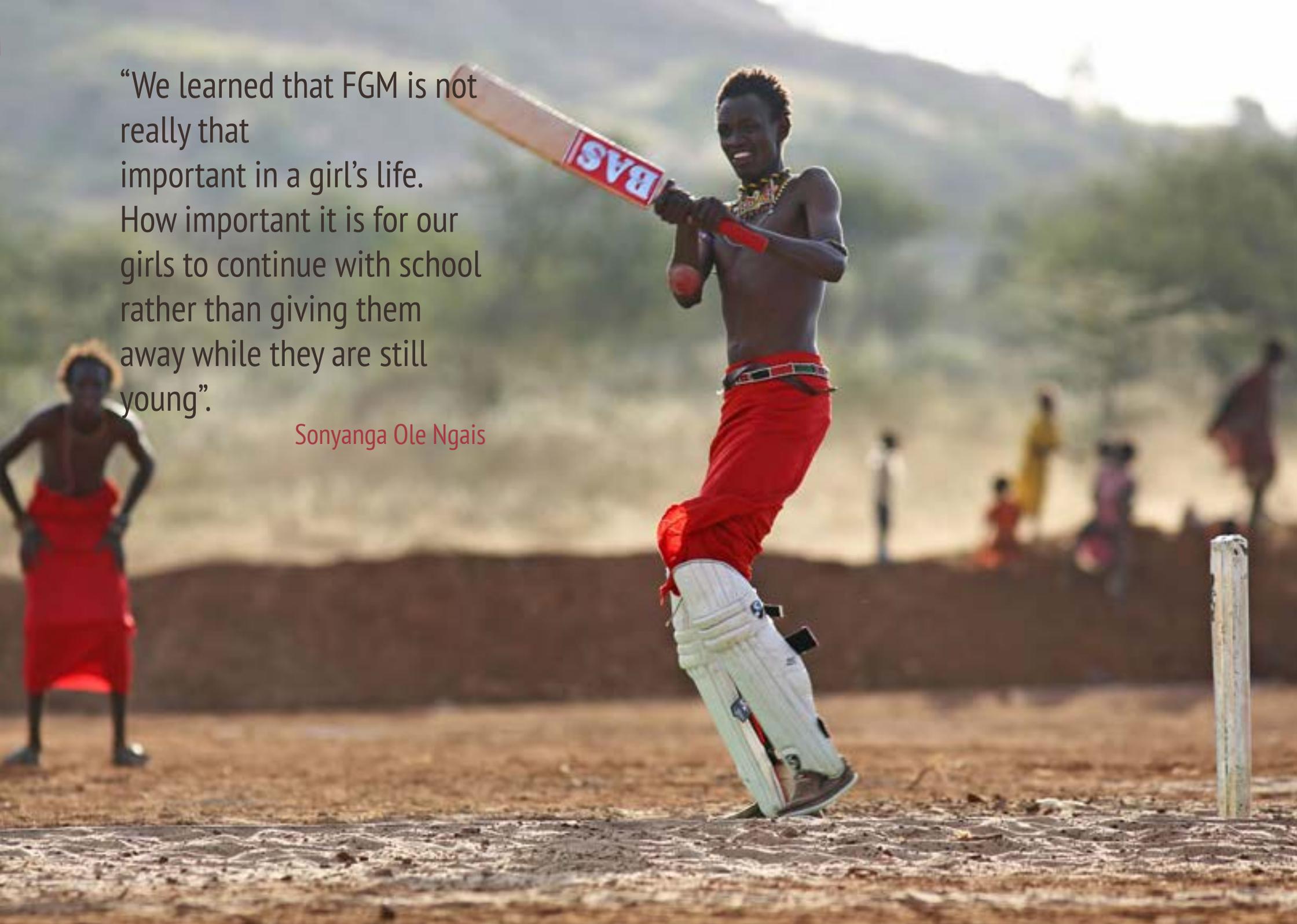
The Warriors film follows the young sportsman and his team from his birth place in Laikipia, north-east of the Great Rift Valley, Kenya, as they train and then travel to England, to compete in the 2013 Last Man Stands World Championship. However Sonyanga's story is about much more than cricket: "the ball is the spear, the bat is the shield"; If you look a little deeper, this is a story of a group of young Maasai brothers and their nephews, taking a stand against discrimination of the girl-child. It's about collective protection; for their sisters, their daughters and their future daughter's daughters. This is about the war on FGM.

The Ngais brothers: Saidimu (the eldest), Paraga, Sonyanga and Lesikito, have five sisters. Four of them were cut, married off at an early age, before their brothers were mature enough to help put a stop to the suffering. As these young men watched traditions repeat themselves again and again, they became traumatised. For each of them, their elder sisters were their 'little mothers'; taking care of them when their mother and father were away searching for food, grass and water for the animals. The Ngais brothers are the visionary bearers of the idea behind the Maasai Men Against FGM (MMAFGM), and their story is one of a cultural revolution; of the questioning of discriminating and harmful traditions that steal the freedom and dreams of young girls.



“We learned that FGM is not really that important in a girl’s life. How important it is for our girls to continue with school rather than giving them away while they are still young”.

Sonyanga Ole Ngais





If current trends continue, about 86 million additional girls worldwide will be subjected to the FGM practice by 2030 - however the Ngais brothers believe in change. They have chosen to fight to eradicate FGM from the surface of their own land and to try to influence other societies to do the same.

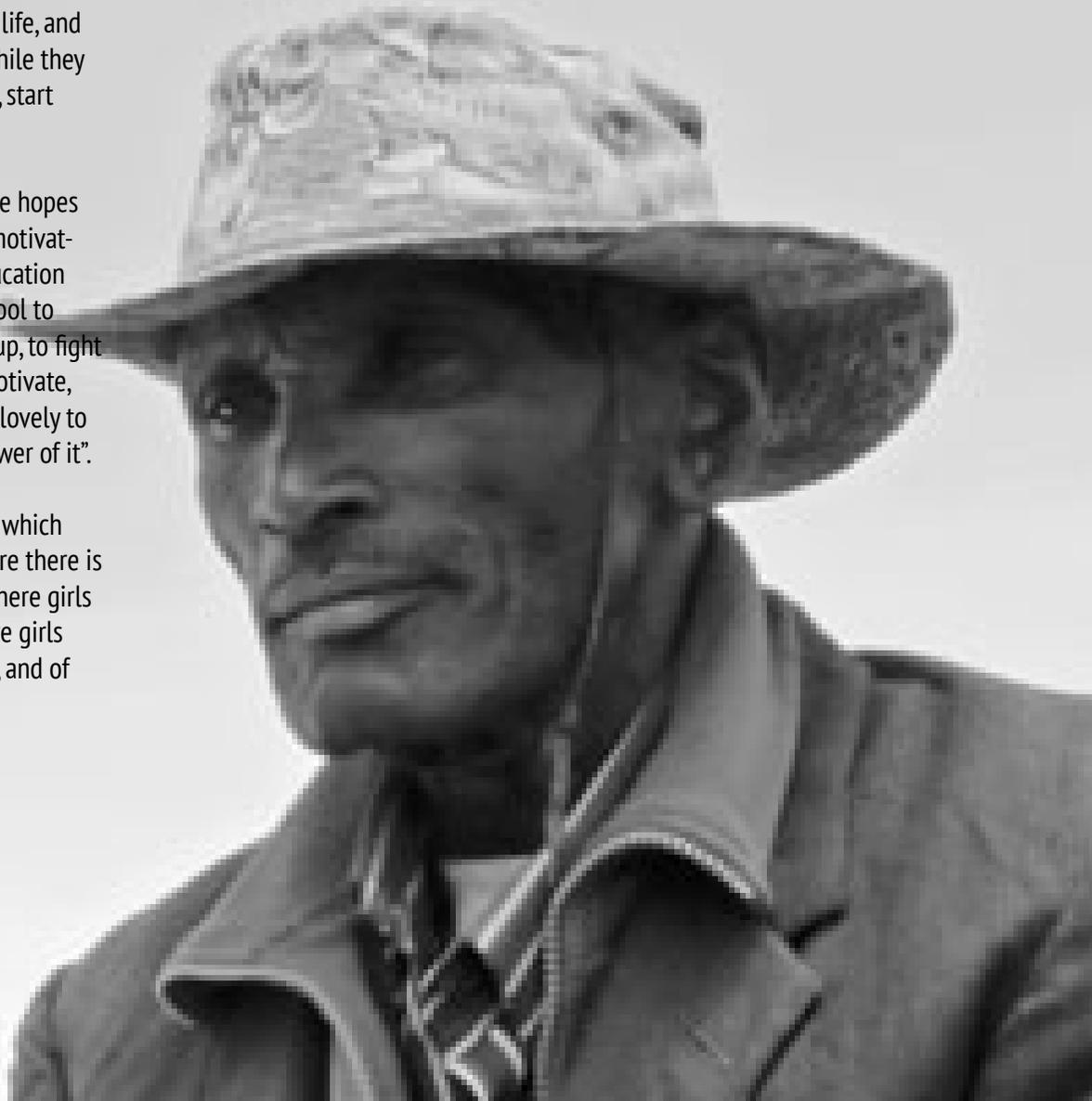
Sonyanga speaks to us of his vision for the Maasai community: “Female genital mutilation, early marriages and lack of equal rights are among the retrogressive practices in our Maasai way of living. If we look to eradicate these practices then I see a future where everyone enjoys equal rights. A healthy and well educated society with a positive focus on life. I believe that we don’t have to physically mutilate a girl for her to realize that she is now an adult. Rather she needs to be empowered mentally, she needs to understand the reality and get to know about the repercussions that follows thereafter.” Of the five Ngais sisters the only uncut sister is the last born. All four brothers stood up for their sister and in time, their parents allowed them to protect her from FGM and from being married off to an adult whilst still a child. Sonyanga’s parents allowed this under one condition: The brothers would sponsor her schooling ensure that she gets a job and can provide for herself, and that she does not disappoint them at all. Their youngest sister went to a local primary school and became one of the best pupils in her school. Now in her second year in a national level school she passed her Kenya primary education with flying colours. However bringing about such change and convincing the elders of a different path was no easy task.

Sonyanga talks of “protecting the good part of our culture from erosion” explaining: “It wasn’t easy to convince the elders to change their traditional perspective on this matter. I could perhaps compare it with the peeling of an onion. For one to reach the core of the onion you have to peel it again and again, since there are many layers that one encounters before you get to the core. It is not such an easy task as it may appear. It involves a tearful process, one sheds a lot of tears. The onion is like a culture in a way. The core here is the heart of the culture and it shapes the entire culture, which is dearly guarded and protected by the elders. So now you can imagine how easy it is to change the minds of the elders!”

“Maasai are people who are deeply rooted to their culture, no one is allowed to question an elder let alone our ways of living, so we had no voice” says Sonyanga. “But with the discovery of the power of sport - cricket in our case, with the traveling and gathering of ideas and bringing them back to apply them in our society, this really shed some light of hope for us. We applied the principle of the saying that ‘the eye that leaves the village sees further’. With our cricket we have travelled abroad several times and we have gathered a lot of perspective and we brought this back to let our society realise what we have actually learned. We realised how women outside are enjoying equal rights as men, we learned that FGM is not really that important in a girl’s life, and how important it is for our girls to continue with school rather than giving them away while they are still young. So our elders could actually picture the whole scenario and little by little, start changing, but they must always all agree since the culture is so deep rooted to them”.

With the success of the Warriors documentary, Sonyanga talks of its message and what he hopes might be learned from the film: “Warriors is a very powerful documentary which is very motivating, encouraging and educational. It shows the power of sport and the importance of education in our societies. The Warriors film can be utilized in schools or other organizations as a tool to spread messages on FGM, and it can be used to encourage other young people to stand up, to fight against FGM and fight for gender parity in their societies, The film can also be used to motivate, unite and to spread the message of peaceful coexistence through sports. It can really be lovely to include Warriors film in the school curriculums globally, because I truly believe in the power of it”.

A percentage of the profit from Warriors will go back to a trust in the Maasai community, which will be used to create an education centre for young people in the region. “With the centre there is a lot of hope” says Sonyanga, “since we will use it in many ways. First it will be a place where girls and women receive education from experts regarding their rights. It will be a place where girls can find refuge, with health facilities for the community, together with sporting facilities, and of course, cricket!”.



A person's hand is visible on the right side of the frame, holding a wooden cricket bat. The background is a savanna landscape with green and brown bushes under a cloudy sky. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

So what of the cricket? Sonyanga continues: “We have been teaching cricket in many primary and secondary schools in our regions because that is where we can get our messages through to a good number of children. Girls get a chance to compete with boys, hence realising that they are as capable as the boys. Girls realise that they actually have a space to fight for in their societies and a chance to realise their talents. Personally with this realisation I figured out that I needed to start a ladies cricket team, and I named it Maasai Cricket Ladies. The point here was to have a ladies team equal to the Warriors team, and it is even more powerful! The idea here is that now girls get to stand up for their rights, and they educate their fellow girls on the importance of avoiding FGM, whilst using the same sport that Warriors use to spread the messages. So you can imagine the combination, Maasai Cricket Ladies with the Maasai Cricket Warriors? So powerful I believe. To me this is young people uniting together for a well informed and a healthy society”.

The #WakeTheLion campaign - share the message

www.warriorsfilm.co.uk

Images courtesy of warriorsfilm.co.uk



Picture: Sonyanga by the river

OLDER WOMEN

Awareness of elder abuse, and specifically violence against older women is growing. Despite this, older women and how violence affects them, is regularly absent from discussions about gender violence. Present across cultures, and sometimes called 'the last taboo', violence against older women is often an invisible problem. Not only is this an issue which is rarely talked about, but data on gender-based violence is rarely collected for people older than 49.

SI UN Representative Sabine Kinzer works on the UN NGO Committee on Ageing in Geneva. The committee advocates for governments to take action on elder abuse, and supports the development of international consensus on supporting the needs of older people.

"2015 was a busy year for the NGO Committee on Ageing, Geneva" says SI UN Representative, Geneva, Sabine Kinzer. "24 November brought the good news that the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly (GA) adopted the resolution: "Measures to enhance the promotion and protection of the human rights and dignity of older persons". There were many informal negotiations to find consensus and the original draft was 'softened' considerably – still, it is good that consensus was reached. The formal adoption of the GA will take place sometime in December.

Demonstrating the growing understanding that united action is needed to protect older people, also in 2015, the member states of the Organization of American States (OAS) approved the Inter-American Convention on Protecting the Human Rights of Older Persons. This convention includes access to palliative care and to treatment for pain. It is the first instrument that explicitly includes palliative care – including access to palliative care treatment and care, access to medicines across the globe and research to improve the quality of care including palliative care for older people. When we talk about violence against older women – is it elder abuse? Is it domestic or family violence? Is it all of the above? There is no clear answer – but there is an obligation to create capacity to help women of all ages in any system they feel comfortable with, and respond to their needs.





It was in 2002 when the World Health Organisation (WHO) and International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (INPEA) framed elder abuse as a “single or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action occurring within any relationship, where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to an older person.” So, it is not long since that the world came to realize that elder abuse is a multi-faceted global phenomenon. Importantly elder abuse is a factor that predominantly comprises women, especially since there is a ‘feminization of ageing’. Violence begins often at home and is often an invisible and unreported occurrence. In this context, a strong focus must be put on the care giver and care giving stress, and it is worthwhile reflecting that people who are vulnerable are not necessarily at risk, and people who are at risk are not necessarily vulnerable.

It has been called a last taboo in the report of the side event ‘Falling between the Cracks’ that Geneva’s NGO Committee on Ageing organized, together with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, on 15 June 2015, World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD). 1 October 2015 saw the 25th anniversary of the International Day of Older Persons. The theme this year was ‘Sustainability and Age Inclusiveness in the Urban Environment’. This theme has direct bearing on the achievements of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which were adopted on 25 September. Since the number of people aged 60 and over living in cities is projected to grow to more than 900 million by 2050, there is evidently a need to make cities inclusive and provide safe environments for older people - it is a question of values.

Our NGO Committee was active at the governmental and non-governmental level to continue raising general awareness about the important issues that are connected with ageing in society worldwide. The NGO Committee on Ageing in Geneva strengthens relationships with NGOs by providing a platform for strategy development, bringing diverse voices from local and national levels to international platforms, drawing on the experience of committee members to share analyses on trends, needs and good practices and maintaining regular communication with the Vienna and New York UN NGO Committees on Ageing and with the UN Open-ended Working Group on Ageing (OEWG)”.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING - A PORTRAYAL

By Linda Witong

“At a Halloween party somewhere in the U.S. a trafficker meets a 12-year-old runaway who asks for his help in finding a place to stay”.

“Instead, the trafficker – a long-time member of a notorious and well known gang – forces the young girl into the commercial sex trade the very next day. For more than 3 months, he will hold her captive, coercing her to have sex for money multiple times a day at a variety of businesses, homes, apartments and hotels. Across the U.S. in another city, 4 girls who are 13 and 17 with disabilities are befriended by some men and thereafter lured to a house. Some of them are gang-raped and all are then trafficked. Meanwhile, in another city, a girl gets into an argument with her mother and leaves her residence. The girl sees a young couple who she knows and agrees to get into their car. They then take this girl, who also has mental health issues and has gone off her medications, and force her to work as a prostitute, 24 hours a day, including on her birthday. These exploiters who are called “guerilla pimps,” kidnap girls on the street who look vulnerable. There are also “Romeo pimps,” who pretend to romance victims before exploiting the young child. When asked, most people will associate slavery with what has happened in the past. However, there are more people in some form of slavery today worldwide than at any time in human history.

About the writer

Linda Witong, President of Soroptimist International of Marin County, California, served as a deputy district attorney in Marin County, California from 1979 to 2011. She litigated hundreds of criminal cases and also acted as the Felony Expediter from 1991-2011. In 2012, Linda became the Criminal Apprehension Team for Cold Case Homicides (CATCH) team creator and coordinator and presently investigates unresolved homicide cases for local police agencies and consults on active investigations. She has also served as a NGO delegate to the United Nations for Soroptimist International. In addition, to being a member of the Marin County Anti-Trafficking Coalition, Linda is on the Board of the United States National Committee of UN Women-San Francisco Bay Area Chapter.



Photo: Linda Witong (left) with Retired District Attorney Paula Kamena (right)

And these victims of modern day slavery have often ended up as witnesses in our criminal justice system. Young and afraid, the child will sit with a prosecutor who notices the child's black eyes and bruises which the child tries to cover up by their clothing. The child may not even look at us as we try to interview them. But often when we ask if the defendant caused their injuries, the child will say no but their eyes will start to water. And although this child sits with a child advocate and is clutching a new toy close to their chest, the child has been manipulated into compliance, isolation and fear by their exploiter. The child's self esteem is low or non-existent. They have been told that they are a "throwaway child" i.e. that they are worth nothing "as no one wants them". Very often the child has runaway from physical or sexual abuse within their family and feels that there is little or no social safety net for them. If you've had unsafe people around you when you're growing up, you don't necessarily know what safe people would be like, or how to recognize them. These children try to survive on the streets the best way they can, often trading sex for food, drugs, money, or a place to stay.

The child sitting in a prosecutor's office may also be from an affluent family but feel unloved by members of their family. It might be that the defendant is one of the first people in their life who has paid attention to them and made them feel good or beautiful.

The child may also be uncooperative and not even recognize themselves as a victim. While clutching their toy, the child may look at you with fear as they have been brainwashed into viewing law enforcement and adult service providers as their enemy. They might believe that they must protect their exploiter and their commercial sexual enterprise, as this is the only "family" they have known.

Finally, jurors may not understand the physical injuries which may have resulted in brain trauma, or the emotional scars which will alter how a child reacts to events or how they even recall it. It is our job to educate the public and the jurors about what the child has endured and to appreciate the courage that it took the child to live through and survive such abuse.

And assuming that the child is cooperative and we have filed charges against the exploiter, we often see members of the public who do not understand that the child is a victim. Prosecutors have been known to be discussing a trafficking case with a defense counsel who will argue that we should know that our victim is a "prostitute" at which point we will lean over, and looking them straight in the eye, point out that they should know that the child was only 12 years of age. But it is apparent that the attorney may never see this young survivor as a victimized child.

So we prepare for trial building our case by corroborating the victim where we can, by gathering witnesses, motel records, phone records, computer records, photos, and medical records which may show prior injuries as well as DNA, as it is common for exploiters to have sex with their victims. If we find the victim and exploiter's DNA at the location where the child states the exploiter kept them, or on implements or tools, it can help prove physical or sexual abuse in our criminal case.

Once we are before a jury, we must be aware that potential jurors may also believe that they cannot trust the child as a witness. A juror may believe that the child would have gotten away or fought off the predator. Jurors may not understand the coercion, violence and fear that has resulted in this small injured child, huddling in a chair in the corner of our office, trying to find some safety in a otherwise dangerous world. The child is scared to testify in court, to face their exploiter and "tell on" someone that they know has a gun or other weapon which they have used on the child repeatedly in the past.

And as a prosecutor, you also know that simply filing charges against these predators without providing additional services to the victim is not going to work. It is our job to try to get the child individual attention and special services or they will be victimized again. It is our job to perhaps be the first advocate that the child may have known and to do everything in our power to begin the healing process and path to recovery for the child. Our reward? That will always be a hug and a thank you from the child after the trial is over".

SI Project Showcase



YOU ARE INVITED TO
ORANGE
YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD DURING THE
16 DAYS CAMPAIGN TO END GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

SI Timisoara, Romania provided support to a young survivor of domestic violence. Recognising the value that accessing education has for those who have experienced DV in helping transform lives, SI Timisoara ensured that the survivor was able to graduate from high school, and that she was empowered to build her own future.

Often women and children can arrive at refuges and safe houses with only the clothes they are wearing. **SI Moreton North Inc**, Australia, aware of the challenges that the Wadey Safe House for the Aboriginal Community in the Northern Territory face in providing for these women and their children, collected clothing and other items for the safe house. SI Moreton continues to build their relationship with this remote Aboriginal community so that they can provide practical material supplies to assist with the work of the centre.



SI Sunderland, UK supported a local domestic violence drop-in group to publish and distribute a journal about the experiences that they have gone through, moving from victim to survivor. Entitled 'Our Journey', the women writers wanted to have the journal printed so it would help other vulnerable women realise that there are ways out of abusive relationships. One lady from the group said: "This is the first time I have spoken about my experiences to people who listened and understood".

SI Lae, Papua New Guinea supported their local refuge and helped provide resources for reporting domestic violence. Through their actions, SI Lae ensured that a consultation with women and girls on the issue of domestic violence could be carried-out by the Family Support Centre, Angau General Hospital. The results of this consultation would help drive actions to support women experiencing domestic violence. Building on this success, SI Lae are now looking at how to take their awareness-raising to the next level.



For the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, **SI Whitefield**, India held an awareness-raising event to educate local women and girls about domestic violence.

Specifically working with women who live below the poverty line and are at increased risk, SI Whitefield equipped the women with the information they might need in order to recognise domestic violence and to know what help is available. One lady who attended the event was able to go to the police about abuse as a result of this and was then able to protect herself and her children.



SI Nadi, Fiji, partnered with Fiji Women's Crisis Center in an effort to combat rising rates of violence. Their aim was to educate and engage NGOs, civil society and community leaders on this pressing social issue. Lack of knowledge can work against victims, as they may not know what can be reported and what services there are to protect them. With many indigenous women turning to local leaders rather than the police for protection, raising awareness is a critical tool for indigenous women in order to empower themselves. By running workshops with participants, SI Nadi also helped equip other people through sharing information on violence against women, with follow-up support already being given to a rural community in Mulomulo.



SI Project Showcase

Gender violence - Walk the Talk

SI Ba, Fiji organised their own 'Walk the Talk' march. To make their march different, SI Ba decided that their 'Walk the Talk' should be silent symbolising how this widespread issue is often not talked about enough in society. The Minister for Women and Children, members of the police force and council representatives all joined the march where participants held up placards with 'Real Men Don't Hit Women' and 'Stop Violence Against Women'. During the march, members of the public stopped to watch and some even joined in. Pictures of the 'Walk the Talk' event made it into daily newspapers and Government Ministers celebrated the hard work of SI Ba.



Orange your world - Stop violence against women and girls

SI Timisoara wanted students from a local school and the community they are part of to focus on the problem of violence and aggression in all their forms; especially violence against girls and women. Their goal was to make everybody aware of this very real problem. Two teachers and members of SI Timisoara, organised different activities at Secondary School No.30, Timisoara, with the involvement of 58 students. There were several debates about violence, aggression against girls and women and a focus on conflict solving. The children worked in teams and created illustrated posters on orange paper with messages against violence which were then posted in the hallways of the school. Teachers and pupils wore orange clothes provided in order to show support for Orange your neighbourhood.



YOU ARE INVITED TO
ORANGE
YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD DURING THE
16 DAYS' CAMPAIGN TO END GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Gender violence - Each note a caress for you

SI Reggio Calabria, Italy held a charity event at the restaurant La Luna Rebel waterfront, Falcomatà, of Reggio Calabria, raising funds for the 'Anti-Violence Center - House of Women'. More than five hundred friends attended the evening, "Each note a caress for you" - a night of music and dinner. Amongst the various initiatives of the charity evening, Reggina Daniela Labate donated a painting entitled 'The Waiting'. The evening raised 8,000 Euros to be donated to the 'House of Women' to support activities and aid women and children who are victims of violence.



Orange your world - Creating Safe Spaces to Improve Access to Justice

When a women or child reports a case of violence and abuse to the police, environments such as interview rooms can often be very intimidating. Women and children may be victims of sexual abuse, domestic violence, human trafficking or other atrocities. When investigating such crimes and bringing the perpetrators to justice it is important to provide for the psychological well being of victims. By creating safe spaces within the justice system, women and girls are more likely to bring cases forward and feel supported when seeking prosecution. SI clubs have been highly successful in supporting both the needs of victims and in working with police departments to create safe spaces.

SI of Vista California and SI Oceanside Carlsbad, USA wished to alleviate the fear and anxiety women and girls often encounter in interview and examination rooms. The Human Trafficking taskforce of the two clubs joined together, meeting with the Chief of Police and detectives at Oceanside Police Department. They were extremely supportive of the SI clubs and even painted the donated room ready for SI Vista California and SI Oceanside Carlsbad to equip it and make it a comfortable, safe space. Female Case Managers from Project Life, a local helpline for victims of gender-based violence are on call 24 hours a day – this room is a vital resource for them.

International Women's Day - Gender and Women's Rights

In a friendship link with Sigatoka, Rakiraki, Lautoka and in partnership with Fiji Woman's Rights Movement, **SI Nadi, Fiji** recognised a current lack of awareness of issues and distinctions based on gender and the legal rights of women and the impact upon equal opportunities in relation to jobs and education. They also noted the impact upon the decisions parents within homes make, in relation to prioritising girls and boys education and deciding which child has access to higher education and jobs.

The club held a workshop and shared both audio and visual materials together with other education handouts looking at Gender and the ways of analyzing situations and decisions in order to understand whether these were based on gender, and were gender sensitive. The workshop also covered topics on a woman's right to education, equal opportunities, and the legal protections which were in place under the laws of Fiji to support this. The human rights dimensions and the Vienna Convention and the ways in which these Conventions translate into local laws to protect women and girls was also covered by the highly informative workshop.

As the majority of the participants were senior and current members of various civil society organisations and non-government organisations, and school teachers, the aim was for these very active participants to disseminate the information gained to those within their own organisations and institutions. The church representatives and school teachers were especially targeted due to the large audience they command within their work environments.



SI Project Showcase

Computers and Internet Access for Refugee Students - SI Gold Coast Inc

Two conscientious Eritrean female students in Years 10 and 11 with refugee backgrounds were identified by The Migrant Centre Southport as being significantly disadvantaged because of their families' financial circumstances. SI Gold Coast sourced the donation of two laptops from private donors and it was agreed that Au\$300 would be provided to cover mobile broadband costs. A fundraiser would be held to meet the further cost of support during 2016, estimated at being Au\$700. The two students, Segen and Asmeret, will now be able to prepare course homework and gather data for their school assignments in the convenience of their homes, enabling them to have favourable educational outcomes. Both have had interrupted education, mental stress and trauma from conflict and day-to-day challenges in refugee camps. The Migrant Centre says they are hard-working, conscientious and high-achieving in their studies which include physics, chemistry, engineering, maths and ICT.



Members of **SI Kumamoto-Sumire**, Japan, created 1,000 purple ribbons, which hung on a tall white tree in a busy plaza in their city. The project raised awareness about domestic violence and was covered in the media. The club also incorporated the SIA Live Your Dream Art contest into the display. More than 35,000 visitors learned about domestic violence, the club and the Soroptimist mission.



Cyber VAWG - Internet Safety and Cyber Violence

With the internet playing such a significant role in daily lives, **SI Waimea, New Zealand** recognised how vital it is that girls and their families are made aware of the potential risks they may be exposed to. SI Waimea took part in a two-day event, helping to inform girls and their families about cyber violence by handing out information. The club took the opportunity to alert the public to the support and help available should they come up against online violence. Parents at the event were appreciative of the support SI Waimea gave, as many felt challenged by internet safety, often left feeling unsure of what to do. Due to the success of this project, SI Waimea is planning to do similar activities in future.

Soroptimist International Grenada - a 44 year old service club, was given the opportunity to be part of a project rolled out by Grenada National Organisation of Women (GNOW) titled: **Mobilizing Community Action against the Spread of Gender-Based Violence and the Spread of HIV among Young Males and Females in Grenada**. This project is funded by the President Emergency Plan for Aids Relief (PEPFAR). The project targeted men as the main perpetrators of GBV. **“Engaging men and boys** in gender equality was viewed as an integral part of the new global Post-2015 Development Agenda, which will aid in maintaining the momentum on addressing gender inequalities, strengthening human rights, and promoting women’s empowerment”. During the period January to June 2015, the primary focus was raising awareness on gender-based violence issues amongst male inmates at Her Majesty Prison (HMP), Richmond Hill, and St. George’s, Grenada. The intention was not only to engage male inmates in dialogue on gender equality issues but more importantly, to address how they in the long term could become agents of change. SIG club viewed this initiative as an important step towards sustainable rehabilitation of these individuals, to effectively prevent violence from recurring in the individual homes and communities, when they leave the prison system.

Inmate’s involvement in the Reflection Exercises component was the key to the success of the sessions at the prison. It was during this period of deeper probing by the presenters and the club members, that inmates were given the opportunity to put forward their perceptions on the varied gender issues being presented to them. During the healthy relationship session for example, the inmates shared their perceptions as follows: “We should only have one woman”; “some of us are thirsty and we want to have many girls, which can lead to violence”.

One important outcome of this initiative is that the Soroptimist club is seeking funds to compile and publish poems initiated during the sessions by the inmates –title: Anthology from the Hill, Inmates Perceptions on Gender-Based Violence.

One of the recommendations of this initiative was for further one on one or smaller group sessions with the inmates, in particular with those who have committed crimes of Intimate Partner Violence. This recommendation has already borne fruit as the club has been asked to return to the prison to conduct sessions with inmates who have committed crimes of IPV.

In an effort to raise awareness of human trafficking, **SI Davie, Florida**, recently held a poster contest entitled, **“Stolen Girls...Stolen Dreams.”** The club encouraged 11th and 12th grade students to draw their vision of the sorrows and tragedies associated with human trafficking. The winners received prizes and ribbons and their posters were displayed throughout the Davie and Cooper City Town Halls, school guidance offices and a local mall. The award ceremony also included a presentation on trafficking by Dr. Sandrine Gaillard-Kenney, Ed.D., associate professor at Nova Southeastern University. In addition to the art contest, SI Davie, also teamed up with the Federal Bureau of Investigation Victim Witness Assistance Unit, to assemble backpacks for trafficking victims. Items included toiletries, clothing, and a sticker that read, “If you can dream it, you can do it.” Club members delivered seven backpacks to the Victim Assistance Unit and hope the supplies will support women who escape their current situation.



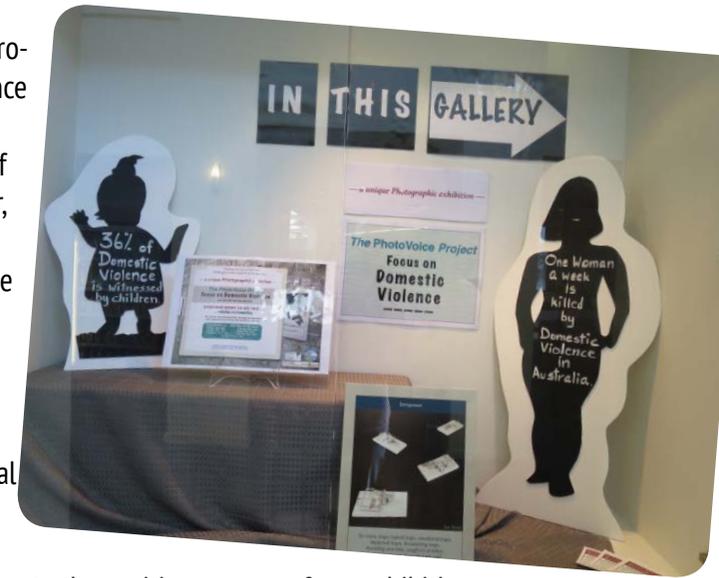
SI Project Showcase

SI Gold Coast & The PhotoVoice Project: Focus on Domestic Violence. SI South Queensland Region has adopted The PhotoVoice Project as a Region project, and all clubs will host the exhibition. The clubs' primary objective was to raise awareness of the prevalence of domestic or family/domestic violence (DV) by organizing a photo exhibition, 'The PhotoVoice Project'. The exhibitions displayed photographs taken by six women, all survivors of domestic and family violence. The images depict the distressing consequences of DV on their lives, which are mostly hidden behind doors, away from public view. The statistics tell the tale. In Queensland last year, more than 65,000 incidents of DV were reported. The secondary aim of the project was to increase confidence and empower the six survivors of DV (the photographers). The exhibition was hosted for a period of two weeks in a very public art gallery, next to the Robina Public Library. SI Gold Coast members were a constant presence at the Gallery over the two week period, nine hours a day. Invited to the Opening were State and Local Government; VIPs; PhotoVoice Australian Director; the Police Department DV Officer; two of the photographers, and two White Ribbon Ambassadors who launched the exhibition.

The Gold Coast domestic violence courts are deemed to be the busiest in the State of Queensland. By raising awareness of the impact of domestic violence from a victim's perspective, it was hoped that it would provide impetus for positive and ongoing social change and increased awareness of the DV epidemic.

There were over 400 visitors to the exhibition, including school groups. Follow-up newspaper interviews and public speaking engagements were given by two of the DV photographers. The transformation in the photographers was remarkable and their reaction to the positive response from exhibition viewers has boosted their self-confidence and self-worth in a healing way.

* A visitor to the exhibition said: "Absolutely floored by the strength and resilience of these powerful women. Healing is a slow, but important process. Truly an inspiration to me. Such a powerful exhibition brings home the truth of a situation we don't talk about - this expo will start the conversation that we need to have. Thank you for sharing your pain and your joy!"



SI Grosse Pointe recently teamed up with several local organizations to hold a human trafficking forum.

More than 250 members from the community attended the event, which discussed trafficking legislation, awareness and prevention. Panelists included Eastern Michigan University social work advisor, David Manville and Wayne State University assistant professor of law, Blanche Cook.

SI Cannock & District, Educating and Empowering Women & Girls - FGM. Many girls are still being subjected to FGM - they and public authorities need to be aware of the role they have in preventing this. Many women who have suffered FGM have serious health issues, particularly during child birth. They need to know that support is available.

SI Cannock & District met with their MP to speak about this issue and ask for her support and action within Government. Letters regarding the issue were presented to her. The meeting was given coverage in the local press, helping to keep members of the public informed of the issue and Soroptimist actions.

This is an on-going project - various actions will be needed to keep the issue high on the public agenda.





SI/Rio Negro, Brazil, with the help of a \$3,000 Soroptimist Club Grant for Women and Girls, recently organized a skills-training course for domestic violence victims. The course included classes on wall texturing and painting, which will provide skills and employment opportunities for the women and their families. Club members offered support for practice classes and lectures, and also publicized the project.

SI Manhattan Beach worked with New Star Family Justice Center, on the Domestic Violence Strangulation Workshop. Los Angeles County Law enforcement and medical providers had not been adequately trained to recognize and treat damage from strangulation injuries, that occurred during domestic violence disputes. Often strangulation does not immediately leave a mark and the victims are conscious and seem fine. However there can be serious long term harm to the brain and blood flow, leading to future strokes. Additionally, the attacker is not punished for the full extent of what he did as may be the case when cuts and bruises are evident.

Dr. Gael Strack is a nationally known educator and advocate for improving legal response. Her Training Institute on Strangulation Prevention is based in San Diego and she traveled to the Manhattan Beach community at the invitation of the New Star Family Justice Center, in order to deliver a one-day course. Over 100 professionals from the LAPD, Sheriff's office, fire department EMT's, nurses and social workers attended. SI Manhattan Beach provided \$1,000 to underwrite costs for the facility rental and provided volunteers to register guests.

It was hoped that first responders, medical staff and prosecutors would learn to recognize the impact of strangulation injuries; treat the victims more fully and also impose harsher charges and sentences on the perpetrators. Women who are victims will be encouraged by these professionals to tell their entire stories of the abuse and not minimize "he just choked me."

The club is estimating that each of the 100 attendees would encounter at least one case and deal with it in better ways. What they have learned will spread to their colleagues and we hope many more will seek out this information. Given the questions and conversations that happened during the workshop it is clear there are many inadequacies in the responses to domestic violence incidents and it is important for professionals to be equipped with ways to identify this attack.

The club will be glad to assist New Star as they work on their mission to protect women and help them to escape their abusers.



SI Project Showcase



SI Bingley, Yorkshire UK - Bingley Youth Cafe. This project is managed by Shipley and Bingley Voluntary Services and funded in part by the Big Lottery. The café works in partnership with other organisations such as Bradford Council and West Yorkshire Police. As this is a small organisation, it seeks support from local community groups, businesses and other funders in order to deliver a quality youth provision to young people from Bingley and Bingley rural. The Café is open from Tuesday to Sunday, providing a safe environment in which young people can complete homework as well as providing services including 'cook and eat' sessions, arts and crafts workshops, games, music and job and health advice. The Centre Manager visited the club to discuss what happens at the Youth Café and suggested ways in which the club could support this local project. SI Bingley provided refreshments for the young people - as they go to the café straight from school. Money for refreshments for the year is raised through raffles and voluntary donations. Prior to the opening of the Youth Café, teenagers were meeting on street corners and frequently causing disturbances because they had nowhere to go or anything constructive to do. The Youth Café is now very popular and is well attended. Staff report that the youngsters respond well to the activities provided and make further suggestions of what they would like to do. Members of SI Bingley are currently exploring how they can share their skills and expertise with the young people. For example, helping the young people to write CVs and university applications, allowing them to practise their interview techniques before a selection panel, and more.

St Vincent and The Grenadines - Youth Summer Programme- Girls on Fire 2.0

In partnership with the Girls Guides Association Ministry of Education and with Sponsorship from National Insurance Services Teachers, Cooperative Credit Union, Building and Loan Association and the Government of St.Vincent and the Grenadines. It was observed that young ladies in St Vincent and the Grenadines would benefit from a programme focused on areas such as communication, internet safety, entrepreneurial skills and personal care. A special programme dubbed 'Girls on Fire' was developed by the club, aimed at empowering girls and equipping them with the necessary skills to build self esteem and to develop skills for self sufficiency. This programme ran for a week in July 2015 and was held at the Girls Guides Headquarters. Sessions conducted included Internet Safety Empowerment sessions, Communication, and Dressing for Success. Girls also conducted a service project where they visited and donated gifts to the National Insurance Services golden years centre. This project will be conducted yearly and it is hoped that there will be an increase in the number of girls attending in addition to increased topics such as sexuality, violence against women and climate change. More over, greater focus will be placed on entrepreneurship.



SI Toowoomba, South Queensland, Australia ran a project entitled **Support for homeless youth in Gateway House Crisis Accommodation**, in a project partnership with Toowoomba Youth Service and Gateway House. Due to a range of variable complex issues facing young people and their families today, many families are struggling with being able to support their children. Some issues facing young people and their families include lack of income, mental health issues, addictions, Youth Justice involvement, deceased family members and often complex behavioural issues. Young people may arrive at the crisis centre day or night, some with only the clothes they are wearing. Whilst living at Gateway House, the youth workers support the young people in attaining Medicare cards, Centrelink payments, and other forms of identification. Young people are encouraged to open bank accounts and learn to budget and save money. They are also encouraged to attend information sessions and programmes run by other services within Gateway House. These sessions provide a range of information to help the young people step out in the world more informed, and better prepared to live independently.

Meeting the immediate needs of youth at Gateway House, SI Toowoomba provides young homeless females and males, aged 14 to 17 entering crisis care at Gateway House, with brand-new clothing such as underwear, pyjamas, socks, footwear and personal hygiene items. Additionally the club regularly asks Gateway House for a 'wish list' and endeavours to source the majority of items requested including towels, sheets, pillows and other bedding items, together with craft and recreational items. Last year the club also provided gift vouchers and other items for inclusion in Christmas stockings prepared by the Gateway House staff. The club also provides Independent Living Baskets to give initial assistance to youths moving into rental accommodation. SI Toowoomba provides young people aged 16 and 17 who are moving on from Gateway House with basic essentials for setting up a unit - namely a laundry basket containing crockery, cooking, cleaning and personal hygiene equipment needed during their first week. Items are donated or purchased with club funds. The club hopes the Independent Living Baskets will help those previously homeless to successfully transition from supported living at Gateway House to independent living in a rented unit. The laundry basket pack not only provides the young people with the basic, household items essential during their first week, but it is hoped that by supporting the transition into a safe, secure home of their own, the young people will continue school, training or take on jobs and ultimately achieve economic security and satisfaction for their future lives.



SI Sigatoka, Fiji - SI Guides-Guiding the Girls towards Leadership. SI Sigatoka began preparing for this event after finding out that the National Girl Guides Camp would be held in their town. Negotiations started with the committee for their involvement in delivering and advocating knowledge on leadership to help up-skill the young girls into dynamic leaders. SI Sigatoka prepared a presentation on Qualities and Dimensions of a good Leader. More than 620 guide girls and over 100 guide teachers from 111 schools participated in the programme. Groups of around sixty girls with their guide teachers passed through the Club's booth at the camp; four sessions a day for three continuous days in August, at Cuvu College Grounds in Sigatoka. SI Sigatoka also sponsored ten awards, all on Leadership, to boost the morale and motivate the girls who will compete for these awards in future events as well. The National Guide Leaders, Minister for Education, teachers and well wishes were present to witness the events and awards. SI received great publicity and the club intends to be involved with the next national camp.

EDUCATE TO LEAD: NEPAL - INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT'S APPEAL 15-17



On Human Rights Day, 10 December, 2015, Soroptimist International President Yvonne Simpson announced the launch of the new President's Appeal - 'Educate to Lead: Nepal'

The December 10th President's Appeal historically brings together the four Soroptimist Federations, drawing on the collective power of its 76,000 strong membership and focusing on supporting women and girls most in need around the world.

Still in its infancy, **'Educate to Lead: Nepal'** will support women and girls in Nepal as they rebuild their lives following the devastating earthquakes of 2015. The focus will be on education and leadership and here, we take a look at the first three projects chosen for support through this biennial's President's Appeal.

Soroptimist International & the Australian Himalayan Foundation

Following in the footsteps of Sir Edmund Hillary, the Australian Himalayan Foundation is working to help the people of the Himalayas through improvements in health, education and conservation in Nepal. In partnership with REED Nepal we will work to improve educational outcomes in the Lower Solu Khumbu (Everest) region, a world away from the popular trekking trails.

Their TTQE (Teacher Training & Quality Education) Program includes support for Key Teacher workshops to fast track the most able teachers so they can train other teachers – creating a truly sustainable program. The key challenge facing education in rural Nepal is not building more schools but improving the quality of the education delivered, so girls are equipped with the kind of education that changes lives. SI Educate to Lead: Nepal will provide training for 100 teachers.

Teachers, local district education officers, government representatives and community stakeholders will also participate in gender sensitivity training, creating awareness across the region of the gender issues in their communities. Working with the entire community has been integral to their success. The TTQE program will also extend their scholarship program, by providing 14 girls with vocational training aimed at creating long-term livelihood opportunities and economic independence. This training would be made available for girls at a high school level, either in school or who have dropped out, providing them skills in practical trades. The Solu Khumbu area was identified as a priority emergency district after the second earthquake occurred close to the Everest region. The training and selection of students will commence immediately. We are looking forward to following their progress.

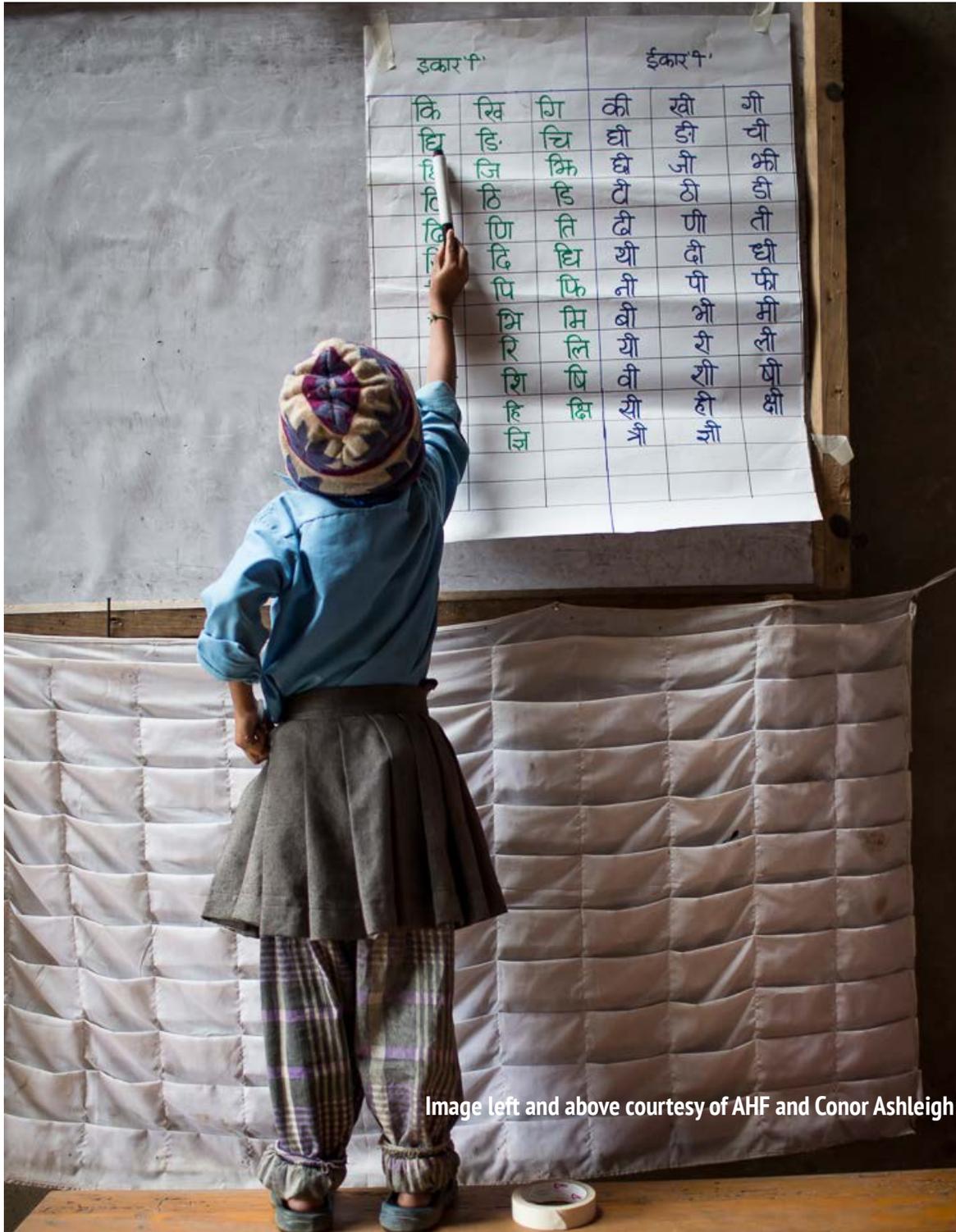


Image left and above courtesy of AHF and Conor Ashleigh

Removing Barriers to Education in Nepal

Soroptimist International of Truckee Meadows in Reno, Nevada, became familiar with the needs in Nepal fifteen years ago, after an inspiring presentation by Dr. Purna Subedi who came from Nepal to the US as a boy. He is the adopted son of a Soroptimist club member and still has family in the village of his birth. The club is so well known they are referred to fondly by the village elders as the “American Mothers”. The club refers to Thulipokhari as “our” village. Learning about the lack of educational opportunities for girls in Nepal, their initial goal was to build a dormitory and fund scholarships for girls to attend school. Girls were walking several hours each way to attend school. The dormitory allowed the girls to stay at school. Since then they have continued to fund improvements including clean cooking technology, solar generated electricity, computers, sanitary toilets and guidance in the development of a governing council to manage these changes. The 900 girls that have graduated from the program have gone on to influence their children and families in the village as well as raise the standard of living for themselves.

With the ‘**Educate to Lead: Nepal**’ grant, SI Truckee Meadows will remove the barriers to education for twenty girls when they move into the dormitory for two years to attend school. Room and board, tuition, books, supplies and uniforms will all be paid. A microcredit programme will be available to them when they finish, allowing them to start a small business. Since the launch of the microcredit programme the club has experienced a 100% repayment rate. The girls will be selected in December, 2015 for a class that will begin at the end of the first quarter.

The earthquake has been very difficult. Many homes have collapsed and the canvas provided to them is still being used as shelter. No funding has reached the village since the earthquake, so the club moved into action. Having direct contact with the village, the club was able to assess the immediate needs of food, blankets and shelter.

Tharu Women's Project

The third project to get the go-ahead was proposed by Soroptimist International of Oita-Midori, Japan, Minami Region. Some twenty years ago, the club was asked for help because the women in Tharu village were unjustly discriminated against as an indigenous minority. At the time, over 85% of the women were illiterate and many women and girls were being abducted by human traffickers. The club built a training center and began literacy classes, which were then followed by other skills training in an effort to advance income generating opportunities. These included dressmaking and food preparation. Girls were offered scholarships for tuition and upon completion, were offered micro credit loans. Now, with three training centres, thousands of women have completed literacy courses.

With a grant from the President's Appeal, SI Oita-Midori is all set to offer computer literacy classes to women and girls. With the purchase of twenty computers the first two years will see computer training for eighty women and ten teachers. The training will continue over five years with a final goal of training 200 women. The Soroptimist club visits this same village every year and during a recent trip in December 2015, members of SI Oita-Midori presented the first computers to Tharu Village in Nepal. This is just the beginning; a small sample of the change the 2015 - 2017 Appeal, and this particular project, hopes to make to the lives of women and girls in Nepal through education.



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