

a global voice
for women



ANNUAL REPORT 2021

SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL

Cover Image:
Beyond Football



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FOREWORD

BY SHARON FISHER SI PRESIDENT 2020-2021

2020-2021 was a time of extremes in a way most could never imagine. However, we came together under our Soroptimist International mission and goals to find those who needed our help and be their voice. With the promise of a vaccine arriving in December 2020, we were hopeful that in 2021 the world would 'Build Back Better'.

However, extremes showed us that getting a vaccine would not mean equitable distribution, since many countries still are without, whilst others are receiving a fourth booster shot. Pandemic rules and restrictions continued throughout 2021, with global news showing that once again women and girls were the most vulnerable, bringing gender to the fore and clearly showing us that human rights are not equal. The pushback against some of the hard-fought gains for gender equality is a concern to all of us and whilst we are becoming more literate in the use of technology and meeting each other more than ever before, the digital divide found many were left behind.

Climate disasters are risking our way of life with flooding, fires, natural disasters and new events like heat domes and atmospheric rivers. Political leaders are changing our democratic landscape and communication channels obscure the truth and feed us false information. Soroptimist International engaged in all these issues and more as we accelerated our advocacy work and listened and learned as we took action where it would have impact. We attended an increased number of events, delivered more statements, and met more people than ever before.

There was no country we could not reach and share our message with as 2021 relied on digital communications. We, at SI, took full advantage of this. Our actions in such times are critical and prove once again we are stronger together.

I am so grateful for the support I received for my SI President Appeal, Road to Equality. Launched in 2019 in Kuala Lumpur, my aim was to strategically focus on taking Action and to Advocate on topics affecting women and girls, including Child Marriage, Female Genital Mutilation, Domestic Violence, Rights of Older Women, Migration, and Human Trafficking. Despite the challenges of the pandemic, I am pleased to report that we have worked with partners to deliver projects on each of these topics; details of each project can be found on the Soroptimist International website.

In March 2021, we formed the Soroptimist International Foundation, which has charitable status enabling us to develop our work. The Foundation will become home to our SI President Appeals and future international appeals. We plan to launch it to members during the SI Dublin Convention in July 2023.

The highlight of the year was the 100th Anniversary of our organisation. Soroptimist International was celebrated in a live-streamed event with members joining from around the world to see, hear and celebrate our Bright Past and Brilliant Future. Soroptimist International has a proud history of 100 years transforming the lives of women and girls; our celebration reflected our global efforts since 1921, and I was honoured that so many Soroptimists joined us to commemorate our centenary.



As the 'Road to Equality' bus arrived back home, I want to thank you for joining the road trip and learning how we can make a difference in this world of challenges. It has been a pleasure serving with so many amazing members and staff that share a passion for making the world better each and every day.

Speaking of Challenges, and the Future, did I mention I will be in Dublin, Ireland in July 2023 for the next Soroptimist International Convention? Please join me and we can have another wonderful adventure together seeing, what I am told, is one of the most beautiful countries in the world.

Together we can Challenge the Future.
Sharon Fisher

ABOUT SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL

VISION

Women and girls will achieve their individual and collective potential, realise aspirations and have an equal voice in creating strong, peaceful communities worldwide

MISSION

Soroptimists transform the lives and status of women and girls through education, empowerment and enabling opportunities

PRINCIPLES

The advancement of the status of women; High ethical standards; Human rights for all; Equality, development and peace; and, The advancement of international understanding, goodwill and peace

Founded in 1921, Soroptimist International (SI) is a global volunteer movement with five Federations. A network of almost 70,000 club members in 122 countries. Although women and girls make up half of the population they are consistently discriminated against, and

ALMOST 70,000 CLUB MEMBERS IN 122

their human rights often ignored. For almost 100 years, SI has advocated for human rights and gender equality through education and empowerment.

At the heart of SI's advocacy work is its activity at eight United Nations Centres, in which Representatives ensure the voices of women and girls around the world are included in international decision making.

On the ground, Soroptimists take action through project work, awareness raising, and lobbying of governments to support and realise equality for women and girls. SI takes action to Educate, Empower, and Enable women and girls to achieve their individual and collective potential, and to realise aspirations, and have an equal voice in communities worldwide.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Soroptimist International recognises the valuable contributions of the the Board of Directors, Committees, Staff, Soroptimist Federations, Clubs and Soroptimist membership, without whom the results we now witness within the pages of this report would not have been achieved.

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2021

Sharon Fisher
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Kathy King
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Wendy Logan: Chair of Finance
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Sue Perry: Chair of Dublin Convention

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Public Relations: Sue Riney
Procedural Consultant: RoseMary Reid
Archivist: Gerda Huisman
President's Appeal 2020-21: Ayushi Kundu and
Olga Sidenko

Special Advisors to Advocacy: Linda Witong, Pat
Black
Strategic Relations: Bette Levy
SI President's Appeal 2022-23: Lee Ann Cochran

ROAD TO EQUALITY



The Sorooptimist International (SI) Road to Equality Appeal projects were able to proceed in 2021 and included the topics of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), Child and Forced Marriage, Domestic Violence, Human Trafficking, Migration, and the Rights of Older Women.

A series of Informational webinars educated Sorooptimists and others on these issues, and suggested ways to become advocates locally, nationally, and internationally.

In February 2021, SI Road to Equality hosted an online seminar to highlight a range of SI projects under the title 'Progress: from the Past to the Future'. This involved a discussion on the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) theme, and increased awareness of our project work, which directly informs our advocacy work, and supported our status with the United Nations.

WITH GLOBAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN

The Road to Equality work with the Global Media Campaign to end FGM, focused on Sierra Leone in the first half of 2021, at a time when the President had stated that he could not legally stop girls being cut as it would impact his political career. With girls out of school, many were being brought together for mass cuttings. In June SI hosted an online seminar for the International Day of the African Child with two Sorooptimist Six FGM campaigners from Sierra Leone. They shared their action in Sierra Leone, resulting in alternative ceremonies that did not involve cutting, and the changing of mindsets - and parents choosing not to cut their daughters. Collectively, the Sorooptimist Six through radio and television interviews community awareness programmes, were reaching millions about the harm of FGM and pushing forward to make change happen.

WITH SHREEJA INDIA

Our work on 'Beyond Football' with Shreeja India, a non-profit CSO working towards engaging, educating, and empowering young girls and women from marginalised communities in West Bengal, continued throughout 2021. Beyond Football trains girls in the skills of football (soccer) to reduce instances of child marriage, trafficking, domestic violence, and other forms of abuse. At the end of December there were 33 beneficiary villages participating in the programme.

Several girls received awards, and 13 girls from class 10 were selected for 'The Telegraph Education' Scholarship and awarded financial help to continue their education. Many played in tournaments, and the team became champions at the Women's Tournament (D.T.P.S. Sanghasree Club) Durgapur, winning three back to back matches, a Trophy, and 15000₹. Road to Equality branded T-shirts were distributed to the girls and worn on the pitch with pride! 140 girls were registered for the subsequent Beyond Football session, and the project is expected to continue until August 2023.



WITH LUGARI COMMUNITY RESOURCE CENTER

With the support of the SI Road to Equality Appeal, the Lugari Community Resource Center Youth Leadership and Mentorship Training Camp took place to celebrate the 10th Anniversary of its Leadership programme in rural Kenya, and 150 girls were selected from around Kenya as young leaders. Soroptimist Board member and SI UN Representative, Nairobi, Mary Muia, on behalf of SI President Sharon Fisher, opened the event, encouraging the girls to walk their leadership path and to learn all they could during the camp and then take that knowledge to practice and to teach in their own communities.

The girls spent eight days at Lugari learning about leadership and many of the issues that impact girls aged between 13 and 18 years old, including leadership, human rights, safety and violence prevention, Menstrual Hygiene Management and FGM, nutrition, and much more. They were shown how to create a vegetable garden, encouraged to join a debate, and a Head Teacher guided them in ways to connect with their communities at home and in school, to help them establish groups and implement and complete projects once they had left the camp. The successes will be judged and the girls with the top projects will return next year to share their stories with the next group of future leaders.



WITH GLOBAL ALLIANCE FOR THE RIGHTS OF OLDER PEOPLE

SI Road to Equality sought out a project for the topic of Older Persons, partnering with the Global Alliance for the Rights of Older People (GAROP), with the goal of raising awareness of this overlooked demographic. GAROP has over 400-member Non-Governmental Organisations from 80 countries advocating for a convention for the Rights of Older People. A UN Convention would strengthen the rights and voices of older people globally and we will support GAROP during 2022 to sponsor this campaign. At the Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing in April 2022 over 300 organisations put their signatures forward calling for clear action on older people's rights. This was a significant increase from April 2021. This campaign is known as 'AGE WITH RIGHTS.' A CSW parallel event webinar was hosted with several hundred people registered. The project will continue through 2022 with the next event scheduled for 1 October, 2022, the International Day of Older Persons, where the 2022 theme is Older Women.

WITH AIDROM

The topic of Migration took us to Romania providing a pathway to citizenship for 40 refugee women. With the Ecumenical Association of Churches in Romania (AIDRom) as a partner, these women are enrolled in vocational training, given a job on completion, assisted with housing and eventually citizenship. SI hosted a webinar with AIDRom and Romanian Soroptimists, discussing the project. This was prior to the war in Ukraine that has seen hundreds of thousands of women and children cross the border into Romania. Some of these Ukrainian women will be enrolled in the programme.



OPENING DOORS TO A BRIGHT FUTURE 2021-2023

INTRODUCTION

The Soroptimist International (SI) President Appeal 2021-2023 'Opening Doors to A Bright Future' was launched at the Annual General Meeting, 2021, with the aim of implementing one project in one country within each of the five SI Federations. The projects would commence on 1 January 2022.

Education is a fundamental human right for everyone. It is a powerful driver for sustainable development and peace, as well as being one of the strongest instruments for reducing the multiple barriers that affect women and girls around the world, such as poverty, gender inequality, and food insecurity. Education is the key to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, including decent work and economic growth, making it possible for women and girls to stand as equals and participate fully in society.



OBJECTIVES

To provide access to education and training for disadvantaged and marginalised women and girls in a safe, friendly, and stimulating environment where there is equality of opportunity and support for all.

To encourage the development of confidence, self-esteem through mentoring programmes.

To enable the most vulnerable and those excluded from society to access information, resources, and services to empower women and girls to make positive life choices.

To break down barriers to learning and participation for women so that they become fully active citizens and are equipped to pass on their experiences to benefit their families and broader communities.

OUTCOMES | IMPACT

Learn and feel safe.

Gain opportunities to complete various levels of education.

Acquire knowledge and skills to compete in the labour market.

Have the socio-emotional and life skills to adapt to a changing world.

Earn a higher income.

Make decisions about their own lives.

Marry at a later age.

Have fewer children who are healthier.

Contribute to their communities confidence, self-esteem through mentoring programmes.

ADVOCACY

BEVERLY BUCUR



The United Nations (UN) was established following World War II to prevent future wars. On 25 June 1945, the UN Charter was adopted and later that year the UN began operations. The UN's objectives are to maintain peace and security, protect human rights, promote sustainable development, uphold international law, and deliver humanitarian aid. These objectives remain relevant to the work that Soroptimists do in their communities and throughout the world today.

Present at the UN from its conception in 1948, the Soroptimist Association received consultative status with UNESCO. Two years later, Soroptimist International (SI) was awarded Consultative C status by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and, in 1984 was granted Category 1 status with ECOSOC. General Consultative Status is the highest status an organisation can receive.

In 2021, SI had a team of 21 UN Representatives serving at the UN Headquarters in New York; United Nations Office in Geneva; United Nations Office in Vienna; United Nations Environmental Program in Nairobi; UNESCO in Paris; The Food and Agriculture Organization in Rome; and The Economic and Social Commission for Asia-Pacific Region. The work of SI's UN Representatives focuses on advancing the 2030 Agenda, specifically the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

2021 was the second year that COVID-19 halted or cut down the number of attendees allowed to participate at in-person UN meetings. The UN and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), adapted by providing increased virtual opportunities. This did, however, limit access to member states and UN personnel.

The pandemic pushed back gains made in achieving gender equality, and gender-based violence. Domestic violence in particular saw a large increase of cases. Schools closed, leading to more cases of early, child and forced marriage, and harmful traditional practices. Women were left unable to access healthcare, whilst economies and livelihoods were destroyed deepening poverty and inequalities. Our UN Representatives worked hard to generate awareness of these issues and advocate for policy changes to improve the situation of women and girls in all their diversity.

The Secretary General's Report of 2021, 'Our Common Agenda', details the precarious situation the world is in today, including the challenges of conflict, climate change, poverty, discrimination, and violence, denying many the necessities of life such as food, water, housing, and medical care. António Guterres called on nations to work together for people and the planet, by accelerating the implementation of existing agreements, including the SDGs.

ADVOCACY

SI had six UN Representatives at the UN Headquarters in New York during 2021.

Bette Levy, as Main Representative, coordinated the activities of the New York team, additionally representing SI on the Women's Major Group (WMG). Her work focused on Gender Equality, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), Poverty, and Children and Families.

Bette had several opportunities to step up and take on roles within the official UN processes, including representing civil society at the 2021 High Level Political Forum (HLPF) Expert Group Meeting (EGM), the purpose of which was to bring together experts from UN agencies, member states, civil society, academia, research and the private sector, to address the proposed theme of the meeting and make recommendations and action plans that will be used to form the basis of the Secretary General's (SG's) report on the topic.

In preparation for the EGM, Bette prepared a written statement, circulated to members of the WMG advocacy group and to other NGO representatives, for additional input and edits. Francesca Fletcher Williams (SI Global Policy Coordinator) served as editor. Once the process was completed, the statement was submitted to UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs (DESA). Over the course of the three-day meeting, Bette had the opportunity to represent the WMG as an expert on UN Sustainable Development Goal 1 – Poverty, and to make several oral interventions.

Frances Zainoeddin is an expert on the rights of older persons including healthy ageing. In addition to representing Soroptimist International, Frances is vice-chair of the NGO Committee on Ageing, and is the UN Focal Point in New York for the Stakeholders Group on Ageing. Frances is also actively involved in issues concerning the rights of older persons, particularly in the context of efforts being made by the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing at the United Nations, calling for a convention to protect and promote the rights of older persons.

NEW YORK

A report published in September 2021 by the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons, tells us that the intersection between discrimination based on age and gender, produces unique forms of inequality, including negative stereotypes that combine both ageism and sexism.

On 1 October, the NGO Committee on Ageing New York called attention to digital equity of all ages. Women and older persons experience digital inequity to a greater extent than other groups in society – either lacking access to technologies, or not benefitting fully from the opportunities provided by technological progress.

Vanessa Treers follows the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and is a member of NGO CSW New York. Vanessa worked closely with Assistant Director of Advocacy, Ulla Madsen and Leigh Elwood-Brown on organising training for CSW66 in 2022. Vanessa also represents SI on the NGO Major Group, where she monitors and reports on updates for HLPF.

During 2021, SI partnered with the Young Ambassadors Society (YAS), in organising an international consultation with youth organisations from all over the world in preparation for the Youth 20 (Y20), the official G20 engagement group dedicated to young people. The group was chaired by the Young Ambassadors Society, in collaboration with the office of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers of Italy, and in coordination with the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. Y20 sought to encourage young people to express their ideas and visions to the Heads of State and Government of the G20. Vanessa Treers, Francesca Fletcher Williams, and Allie Liu planned and coordinated the activities and discussion groups on behalf of SI.

Maria Fornella Oehninger served her second year as co-chair of the NGO Committee on Social Development. The theme for 2021 was 'The role of digital technologies on social development and the well-being of all'. Maria's role was to coordinate Civil Society participation with UNDESA and plan the Civil Society Forum. Many hours were spent on advocacy work, virtually meeting with UN Permanent Missions, and working towards the Civil Society Forum, an official part of the commission's official programme.

Together with her co-chair, Maria was invited to participate in the Opening Session via video, additionally overseeing morning briefings with UNDESA and members of the Bureau. Maria coordinated participation of NGOs in main debate and dialogs of the Commission, coordinating question and answer panels, and organising and presenting the Closing Session.

Maria represented NGO CSocD as speaker on the Club de Madrid Side-event 'Transforming Multilateralism for Social Justice and Inclusion,' presenting a vision of a new multilateralism that includes civil society. Maria is a member of the working group on homelessness advocating for women and girls.

Jacqueline Shapiro focused on the Working Group on Girls (WGG), and the NGO Committee to Stop Trafficking in Persons (CSTIP). WGG formed in the lead up to the Fourth World Conference on Women to ensure the particular challenges faced by girls were addressed. For the International Day of the Girl Child, the WGG focused primarily on girls' participation at an event held at the UN New York.

Barbara Rochman's valued work focused on migration and the Migration Compact for Safe and Orderly Migration. Barbara completed her term as a UN Representative in February 2021.

The WGG made a pledge for the International Year for the Elimination of Child Labor (2021), to work with high school girls and create a model for educating youth on sustainable clothes shopping. Jacqueline was involved in organising three programmes, including a webinar delivered on UN WEB TV 'Bankrupting the Business of Human Trafficking 101'.

In April, 2021 as a continuum to its previous programme, CSTIP organised four breakout sessions with 21 experts from law enforcement, government, business, and civil society to share best ideas for ending human trafficking. Jacqueline was also involved in organising a webinar collaboration between the NGO Committee on Migration and Stop Trafficking in Persons entitled 'Improving Outcomes for Migrant Children at Risk of Trafficking' as part of the 2021 International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour.

Jacqueline Shapiro and Maria Fornella were involved in the NGO Coalition to Ratify ILO C190, the first international treaty to recognise the right of everyone to a world of work free from violence and harassment, including gender-based violence and harassment. The Convention came into force on 25 June 2021. Governments that ratify C190 are required to put in place the necessary laws and policy measures to prevent and address violence and harassment in the world of work. The Convention represents an opportunity to shape a future of work based on dignity and respect for all.

3.



A GLOBAL VOICE FOR WOMEN
100
FOR ONE HUNDRED YEARS

**THE DIGITAL DIVIDE
MUST BE RECOGNISED AS A
CORE DIMENSION OF A
GENDER-SENSITIVE RESPONSE
TO PANDEMICS.**

[#BridgetheDigitalDivide](#)

[#CSOCD59](#)

GENEVA

UN Representative Berthe DeVos, together with Stacy Ciulik, and Donatella Benjamin, represent SI at the UN in Geneva. SI's work here focuses on human rights, gender equality, and peace and security.

The UN's Human Rights Council and human rights review mechanisms take place in Geneva, including the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Universal Periodic Review (UPRC), and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Our UN Representatives participate in NGO CSW Geneva meetings and events, where Berthe DeVos serves as Treasurer and Advocacy Coordinator. SI participated in the 109th International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention, with the main theme of Inequalities, skills, and lifelong learning. COVID-19 remained a major issue with the call for advancing a human-centered approach to recovery.

ILO C-190 is the first international treaty to recognise that everyone has a right to a workplace free of violence and harassment. The Convention was adopted in 2019 and came into force in 2021. The UN Representatives in Geneva and New York, advocate for governments to ratify C-190, and to put in place laws to address violence and harassment in the workplace.



ROME

Dr. Liliana Mosca is our representative to Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in Rome. The UN General Assembly declared 2021 the International Year of Fruits and Vegetables. The focus of her work was food security in the face of climate change, water scarcity. In particular Liliana focuses on gender equality, and women's and girls' empowerment in the context of access to sufficient nutrition food. Liliana represents Soroptimist International on the AD HOC Group of NGO representatives to FAO in Rome, and the Women's Group of the Civil Society Mechanism. Even with the restrictions of COVID-19, Liliana represented SI at 12 meetings during 2021.

NAIROBI

Nairobi is home to the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), where we currently have three UN Representatives: Mary Muia, Main Representative, Asha Abdulrahman, and Beatrice Oluoch. The focus of their work during 2021 was on the United Nations Environmental Assembly or UNEA 5. The overarching theme for UNEA 5 was 'Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve Sustainable Development'.

A major focus of discussion was the environmental dimension of sustainable development to build a resilient and inclusive post-pandemic world. Soroptimists participated in the Civil Society Forum prior to UNEA 5, and our team followed the work of the Committee of Permanent Representatives and participated in UNEA 5. The message was clear - 2021 was a critical year to reset our relationship with nature and Member States will also gather this year to address biodiversity loss, chemical pollution, ocean health, desertification, and climate disruption.

VIENNA

Our work at the UN in Vienna focuses on Crime and Crime Prevention as they affect women and girls through conferences sponsored by The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). We annually attend the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ) and Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime. We also attended the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) Conference focusing on the rights of women in the workforce.

2021 was a busy year for our team in Vienna, starting with the Kyoto Crime Congress which was rescheduled from the previous year. The 14th Crime Congress, held in Kyoto, Japan had the overall theme of 'Advancing crime prevention, criminal justice and the rule of law: towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. The event was attended in person by Soroptimist International of the Americas (SIA) President, Kazuko Morita, with our team in Vienna, and Representatives from the US attending virtually. SI President, Sharon Fisher delivered a statement virtually.

The 30th session of CCPCJ took place 17-21 May 2021 with the theme of smuggling of migrants. Soroptimist International co-sponsored a side event about the environmental factors that trigger migration.

Our UN Representatives in Vienna assumed leadership roles, with Martina Gredler as Second Vice-President of CoNGO, Marion Prechtel, Treasurer of the Sustainable Development Committee, and Christine Peer as First Vice President of NGO-CSW Vienna Development Committee, and Christine Peer as First Vice President of NGO-CSW Vienna.

BANGKOK

Theresa Devashayam represents SI at the Commission for the Asia Pacific (ESCAP). In 2021, Theresa attended three meetings, the first being held in April 2021. This dealt with economic recovery strategies of countries in the Asia Pacific region, particularly in relation to marginalised people, including all women and girls. The second meeting was organised by the ILO focusing on ILO C 190, and the third, organised by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), focused on the digital economy and how governments might help women tap into the digital world in response to shifts in the global economy. Theresa is an expert in older persons and food security.

PARIS

In 2021 UNESCO celebrated its 75th Anniversary. SI joined Rotary International, the International Council of Organizations of Folklore, Festivals and Folk Arts (CIOF), for an anniversary event focused on our work at UNESCO. Sharon Fisher, SI President, and Beverly Bucur, SI Advocacy Director gave presentations, whilst Marie Christine Gries coordinated and moderated the event.

The 12th International Forum of NGOs took place in December 2021 and Beverly Bucur participated in Thematic Session 2, on Global Citizenship. Presenting the importance of preparing girls to lead, Beverly highlighted two projects from the 2020-2021 SI President's Appeal. Evelyne Para delivered a statement at the Plenary Session of the 41st Session of UNESCO's General Conference, and Soroptimist Ayushi Kundu co-chaired the working group on the inclusion of youth. The group wrote a guide for the inclusion of youth in advocacy entitled 'Building Toward a Sustainable Future Using Synergies.'

ADVOCACY

In 2021, Ulla Madsen chaired the Global Impact Committee, the main function of which, was to build and develop collaboration with and between SI and the Federations. Overall, substantial gains were made in the building, developing, and unifying of the global message of Soroptimist International.

The Federations agreed on a collaboration to recognise the International Day of the Girl Child, and a social media campaign to address the challenges faced, and the work taking place by Soroptimists to break down barriers and increase opportunities and access to learning.

Vibrant media cards were designed to invite engagement and shared across social media platforms. Additionally, a carousel of all five media cards was produced and promoted on the Instagram platform. For the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence, the Federations collaborated on the theme of stereotypes, each producing a video highlighting important projects on relevant topics, with promotion through social media and the SI website.

The Priority theme of the sixty-fifth session of the Commission on the Status of Women was: Women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. The Review theme identified Women's empowerment and the link to sustainable development (agreed conclusions of the sixtieth session).

The parallel event organised by Soroptimist International (SI), was based on the SI President's Appeal 'The Road to Equality' with the title 'Preparing Women and Girls to Lead.' All five Federations delivered excellent presentations on projects related to the topic, and SI President, Sharon Fisher, explored the background to her Appeal and the impact she hoped to achieve. I had the pleasure of being the moderator of this successful parallel event.



10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



BEYOND FOOTBALL, ROAD TO EQUALITY SI PRESIDENT'S APPEAL 2019 - 2021

The programme combines sports and life skills to tackle the lack of equal access to education for village girls in India

#SDG10

In 2021 Advocacy Advisor Linda Witong, provided research for SI, NGO CSW NY, and other organisations working with SI. Advocacy Advisor, Pat Black assisted with writing statements and blogs for SI.

Thank you to the members of the Global Impact Committee: Ulla Madsen, Chair; Wanda Price (SIA); Kay Richmond (SIGBI) Chinwe Ezenwa-Mbah, (SIAF); Rita Nogueira Ramos and Bettina Hahne (SIE), and Diane Lockwood (SISWP), and to the Global Policy team for their hard work and dedication to Soroptimist International.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE GIRL CHILD

SI GREAT BRITAIN & IRELAND - SISTER PUT YOUR BEST FOOT FORWARD: SI BARBADOS



Helping young women, job seekers, and entrepreneurs to start their careers, through a four-part mini-series covering interview techniques, financial management, and social media use.



100 YEAR ANNIVERSARY

In 2021 Soroptimist International (SI) celebrated its 'Bright Past, Brilliant Future' across the globe through Club, Region, Union, and Federation events, culminating in a global celebration hosted by Soroptimist International.

With thousands joining us online, for many, this was the first time the history of SI had been seen and the remarkable stories heard. The work achieved in the run up to the event - gathering and recording so many special moments, will now be available for future generations to come.

The global event opened with a traditional candle ceremony live in a studio in Seattle, Washington, and members joined us virtually from all five Federations, sharing photographs and videos, lighting their own candles and raising a glass to celebrate 100 years.

We heard from Linabelle Villarica in the Philippines, who spoke of the leadership she had learned, and it was fun to see Past SIE President, Renata Trottmann Probst, travel through time as a Soroptimist! The creativity brought forward by many was excellent.

We introduced past SI Presidents and welcomed our incoming President, Maureen Maguire. We revisited Quadrennial Projects and each of our SI President's Appeals, hearing from the Presidents of the time, and others, seeing the stories through their own eyes - a wonderful tribute to their legacy!

Friends and dignitaries from far and wide shared video greetings - from partners to non-governmental organisations, to United Nations officials, and those from the political world, and more. All Federation Presidents delivered important messages, and shared celebratory activity taking place within their Federation to mark this significant occasion.

Inspiring keynote speakers joined us by video, or in person, providing context on key themes and significant issues affecting women and girls. Kim Bogucki spoke on the prison system and the challenges faced by women incarcerated. We heard from the Union of Italy and the Philippines Region where country-wide projects help women navigate the justice system in innovative ways.

The Soroptimist response to Disaster Relief was highlighted as we heard from Japanese Soroptimists who gave a moving thank you video for support shown following the Tsunami – causing so much devastation and loss of life. Soroptimists were told of a subsequent project that focused on educating girls who had lost their parents, ensuring they were able to complete their high school education.

We heard of the housing challenges faced by women, and how a club began investing in housing at its inception in 1926; now commencing a \$60 million housing project, built by women for women, with over 100 units of affordable housing in Vancouver, a place so many women find themselves at risk of homelessness, due to rising rents.





A GLOBAL VOICE FOR WOMEN

100

FOR ONE HUNDRED YEARS



SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL GALLERY OF PRESIDENTS



A GLOBAL VOICE FOR WOMEN
100
FOR ONE HUNDRED YEARS

**"It was my honour to serve as your
SI President during this significant
milestone anniversary**

Thank you"

Sharon Fisher

Celeste Mergens, the founder of Days for Girls joined us. The organisation received its very first donation from a local Soroptimist club, way before public awareness of girls being unable to go to school due to lack of menstrual supplies was common place. Today, Days for Girls is supported by Soroptimists in many parts of the world, in addition to the SI President's Appeal 2015-2017, which supported the launch of a micro enterprise programme in Nepal for over 10,000 girls, raising awareness and tackling the stigma around this important topic.

It wouldn't be a party without singing, dancing and of course cake! We had plenty and we finished the event with our producer the amazing Nathan Young, our MC, Billie Wildrick, Soroptimists Sue Riney, and Stephanie Smith, who joined us in a memorable rendition of Abba's 'Dancing Girl' as a final act!

We asked for your help, and you showed up. Every Wednesday for most of 2021 you logged in to join us in planning, promoting, and spreading the word, and didn't we have fun! We remembered, recorded, reached out, re-cycled, and realised our Bright Past!

Many of you unable to join us supported us through financial sponsorship or by providing support to those who might not otherwise have been able to attend. Thank you, thank you! I am just now finishing attending club meetings as part of the sponsorship packages, a real treat for me - meeting you and your members, and getting to know you all.

Members joined from 100 of our 122 countries with close to 4,000 people registering. We attempted translation in the languages Federations typically use, hosting the event in two time zones. The one-hour break-out sessions, encouraged a diverse mix of members to join together, with our leaders dropping in to say hello.

A huge thank you to my event partner Sue Riney who never failed to juggle and catch the pieces, and to everyone who worked tirelessly to make the event successful. Thanks for saying 'yes' or raising your hand for those unknown tasks. I hope we made it fun! For those who missed it, the event will be shared for your pleasure sometime soon by SIHQ. Now on to our Brilliant Future, and the possibilities that lay ahead.

CONTEXT

2021 was another healthy year for SI finances resulting mainly from the reduced cost of travelling due to COVID. The surpluses will provide reserves for the future including funds for capital expenditure and a contingency for a decrease in income.



During the year, Soroptimist International (SI) successfully completed two significant new initiatives. The Soroptimist International Foundation was set up under a Deed of Trust at 1 March 2021. We also hosted a successful virtual celebration for the SI 100th Anniversary.

The Foundation was a major focus during 2021, and separate financial records were set up and a new bank account opened. Additionally, a new agreement was established with bookkeepers and all Presidents Appeal transactions from 1 March 2021 from the SI (Soroptimist International) Limited accounts were transferred to a new set of accounts for the Foundation.

The success of the 100th Anniversary Celebration was a significant highlight in 2021. Thanks to high registrations internally managed by Treasurer Kathy King, SI President Sharon Fisher and SI HQ staff, a surplus was realised.

The Finance Committee met monthly to review financial performance, investments and discuss matters of policy and process. During the year all of the SI Finance Policies were reviewed and subsequently approved by the Board.

The SI Investments at the end of the financial year showed a positive result. The investments were closely monitored with the Investment Manager attending Finance Committee meetings quarterly to discuss the performance of our investment portfolio. The Board received quarterly updates on investments and management accounts.

RESULTS

The members of the Finance Committee during the year were Maureen Maguire, Sharon Fisher, Kathy King, Deborah Thomas and Carolien Demey (until October when she was replaced by Hafdis Karlsdottir).

I would like to acknowledge the hours of work that the members of the Finance Committee contributed during the year and the support they have given me in my role as Chair.

Wendy Logan, Chair of Finance

The Financial Statements of SI (Soroptimist International) Limited were produced with the provisions applicable to companies entitled to the Small Companies Exemption. An audit exemption was applied resulting in unaudited Financial Statements subjected to an Independent Chartered Account's Review Report (Assurance Review Engagement)

The SI (Soroptimist International) Limited Financial Statements for the year ending 31st December 2021 show a surplus of £58,292. This result was mainly due to savings on accommodation and travel due to COVID and a surplus of £15,561 from the 100th Anniversary event.

Total income from Dues £5.00 per member was £344,790 compared to £353,023 for the previous year.

Only the President's Appeal income and expenditure up to 28 February 2021 is included in these Financial Statements. All transactions subsequent to 1 March have been transferred to the Soroptimist International Foundation Financial Statements.

Investment Portfolio

The net total value of the managed investment portfolio as at 31 December was £687,983, an increase of £26,471 from the total value in 2020 of £661,513, a net increase of 4% for the year. Whilst this was a good result for 2021, higher inflation, rising interest rates, and political conflict are expected to create more volatility in markets in 2022.

CLOSING REMARKS

2021 proved once again to be a year when the global pandemic attempted to prevent Soroptimist International (SI) from achieving its goals as new variants of the virus spread and lockdowns continued. As we did in 2020, SI implemented a 'together but apart' approach to our work, and collectively the SI Board of Directors, Presidential Appointees, and SIHQ Staff worked as a team to achieve the goals set for the year.

SI's advocacy work remained mostly virtual during 2021. Nonetheless, SI had excellent representation at the sixty-fifth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW65) and participation in the agreed conclusions.

We witnessed pushback on the gains made in respect of achieving gender equality during the pandemic, in particular the increase in domestic violence. Our SI United Nations Representatives worked hard to create awareness of these issues and advocate for policy changes to improve the situation of women and girls in all their diversity.

SI President 2020 – 2021, Sharon Fisher, continued to drive forward her appeal, 'Road to Equality', sharing SI advocacy knowledge and messages to Soroptimists and partners through some excellent webinars and podcasts. If you have not listened in yet, head over to the SI website or our YouTube Channel to view the library of recordings. 'Road to Equality' delivered six projects, all action-orientated to address many forms of violence against women, including an innovative project in partnership with the Global Media Campaign, with SI funding six campaigners to travel to local radio stations across Africa to broadcast key messages about female genital mutilation.

SI President 2022 – 2023, Maureen Maguire launched her appeal 'Opening Doors to a Bright Future' in October, cementing the Soroptimist belief and commitment to Education throughout the life course, and its immense power and fundamental role as a driver for sustainable development, peace, and equality. The first project taking place in Cambodia partners with the Cambodian Community

Dream Organization educating disadvantaged and marginalised girls aged between 10 and 15 years of age in the Siem Reap communities, and supporting newly widowed women and female-headed households, training them in various skills to improve self-confidence and self-esteem.

In March SI established the Soroptimist International Foundation which received charitable status in July. The Foundation will become the home of the SI President's Appeals and future International Appeals. The Soroptimist International Foundation will be introduced to Soroptimists at the SI Dublin International Convention.

October saw Soroptimist International host a virtual 100th-anniversary party for thousands of Soroptimists who joined in from around the globe. Celebrating and recognising our impact since 1921, SI President 2020-2021, Sharon Fisher led the event which proudly displayed many Soroptimist projects and campaigns. We certainly have a history to be proud of and as we embrace the next 100 years, Soroptimist International can draw on its history and modern ways of working to ensure it continues to be heard as a Global Voice for Women and Girls.

Global Executive Director, Deborah Thomas



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