

Welcome to the September edition of Soroptimist Programme Action News (SPAN).

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Federation of the



International
South West Pacific

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Dear Soroptimists, sponsors and project partners,

Suicide is the leading cause of death for girls aged 10-19 globally. Child marriages, disrupted education, modern slavery, violence, exploitation and trafficking of girls often leads to anxiety, depression, communicable diseases and deaths, including maternal mortality. 120 million girls around the world experience sexual violence. That's a horrific 1 in 10 girls worldwide. Gender sensitization programmes targeted at boys and young men is necessary to eradicate generations of cultural oppression of girls in our countries.

Education is the key

- Focus on building the self-esteem and confidence of girls so that they do not feel second class or less worthy than boys.
- Create online empowerment programmes and digital communication spaces to enable girls to trust their unique inner voice and to assert themselves positively. In this hypersensitive and often aggressive era of social media, especially during COVID-19 lockdown, girls are more exposed and vulnerable to social media predators, body shaming attackers and cyber-bullies. We need to demonstrate to girls how to remain cool, calm and focused!
- Develop activities in schools, colleges and local community centres to help girls transform the way they view themselves. May our girls stand tall and know that they are worthy of love and respect. May our girls become wiser to commercial propaganda and not succumb to the mostly unreal media portrayal and stereotyping of girls, especially by the fashion world and music industry.
- Do what you can to advocate and influence local government and business leaders to provide girls with equal access to education, affordable healthcare, nutrition, feminine hygiene products, clean water and sanitation, safe public spaces and transportation.

Every year 12 million girls are married as child brides. Half of them in Asia and the Pacific. Deep poverty forces parents to sell their daughters into marriage and labor exploitation. With consistent efforts and committed fund-raising, I am confident that clubs all across SISWP will continue to enable

posts are invaluable. Please keep the flow coming to us.

Thank you.

Anusha Santhirasthipam

SISWP Immediate Past President

Interim Programme Director

Advocacy Work

What are priorities in your country? What are clubs doing in advocacy?

Advocating on behalf of women is a core Soroptimist function, and this month the programme team is pleased to once again be able to report on Soroptimist Advocacy work.

The Programme team presented a webinar **"How to Advocate Effectively, Influence Policy & Decision Making by Governments and the UN"**, on Sunday 6th of September, Soroptimists from across the globe logged on to hear facilitator Anusha Santhirasthipam with panellists Rita Reddy and Theresa Devasahayam. Both ladies spoke about how and why they became advocates for change and their continued commitment to the implementation of Human Rights for all women and girls. When asked what areas of advocacy Soroptimists could become involved with there were these gems;

"Portrayal of women in the media, women have not reached gender equality in the media and are often depicted as sex objects, this was raised as an issue in 1995 at the Beijing Conference and is still an issue. Soroptimists are urged to be **"Watch Dogs"**, we can start to count daily how many times women are portrayed in a demeaning or inappropriately way, then we should speak out. Our children watch TV, read papers, go to the movies do we want them to see women being portrayed in this way. As the "Watch Dog" run your campaign to bring about change, another area of advocacy.

"Women in politics", globally women as political leaders is still only about 20%, why is this? One suggestion from the panelists was that men politicians do not want to give up their position of power and this prevents women from making inroads. In some countries, the media is controlled or owned by politicians, therefore controlling the voice of the people. It was suggested that women need to become owners or have control of the media. Another way is to mentor and mobilize Young Women and their involvement, how are they going to use their voice, how can they influence policy, mentoring to start small at the local level and mobilize, advocate and make their voices heard. One of the oldest issues and still endemic is the campaign for Violence Against Women, here they can start to raise their voices. We as Soroptimists can be their mentors, we can support and train our young women, build their confidence and capacity, providing them with the confidence and platform to stand up and speak out.

Soroptimist International as a bottom up organisation. You have a voice - use your voice.

Soroptimist International is a community of women, who can act when others cannot.

Keep focused on the Sustainable Development Goals. Think about our sisters as we are all ONE.

If you missed this powerful and insightful webinar, you can watch in on catchup - The webinar is available for viewing from the SISWP website, log in and click the link to view all webinars under the Members Area. Or [Click Here](#).

Clubs to be more actively involved with Advocacy, and that all clubs should be able to submit ONE advocacy action to the Reporting Database by end of November. Whilst some Advocacy topics were introduced during the Advocacy Workshop, there are also some other areas where Soroptimists can advocate. A recent paper by the UN on Gender Equality, Economic Recovery post COVID 19, read the full article by Valeria Esquivel, ILO Senior Employment Policies and Gender Officer, this document talks about 4 areas where our voice could influence government policy regarding the employment of women. 1. Help women find new jobs if they've lost them, 2. Avoid cutting subsidies. 3. Invest in care, 4. Promote employment policies that focus on women.

[READ MORE](#)

Tell us what your club is doing to Advocate on behalf of women. Send us the information or complete a Advocacy Programme Report

POS Extended Team Meeting



Soroptimists who hold Programme of Service positions at Region or with their club, held a recent and successful Programme of Service Extended Team meeting, 63 members participated in the meeting. There was great dialogue between the POS Team, Region POS team members and National Representatives. The questionnaire provided valuable information to the POS team for future discussion and direction. The webinar can be viewed from the Webinar section on the SISWP website, or you [can follow this link](#).



The Road to Equality
SI PRESIDENT'S APPEAL 2019 - 2021

Soroptimist International President's Appeal - The Road to Equality. watch the first webinar
https://youtu.be/f1D0NzMx_Ew

Webinar recording from 20 August 2020.



Programme Reporting Database



We are now 8 months into the Soroptimist year. I have run some reports from the database so that you can see a snapshot of the value of the work being performed by Soroptimists. This report is for the period 1 January to 30 August. Keep up the good work, but we know these figures are NOT a true reflection of the enormous value of work performed by Soroptimists in the South West Pacific. Please encourage members and clubs in your zone to report.

to report.

| Zone | Donated Money | Scholarship Value | Service Hours | Project Costs | Advocacy Hrs | Women & Girls |
|--------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|
| 1 | 20691 | 25400 | 22148 | 48517 | 90 | 183 |
| 2 | 3421 | 3845 | 122 | 3200 | 6 | 33 |
| 3 | 2871 | 3984 | 237 | 3400 | 0 | 1620 |
| 4 | 950 | 0 | 214 | 21600 | 741 | 7921 |
| TOTAL | 27933 | 33229 | 22721 | 76717 | 837 | 9757 |
| | | | | | | |

Report By: Programme Coordinator Zone 2 - Dixie

Congratulations to clubs that have submitted reports from 10 August to 10 September and took on the challenge in the August eSPAN.

The Zone 2 Coordinator can only access reports that have been published for Zone 1,3 & 4. These results do not include Advocacy and Projects submitted.

Some clubs have taken on the incoming SISWP Programme Director Di Lockwood's challenge to report their Advocacy work.

Zone 1 - 5 reports. Congratulations to Brisbane Water who have submitted 4 and 1 from Randwick & Eastern Suburbs.

Zone 2 - 17 reports. Congratulations to Hobart and Launceston who have submitted 4, Rockingham

each and 1 from Waimea, Gold Coast, Brisbane and Logan.

Zone 4 - 4 reports. Well done Torrens who have submitted reports 2 and 1 from Eastern Districts of Adelaide and Kuantan.

Remember the end of the Soroptimist International 2020 year is only 3 and a half months away. It is important to report as soon as possible.

How many reports will your club submit before the October eSPAN is printed?

UN SDG Work

UN International Day of the Girl Child

By Asst Programme Director Sylvia Heywood

The UN has celebrated the International Day of the Girl Child since 2012. The day aims to highlight and address the needs and challenges girls' face, while promoting girls' empowerment and the fulfillment of their human rights. The UN theme for 2020 is "My voice, our equal future." click [here](#) for more information.

*"Because I was brave enough to convince my parents to let me go to school
instead of getting married, I'm able to do what I love the most – study."*

Janaki Sah, 14, from Nepal

As a result of gender inequality in education, girls are denied the chance to develop essential skills that will help them take charge in their homes, careers, communities and countries. It is vitally important that girls are allowed to participate in school education. Threats to girls education can be seen in many forms across the world, such as; child labour, cost, trafficking, conflict, gender bias, and natural disasters. There is strong evidence that investing in girls' education strengthens economies and creates jobs.

In supporting the education of girls we are empowering girls to grow into effective women which is in line with SDG 4 ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities. Also, supports SDG 3 ensuring healthy lives and promotes well-being and SDG 5 in achieving gender equality.



Clubs are helping to educate and enable girls in different ways, from confidence building to sanitary protection. [READ MORE](#)

School is an important space in which girls exercise their agency, make their voice heard, and in some cases develop their first leadership opportunities. **Let's celebrate every girl attending school**

cooperation across borders, sectors and generations. The UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, has said: "Everything we do during and after this crisis must be with a strong focus on building more equal, inclusive and sustainable economies and societies that are more resilient in the face of pandemics, climate change and the many other global challenges we face."

Take the UN survey to inform global priorities now and going forward.

SI at the UN

UN Secretary-General Meets with Women's Civil Society :Written by SI Advocacy Advisor, Linda Witong. [Read more](#)

For information on the work that SI representatives are undertaking at the UN offices visit SI website [At the UN.](#)

International Day of Peace: 2020 theme- Shaping Peace Together

Each year the International Day of Peace is observed around the world on 21 September. The UN General Assembly has declared this as a day devoted to strengthening the ideals of peace, through observing 24 hours of non-violence and cease-fire. We are encouraged to 'celebrate the day by spreading compassion, kindness and hope in the face of the pandemic'. Follow link below for more information

International Day for Older Persons: Did you know?

By 2020, the number of people aged 60 years and older will outnumber children younger than 5 years. Over the next three decades, the number of older persons worldwide is projected to more than double, reaching more than 1.5 billion persons in 2050, and 80% of them will be living in low- and middle-income countries

The COVID-19 pandemic may significantly lower older persons' incomes and living standards.

Already, less than 20% of older persons of retirement age receiving pensions.

United Nations Days

SEPTEMBER

18 September

International Equal Pay Day

21 September

[International Day of Peace](#)

26 September

[International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons](#)

OCTOBER

1 October [International Day of Older Persons](#)

2 October [International Day of Non-Violence](#)

5 October [World Habitat Day](#)

10 October [World Mental Health Day](#)

11 October [International Day of the Girl Child](#)

15 October [International Day of Rural Women](#)

16 October [World Food Day](#)

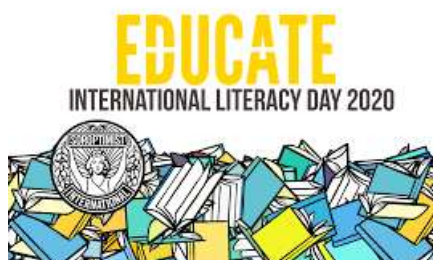
24 October [United Nations Day](#)

31 October [World Cities Day](#)

International Literacy Day and World Teachers Day

Report by: Anne Allen, Programme Coordinator Zone 1

International Literacy Day (ILD) is celebrated annually on September 8th. The intention is "to remind the public of the importance of literacy as a matter of dignity and human rights, and to advance the literacy agenda towards a more literate and sustainable society." (Reference <https://en.unesco.org/commemorations/literacyday>) What a very passionate statement and one that will undoubtedly



resonate with many Soroptimists.

The UN Report as of August 2020 "100 countries have yet to announce a date for schools to reopen and across the world, governments, unions, parents and children are grappling with when and how to approach the next phase".

REIMAGINE EDUCATION AND ACCELERATE CHANGE IN TEACHING AND LEARNING: The massive efforts made in a short time to respond to the shocks to education systems remind us that change is possible. We should seize the opportunity to find new ways to address the learning crisis and bring about a set of solutions previously considered difficult or impossible to implement. [Read the full UN Policy brief report here.](#)

NSO CSW Women of Distinction Awardees 2020, for the first time 5 outstanding women were awarded the award in 2020:

AFRICA, Passy Mubalama, Democratic Republic of the Congo

ASIA/PACIFIC, Dwi Ariyani, Indonesia

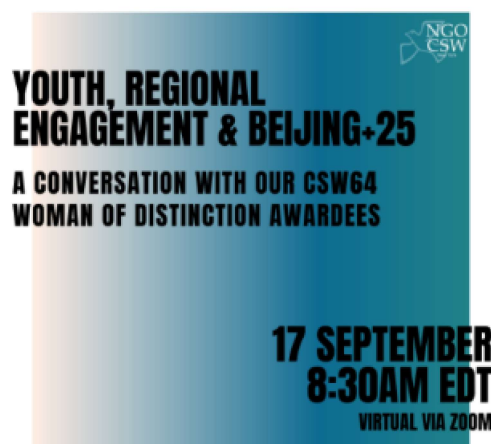
EUROPE/NORTH AMERICA, Anjum Sultana, Canada

LATIN AMERICA / CARIBBEAN, Tarcila Rivera Zea, Perú

MIDDLE EAST / NORTH AFRICA, Dayna Ash, Lebanon

Read their Bio's here <https://ngocsw.org/woman-of-distinction-2020/>

Hopefully for us in this time zone this conversation will be recorded so that we can here their stories.



We'll be having a conversation with our Woman of Distinction Awardees from last year's NGO CSW64 Forum, moderated by the Co-Chairs of our Youth Leaders and Young Professionals program.

[Register here!](#)

Around the Federation

SI The Hills District - Blankets, beanies and other winter warmers

Report by Anne Allen, Programme Zone Coordinator 1.

Congratulations to SI The Hills District, New South Wales, Australia who took the task of collecting beanies and blankets to distribute to the Homeless in their area. It not only provided a great source of much need goods for those in need, but also announced to their local community that they were still active. Here is their Report.



Special mention needs to be made of the students from Rouse Hills High School and the Australian International Academy, Kellyville for their outstanding efforts.

Blankets, beanies and other winter warmers are in high demand by homeless people throughout our Shire. As we are limited in activities during COVID 19, it was decided that an activity to collect as many as we could throughout the month of June would keep us busy, and would let the public know that we are still active. We advertised through Facebook, contact with other service clubs, family and friends, and local schools and churches.

Collection of blankets, beanies, and warm clothes for distribution by local organisations to disadvantaged people in The Hills Shire and Parramatta. In past years a local business had been collecting but they did not initiate anything for 2020. We hoped that the community would respond generously to the appeal, especially as many were in COVID lockdown with time to tidy cupboards and knit beanies. To say we were overwhelmed is an understatement. Two High Schools responded with one school collecting over 100 blankets, hundreds of beanies, gloves, socks and scarves. Parramatta Mission was the main recipient, with many trips being made with carloads of goods. Parramatta Street Med, Hawkesbury Helping Hands, Cessnock Women's Refuge, and St Hornsby received donations. Although the collection finally wound up on 31st July 2020, one last delivery of late donations will be made on Monday 31st August 2020.

They also received publicity on this project by the [Hills to Hawkesbury Community News](#) Read the full story.

Riverbend Riparian Planting SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities



Soroptimists International Launceston members Carol Richardson, Sadie Roberts, Christine Suitor, Jane Laidlaw and president Natasha Vavrek planted trees at Riverbend Park on Friday. Picture: Phillip Biggs

SI Launceston Inc recently celebrated their 70th birthday by revitalising part of the Tamar River foreshore by reintroducing and preserving native vegetation and increasing recreational opportunities for the benefit of Launceston families now and in the future. Members felt this was a way of giving back to their community by gifting the plants to the Launceston community.

There had also been ongoing problems with the health of the Tamar River over many decades, including degradation and loss of native plants. The City of Launceston redeveloped the industrial site into a recreational area and playground suitable for people of all ages and abilities. After the club approached the City of Launceston to assist in revitalising the area and be responsible for the revegetating of a designated section of the Riverbend foreshore in 2020.

The club purchased and planted over 140 endemic native grasses and shrubs along the Riverbend foreshore in front of the newly-opened playground. Selection and planting was done with advice and assistance from the City of Launceston and Habitat Native Plant Nursery.

The revegetated foreshore will complement the City of Launceston's new playground, offering a vast recreational area for the enjoyment of families well into the future. [Read More](#)



Betty Loughhead Soroptimist Scholarships

Every year Clubs and members across New Zealand raise funds to donate to the Betty Loughhead Soroptimist Scholarship Trust. The scholarship was established in 1987 and was named in honour of Betty Loughhead MBE, JP. Betty became Federation President of the South West Pacific in 1982, and then became the first New Zealander to hold the position of International President of Soroptimist International (1983 – 1985).

The Betty Loughhead Soroptimist Scholarship Trust capital provides a principal fund to accrue interest, allowing Trustees to award between two to four scholarships annually to women who are in need of second chance education. So far the Trust has awarded NZ\$206,781 to over 40 women since the first scholarships were awarded in 1988. [READ MORE](#)

This scholarship seeks to address SDG 4 providing quality education to women to enable them to progress their education and advance their careers.

Covid Projects:

SI Jakarta -Youth Discussion Groups

SI Jakarta has set up youth discussion groups in its Lombok Water, Shelter and Capacity Building project. This is mainly to engage the youths in some meaningful activity during Covid where schools nationwide have been closed in Indonesia for about 5 months. Topics discussed include: the importance of education; understanding climate change; unemployment; and the negative effects of child marriages and drug abuse. From these discussion groups, we hope to change the mindset of the younger generation in the village and hope that we can excite them to become involved in useful activities such as learning organic farming, making handicrafts for sale, becoming IT literate etc etc.

SI Ipoh - Hunger busters

SI Ipoh donated 75 boxes of fresh vegetables from Cameron Highlands and 75 bags of groceries to the residents at Bekor Flats in Taman Pertama, where the Edufun Centre is. All are from the B40 community and have approached SI Ipoh for food aid.

SI Ipoh wishes to thank Woon Chin & Sons Agriculture for partly sponsoring the vegetables, Billion Supermart for the delivery of vegetables and groceries to Bekor Flats and En Faiz for making this distribution smoothly.



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