

THE SOROPTIMIST SWP

a global voice
for women

Soroptimist International



Federation of the South West Pacific

Countries of the South West Pacific Federation:

- Australia
- Cambodia
- Fiji Islands
- Hong Kong SAR
- Indonesia
- Malaysia
- Mongolia
- New Zealand
- Papua New Guinea
- Samoa
- Singapore
- Solomon Islands
- Thailand



Volume 32 No 2
May 2012
ISSN 0157 - 437X

Soroptimist International of the South West Pacific

PRESIDENT: Yvonne Simpson
PRESIDENT-ELECT: Siew Yong Gnanalingam
IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT : Leigh Ellwood Brown
PAST PRESIDENT (Acting IPP): Eileen Mitchell
SECRETARY: Anne Gover
TREASURER: Karen Goodwin

Administration Officer:
SISWP HEADQUARTERS:
PO Box 746
SURRY HILLS NSW 2010
Australia
Phone: +61 2 8096 6072, Fax: + 61 2 9690 2261
Email: hq@siswp.org
Website Address: <www.siswp.org>

SISWP SHOP: As above Email: hq@siswp.org



Teddies

SI Upper Hutt members knit small teddies and sell them through the local pharmacy. They make ordinary teddies and All Black (NZ rugby team) teddies. The All Blacks saga has been interesting. They have ended up around the world through NZ Soroptimists sending them to family and friends. The classic one was Cathy Coyle who bought one at the Blenheim Conference, NZ, and carried it with her to London. Here she gave it to a niece who plays rugby for the Wasps London Women's A grade team. It became the team's mascot.

The SI Upper Hutt Soroptimists are thrilled at the success of their teddies at the CSW in New York. Thanks to Yoko Komori Olson, who organized the stall, it had a great return for the SISWP project and enabled the promotion of SI to occur. Yoko was very grateful for all the wonderful feedback she received about the CSW Artisan Fair this year. The idea of using the Fair at the CSW to promote SI projects occurred to her at last year's CSW55 when she purchased a bead bag made by African women. So, she decided to set up a stall and sell rural women's arts and crafts to CSW participants.

Barbara Milburn
SI Upper Hutt, NZ

Pictured above are the teddies and below is the Soroptimist Sales Team with their stall,



THE SOROPTIMIST -SWP The Magazine of SISWP



The care of the aged is an ongoing concern. We all wish to live without needing care for as long as possible. The key issue with the elderly is that their independence relies on their state of health, either mental or physical. But, often the Aged care establishments do not care for their residents as much as their shareholders.

Recently my elderly aunt came to live with us. At 90 years old she had decided to sell her dark, tiny semi-detached house in a retirement village and move closer to me, her closest relative. The retirement village took three months to reply and when finally making an offer on her house there, they stipulated their price, with the clause that she was to vacate her house within ten days of their letter. So at ninety, on her solicitor's advice, she packed up and moved within the ten days.

It will be three months before her new house (see pic) is ready but, she is making the best of her time here settling into a small country village. Here she is known by everyone, and all the amenities, eg doctor, are within walking distance.

Kerry

The deadline for the August SISWP Magazine is **30 June 2012.**

The theme will be:
The new SWP Biennium

MAGAZINE EDITOR: Kerry Garrett
39 Tulip Street, Violet Town
Victoria 3669 Australia
Phone: (61.3) 5798 1206
Email: garrettb@internode.on.net
Committee:

Judy Hunter, SI Townsville
Ellen Crocker, SI Benalla
Maggie Mitchell, SI Business on Collins
Indrani Manuel, SI Damansara
Printer: Prominent Press, Drummond Road, Shepparton, Australia

Front cover: CSW56 New York

Working on all levels

The Soroptimist presence at the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW56) is a prime example of how we can, and do, operate on many levels. Each facet, each contribution adds to making the whole a diversely rich, inter linked, vibrant, living and exciting entity. I felt proud to be a Soroptimist. We were well represented with each Federation coming together with contributions and each supporting the other at workshops.

A whole lot of preparation takes place behind the scenes for any event to succeed. Our SI programme staff consists of Reilly and Anna, our Executive Programme Team, Hilary and Anusha, are the Programme leaders at SI. Together with each Federation's programme director, and the New York based UN representatives, all provided background information, handouts and support so we could maximise having a large contingent.

SI and SI Europe have special status with the United Nations. This enabled us to have two precious tickets to allow members to attend the restricted sessions and higher level interventions. Being there on one occasion enabled IAPD Anusha to ensure the SI voice was heard at the international forum to voice our concerns and solutions. SISWP would like to gain such a status to contribute to having a higher profile in this arena. We can commence this process from December 2012.

CSW provided, among the following, many opportunities to promote our programme of service. SI sponsored events, so SI was mentioned in introductions and acknowledgements. A CSW programme booklet is produced and our sponsorship there gave us further profile. We wore our Soroptimist badges, and had our Soroptimist business cards ready to share. We also carried relevant, up to date material (SI brochures, the DVD on the Global Impact Report, brochures on BIP, and sheets that promoted the panels we were involved with.) We also attended events we may not have otherwise because we made personal connections so went to find out more. Never underestimate the impact of meeting someone and sharing a business card, or brochure.

SI provided panelists at three events.

SISWP Programme Director, Robyn spoke on legislation that addressed Violence Against Women. IAPD Anusha was the moderator of that panel. I had the opportunity to share our Federation project, Birthing in the Pacific (BIP), on a panel addressing reproductive rights of rural women. We spoke as Soroptimists.



The format of the panels is usually an address by the panelists and then time for questions and/or statements from the floor. We attended other sessions and spoke whenever we could, introducing ourselves as Soroptimists and sharing our mission and projects. We asked questions. We were vocal.

The Artisans Fair provides the opportunity for groups to sell wares from their countries to support their work. This year there was a table for Soroptimist International. SISWP brought wares - billiums from PNG and hand knitted teddy bears from SI Upper Hutt and bootees from an SI Westland member. My suitcase was a third full with 30 teddies. I am delighted to report that the teddies in particular were a great hit and we made US\$490 for BIP. The sales table attracted conversations around who we were and what we did. The teddies caught the imagination of the SI Europe president, Kathy Kaaf from Germany, who has recommended we design a Soroptimist bear. You can never tell how one gesture of generosity can expand out. Our special thanks to SI Upper Hutt and your knitters.

News of what was happening was uploaded to websites and Facebook. We contributed well, getting positive feedback from others interested in the topics we discussed. SI is, of course, well known for action as well as words.

There was one touching, unexpected moment that made us feel very humble and gratified. In the public section of one session a young woman from Rwanda went to the microphone and simply said that when she read that Soroptimists would be presenting, she came to publicly thank us for the work we did in her country for women and girls.

You will be able to hear and see that testimony. Reilly was filming the session so we could put the statements on our SI website. We will let you know when it is uploaded so you too can share that special moment.

Are you **prepared**? If programme touches us then it is easier to speak with **passion** about it. The first step is to get involved. The next is to know the bigger picture of what we do so we can share it. The message from CSW56 is that there is much to do to improve the lives of women and girls, especially those in rural areas. Education is the key to making a real difference and attendance at CSW reinforces the need to keep doing it.

And now, it is my **pleasure** to submit my final paragraph. The next magazine will feature our new President. Thank you all for the **preparation** you do tirelessly in the background, thank you for the **promotion** of the ideals of our programme of service, thank you too for the **patience** and support you have offered me **personally**, and a big thank you for the **participation** in active **programmes** that make a **powerful** difference in the lives of women and girls – on all levels. I look forward to seeing many of you at conference where we will also..... **party**

Yvonne
SWP President

Catherine Evans, Reilly, Yvonne and Robyn



Commission on the Status of Women

CSW56 Theme: The empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges

President Yvonne, Australian National Representative, Catherine Evans and I were part of the 40 strong Soroptimist International delegation which attended the meeting in New York. The commission runs for two weeks but most of the workshops take place in the first week. Perhaps, if I go again, I will stay on for more of the second week as that is when the Member States consider the recommendations from Member States and Civil Society and come to agreed conclusions about what has been presented. Unfortunately this year there were NO agreed conclusions.

UN Women Executive Director Michelle Bachelet's comments on this disappointing outcome can be found on the [UN Women website](http://www.unwomen.org).

The disappointment of the non-agreed conclusions aside, CSW56 was for Soroptimists a satisfying 'hands-on' experience. President Yvonne has given a good outline as to how things are organised and I have to add my congratulations to the International team. The late night Skype calls and many emails were well and truly worth it as the preparation was superb.

Each year, on the Sunday before the start of the CSW, a special day called NGO Consultation Day, is held. This is where one is able to meet other delegates and hear women of merit. This year the special speakers included Nobel Peace Laureate Leymah Cbowee from Liberia and Mme Bachelet.

The delegation participated in several workshops and panels. These included:

From Seeding to Feeding – this session followed the story of food from viewpoints of the women involved in all stages of production. Soroptimists involved in this included a member from The Gambia, one from Philippines and the President of SI Europe. We even learned how to prepare smoked milk fish from the Philippines participant. This is a project the Malabon club have introduced to train underprivileged women to make a living.

President Yvonne and International Programme Director Reilly Dempsey participated on a panel discussion about rural women and girls: *Issues in Reproductive Health*. The session was co-sponsored by the Virginia Gildersleeve International Fund. <http://www.vgif.org>. Yvonne outlined the *Birthing in the Pacific* project whilst other speakers spoke about teenage pregnancies, fistula caused by early pregnancy and Reilly presented a case study of a Brazilian woman who died in childbirth through negligence.



I participated in a video panel/audience participatory discussion, chaired by IPD Anusha, which focussed on the policies and legislation currently in place to protect rural women against violence. Other presenters were from WAGGGS, World YWCA and Friends of Cambodian Child's Dream Organisation. I was able to speak about experiences of women in Australia and present information from the Australian National Action Plan on Violence against women and their children.



During the session the audience was invited to speak of their experiences. One of the speakers really struck at the core of the listeners. An elegant, statuesque young Rwandan woman spoke of her horrendous suffering during the war in her country. She then turned to the panel and expressed her thanks to Soroptimists for helping women in Rwanda regain their dignity.

One of the two sessions which I attended affecting our part of the world was sponsored by New Zealand, Pacific Islands and Australia and chaired by Ms Penny Williams, the Australian Global Ambassador for women and girls. Titled *Access to education = success in employment?*, this discussion explored the myth that an education naturally leads to employment. Perhaps this is an area in which SISWP can become involved. The speaker from Kiribati spoke of the need for more vocational education for students who drop out of school. A major problem for female students in the Solomon Islands is the lack of suitable sanitation in puberty and so they fall behind in their schooling. Marilyn Waring from NZ told us about a new book- "Being the first" which has been introduced to the secondary school syllabus so that students become aware of the women leaders in the country. President Yvonne hopes SWP might be able to work to produce similar volumes for Fiji, Samoa and PNG.

The other session was also concerned with the problems encountered by rural women when encountering violence. The importance of engaging men in the solution was shown to be important.

By attending sessions such as the one above and other after hours receptions, including at the country's mission one



is able to make contact with important people in the women's network. We were able to distribute several of the Global Impact Report DVD's – spreading the word of the work of Soroptimist International.

I was also able to sit in on some of the Member States statements and presentations in the main assembly room and heard from the representatives of Thailand, Malaysia, Mongolia and New Zealand. In these statements the countries reported what has been achieved in the area of Gender Equality across vocations.

My final day was spent serendipitously at presentations by young women leaders from the Pacific, South Asia and South America talking about their vision and hopes for the future. They endure many of the same problems of our region but have far less resources to find solutions. An uplifting session was a performance by a group of young (11-16) Baha'i students depicting the stories of Iranian women leaders who had been deterred from attending CSW56 because of what they had reported from CSW55.



This year I gained much more from attending CSW than from any other I have attended. I believe it was due to the amazing preparation before our participation. So many amazing sessions and so much to learn – I ask myself – WHAT can I do? My answer – remind my Soroptimist Sisters to remember WHY they became Soroptimists and encourage them to work together with our partners and the disadvantaged women we wish to help. Do this and we will go a long way to achieve our worldwide vision.

Robyn Cain
SWP Programme Director

Conference Update



Board meetings: The final Board meeting for this biennium will be held in Christchurch on 2 and 3 May. A bus tour of the ravaged and cleared city and environs will follow and there is a dinner in the evening to consolidate friendship and celebrate the move to new growth and directions. The first board meeting of the new biennium will be held on Monday 7 May in Greymouth.

The 18th biennial conference is just around the corner. We are delighted with the response and look forward to seeing our Soroptimist sisters early Friday 4 May at the train station in Christchurch.

Day 1 – the theme will be Pioneers – and we invite you to come on a journey of natural beauty and Soroptimist activity. The Shantytown venue is a replica gold rush town – and so we will be in theme all day. The Friendship evening will also bring a taste of NZ in a fun environment.

Day 2 – the theme will be Maternal Health. It is International Day of the Mid Wife and we celebrate our Federation project, "Birthing in the Pacific".

Day 3 – Educate to lead ..and celebrate will ensure we are looking forward and celebrating our successes.

There is a balance of business, plenary sessions, workshops and celebration: Time to listen and learn, a forum to look at future federation directions on structure, opportunities to choose two workshops and explore an area of your choice in greater depth, informal networking, fun and friendship. We kept

SI Westland working bee sewing on the patches for the conference bags: Annette Copping, Barbara Lakin, Jill Mitchell, Leonie Renton, Shona Marshall

in mind the SISWP Strategic Plan and SI Programme of Service as we planned our activities and keynote speakers, thus supporting our agreed future focus.

Thank you to the conference committee for the work that has been put into creating a conference with a difference: Conference Chair Christine Stet, Secretary Annette Copping, Treasurer Thelma Luxton, and Committee Members, Annette Smith, Chris Tozer, Leonie Renton, and Maureen Pugh.

Thank you to those who have supported Soroptimist sisters to attend – with funds for awards, hosting, making the special bag patches to make each conference bag individual, donating wine or items for the conference bags. Each contribution has added to the whole.

The first questions on the evaluation sheet are "What are your expectations of the conference?" and "What are you planning to do to meet those expectations?" This is a team effort. Participants and organizers are partners in making the conference a success. I am excited that we are all working, and celebrating together and have a time that is educating, empowering and enabling.

I look forward to welcoming you all to Christchurch and the West Coast.

Yvonne
SIWP President



SI Ramu Voluntary Birth Attendant Training Project

"Sapos mipela ino nekim dispel wok husat bai mekim long helpin ol mama blong mipela?" These are the words of committed Papua New Guinea Village Birth Attendants (VBAs) commenting on their role in their communities. "If we don't do this job, then who will do this to help our mothers?"

There were 15 VBAs participating on the recent two week training course organised and run by SI Ramu. The women from the rural villages of Ranara, Nailo and Musuam had walked over the mountains and crossed rivers to the nearest road to catch a bus to the Gusap Health Centre in Ramu to attend.

These are the women, who, with no proper birthing tools, electricity or water, assist pregnant women living in bush housing. These VBAs often must walk at night, risking their lives to travel through areas with no road access and little or no transport, to other villages. Imagine the satisfaction and pride of the SI Ramu members who had conducted the first VBA training in the entire Province; training that had not been undertaken before because of a lack of funds. Imagine the emotion when at a very moving ceremony these 15 VBAs received certificates for the two modules they had just completed in 'Safe Motherhood', which is part of VBA PNG National Policy. The ceremony was attended by Madang Provincial Health Department officials, Gusap business

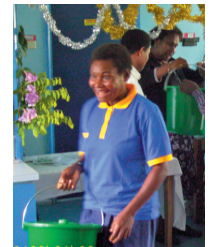
representatives, community women, family members, course trainers and other members of SI Ramu.

The logistics of the course were enormous, with thanks to SI Ramu members Judy Muliap, Magdaline Adam and Sarah Nimi who undertook weeks of negotiation and travel across the mountains to and from Ramu to Madang to get official approval to even conduct the training. Then there were trips to Lae to source and buy materials for presentation to the VBAs on completion of the course. Project Manager Janet Askern took the hardware needed as far as Lae for Judy and Sarah to transport to Ramu. Sarah, who conducted most of the training, spent hours of preparation time translating the training manual from English to Pidgin and writing up the flip charts.

Preparation for further training is underway, and our hope is that the entire BIP Project will receive generous funds from clubs for the next two years of its Federation focus.

May Lamont

BIP Project Liaison



L to R: Ingrid Hendricks, Dr. Miriam O'Connor, Sandra Dannenfeldt, President Anthia Hinson

Birthing challenges in PNG

Dr. Miriam O'Connor is an obstetrician and gynaecologist who has been living and working in PNG for over ten years. She is as an international sexual health consultant. Dr. O'Connor is highly involved in emergency obstetrics skills training for midwives in remote areas. She shared her knowledge with Soroptimists and guests when she spoke on March 12

as a Twilight Speaker sponsored by SI Business on Collins. To get a feeling for the scope of women's health issues in PNG as they relate to birthing: *In 100,000 live births in Australia, 10 women die. In 100,000 live births in PNG, approximately 1,000 women die.

*36% of deliveries in PNG are supervised by a doctor or midwife; 64% of deliveries are in remote villages with no supervised medical care.

*25% of the women in PNG who die in or just after childbirth bleed to death.

During her presentation, Dr. O'Connor told a few stories that many women would shake their heads at, such as the delays that result in death for birthing women in PNG:

Delay 1: The woman does not recognize the need to go to the hospital. Every role model she has says birth in the village is "natural" and nothing untoward will happen.

Delay 2. When a birthing emergency does happen, there can be several day's delay while the women (and her helpers if she has any) walk to a hospital, often across swollen rivers and over mountainous terrain.

Delay 3. Once at the hospital, there can be a delay in getting the right care. There are 210,000 babies born in PNG every year and the hospital birthing wards are often overwhelmed with high-risk pregnancies.

"Women are not dying because of diseases we cannot treat."

"Women are dying because societies have decided their lives are not worth treating."

Sandra Dannenfeldt
SI Business on Collins

Celebration for SI South Queensland

Over fifty Soroptimists had a fun, and informative time for celebrations at their two day Conference at Bribie Island. Guest Speakers and workshops entertained and educated those present. Maree Lubach, President of the SISQ Region, was gratified to see so many new members attending their first conference.

Cesarina Gigante of SI Logan (pictured with Florence Drury, centre, and Maree Lubach) has been awarded the Florence Drury award for excellence in Soroptimism in South Queensland. Cesarina is a Special needs teacher at Runcorn Heights Primary school and is a Charter Member of SI Logan. She has shown commitment and initiative in all areas of the club in local and international projects and has developed close ties with the Logan Health and Wellbeing Centre. The Award has been created in honour of the very active ninety two year old Florence and the spirited contribution that she has made as a Soroptimist in helping women and girls throughout the world. Florence became a Soroptimist in her early 40s. Five members were nominated by their clubs for the award. The others nominated were Jan Banfield, SI Gold Coast, Bev Miles SI Moreton North, Jennifer Marsden SI Bayside and Patricia Heck of SI Beenleigh.



Bev Ditton
SI Logan

SI Fiji Region AGM

SI Fiji Region AGM was conducted on 18 February after a one week delay due to the after effects of the flooding in Fiji. The initial AGM venue was Suva but it was finally conducted at Jasper Williams High School in Lautoka because members from flood affected areas in the Western Division could not to travel to Suva.

Apart from the elections for the incoming Region Executive there were some important resolutions made at the AGM regarding the extension of clubs, membership retention, training and empowering members, building stronger ties between the SI clubs in Fiji and working in collaboration with Government agencies and other stakeholders in the community. The elections resulted in Maria Doton (SI Ba) being elected as President Elect, Ashni Sharma (SI Sigatoka) as Region Treasurer and Saras Kewal (SI Suva) as Program of Service/UN Liaison. Suman Lal (SI Sigatoka) is the incoming National Rep and the Region Secretary is Irene Chand (SI Nadi).



There is a strategic plan in place for member extension and retention by clubs which was formulated under the guidance of the outgoing Fiji Region President Lata Kumar. The clubs have unanimously agreed to use this plan whereby there is an exemption of Region fees for new members and advance fee payment in installments for the following year for existing members.

The seven clubs' have been encouraged to form stronger ties with each other and work in collaboration where projects

are concerned. An example of this was during the recent Fiji Floods when the clubs which were not affected collected essentials for the clubs in the affected areas to distribute.

Also, the clubs with stronger membership have been assigned to look after the weaker clubs in building membership and carrying out projects. SI Suva and Sigatoka have been assigned the Labasa club; SI Ba will look after SI Nadi while Lautoka will mentor SI Rakiraki.

Zareena Khan
SI Fiji Region

Human Rights speaker at AGM

Twelve clubs were represented when SI Victoria Inc. held their AGM at Soroptimist House, South Yarra.

The guest speaker, Dr. June Kane AM is an internationally respected expert in human rights, specifically in the fields of child labour, sexual abuse and exploitation, violence against women and children, and human trafficking.

After the AGM, Christine Johnson, Federation Public Relations Convenor presented a DVD about publicity and the benefits of using the SISWP database to the members.

June Kane with Shirley Reynolds, Maggie Mitchell, and Kerry Beer



International Women's Day 2012 Celebrations



SI George Town celebrated International Women's Day (IWD) with hands across the bridge. We all met after work on the York Rivulet footbridge in George Town and a partner and a husband took the photos. We then all adjourned for dinner at one of our local hotels, and had a great social evening celebrating our Soroptimist friendship.

Jane Zimmerman

SI GeorgeTown, Tasmania



SI Griffith 8th March was IWD and SI Griffith helped celebrate the day with Griffith City Council. Four speakers were invited to talk at the local library and members of SI Griffith provided afternoon tea to a crowd of women and girls.

Speakers included Mama Jude and Iva Quarisa who both travel to Uganda to continue their setup of a clinic and hospital for locals to receive medical attention and advice. Many programs have been setup with education on family planning, living with Aids and sewing classes. Sarah Brown spoke of her love of photography and displayed images showing young mothers as beautiful women. Cassandra Campbell – Smith chaired the speeches and spoke of her experiences in life as the Griffith Young Person of the Year Australia Day recipient.

Louise Miller

SI Griffith, NSW

Photo: Members of SI Griffith with Mama Jude and Iva Quarisa.



SI Shepparton celebrated IWD with their annual breakfast while their 150 guests listened to two excellent speakers. Leading Detective Senior Constable Alison Lewis gave a most graphic description of her role with Shepparton Police Sexual Offences & Child Abuse Investigation Unit, and she was followed by the Reverend Dr Helen Malcolm who spoke of her experiences in India and Africa.

The highlight of the morning was the presentation to SI Shepparton of the *Award for Services to the Community* by the Shepparton Council.

The picture above shows President, Carla Farrell accepting the award from Councillor Jenny Houlihan.

Lyn Bailey

SI Shepparton, Victoria



SI Lower Hutt held an IWD breakfast on Tuesday 6 March which was a community team effort. 55 people, including 19 students attended. The picture is of our guest speaker, Holly Walker

Sheilah Downs

SI Lower Hutt, NZ



SI Hobart members and guests gathered at 5:30pm on Constitution Dock Bridge at Franklin Wharf, Hobart on Thursday, March 8. Members and guests joined hands across the length of the bridge to draw attention and create awareness of IWD.

SI Hobart was joined by an honored guest, Ms Robin Banks, Anti-Discrimination Commissioner of the Office of the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner of Tasmania with three of her staff. In the event commemorating IWD, SI Hobart joined the global campaign hosted online by Women for Women International UK: "Join Women on the Bridge -- to spread a message of peace and equality". As part of the global movement SI Hobart is also gathering messages of peace and solidarity. The global target is to collect 10,000 messages and to share them with women affected by violence and conflict.

Julie Marsaban - SISWP Programme Coordinator Zone C, SI Hobart, Tasmania



SI Benalla. *Connecting Girls, Inspiring Futures* is the 2012 theme of the IWD website and was adopted for the IWD breakfast in Benalla, Victoria. Nearly 200 women of all ages attended. SI Benalla joined a team of Benalla community women to host the breakfast. They also sponsored five local year 11 students to attend.

Ellen Crocker

SI Benalla, Victoria

International Women's Day 2012 Celebrations



SI Fiji The United Nations theme for 101 years anniversary of International Women's Day celebrations on March 8 was *Empower Women – End Hunger and Poverty*. The national theme for this day in Fiji was *Connecting Girls, Inspiring future* and SI Ba celebrated this occasion by organizing a programme for more than thirty women and girls.

Seini Puamau, a senior officer from the Director of Public Prosecution's Office, Lautoka spoke on the Domestic Violence Decree in Fiji. The resident doctor of Nailaga Health Centre, Dr Natasha highlighted breast cancer and cervical cancer. The third speaker was a JICA volunteer based at the Ministry of Women and Culture – Poverty

Members of SI Ba with the guest speakers and other attendees.

Alleviation, who shared her experiences while working with the Ba Hart Home which supports destitute families. The programme ended with the cutting of cake and refreshments for all.

In addition, SI Suva members took part in a panel discussion organized by the UN office on March 9 to commemorate IWD. The discussion highlighted strategic approaches adopted by UN agencies, funds and programmes in support of governments to overcome obstacles to food security and poverty alleviation.

The highlight of the programme was an address by Lilly Be'soer, a Women's Human Rights defender, from the Highland Region of Papua New Guinea. She is the peace maker of the tribal conflicts in the Highlands. It was very inspiring to listen to this single mother who was awarded the Pacific Human Rights Defenders Award for her exemplary work.

Zareena Khan
SI Fiji Region



SI Phnom Penh On Thursday 08th March 2012 at 3pm Prof. Chan Sok Khieng, Rector of Norton University organised an International Women's Day celebration at Norton University, Phnom Penh. Many of the management teams, lecturers, members of staff, and members of SI Phnom Penh participated in the celebration. Moreover, SI Phnom Penh members were prepared to spread Breast Cancer Awareness to the participants to help them understand how to prevent it. They also sold flowers and tea boxes to raise funds for their project.

Their project was helped by Ms. Sineat Som's impressive message to all attendees that women are the backbone of our economy and society and, we can join together to bring about change. She also said that before women were only housewives, but modern society has changed that. Women now have two roles: work to earn money and also household work to take care of the family. So, we work harder than men and in order to be successful we have to cooperate with each other to steadily change a woman's life in Cambodia.

Phunlang Sun
SI Phnom Penh, Cambodia



SI Port Pirie. To celebrate IWD this year, members of SI Port Pirie invited friends, colleagues and general members of

the public – 45 altogether – to lunch followed by a guest speaker on the topic *Connecting Girls, Inspiring Futures*.

Our guest speaker was Kendall Jackson, a former ABC radio employee who spoke about her career as a rural reporter in Port Pirie, Alice Springs and Darwin. Kendall has built a career around farming communities and in mid 2010 she won a short trip to the Syrian

Arab Republic to study their agricultural methods. The trip was sponsored by Council for Australian - Arab Relations and the Crawford Fund. While there, she arranged a day of observation and discussion among rural women in Agez village about 30 Kms south of Aleppo. Kendall displayed several etched metal bowls of various sizes used by Syrians for personal washing and keeping small objects in, as well as a red and white head scarf (shmagh) worn by farmers, which she demonstrated on some of the audience.

Heather Hunt
SI Port Pirie, SA

Club snippets



Education grant

SI Mt Gambier recently presented its annual Mim Ingham Education Grant to 2011 recipient Jenna Laube.

The Mim Ingham Grant of \$2,000 is awarded each year to a student graduating from secondary education and moving into a variety of tertiary institutions to assist with cost associated with their studies. The grant in 2011 was awarded to Jenna Laube who recently completed her SACE at Mount Gambier High School. She has been accepted into a Bachelor of Paramedic Science at Flinders University. She was presented with her cheque by President Sonya Meziniec and members of the committee with responsibility for administering the award, established in memory of a late member, Mim Ingham who was an enthusiastic educator and Soroptimist.

**Margie Russon
Mt Gambier, SA**

Photo above: Pres. Sonya Meziniec, Jenna Laube, and Jennie Elliott

Happy 37th North Shore

North Shore Club celebrated their 37th birthday with a New Members' Evening. This was held as a lovely gathering of 22 members with four possible new members attending. We are pleased that one is ready to be inducted this month. We have four others who have also expressed interest. These potential members will be invited to attend our next dinner meeting where we will be talking about our community projects.

President Paula gave a visual presentation outlining our mission, objectives and projects followed with



Westland for life

February 18th, 3pm through until Sunday 19th at 11am, the annual Relay for Life was held in Hokitika. People gathered at Westland High School grounds in Hokitika to celebrate, remember and fight back in support of those suffering from cancer, those who have recovered and those who lost the battle. Local groups and businesses were invited to enter teams to walk, and to gather sponsorships for their efforts.

The Relay begins with an opening ceremony followed by the first lap being walked by cancer survivors and their caregivers. At the completion of this lap it is traditional for these people to be invited to share an afternoon tea together. The local Cancer Society organizes the day but had no-one to provide the afternoon tea and SI Westland saw this as an ideal event to use for its Saturday of Service. So, following the walk around the designated track the survivors gathered to enjoy a delicious afternoon tea donated and prepared by SI Westland members.

**Frances Stapleton
SI Westland, NZ**

Photo: General view of the food and those who had walked. The people with red sashes are those who are cancer survivors.

much informal anecdotal input by all members present.

Two charter members of our club were in attendance, together with our esteemed member, Kantha Soni, who recently received her Member of NZ Order of Merit award from the Governor General for services to Medicine and the Community.

**Paula Siddle
SI North Shore, NZ**



Extension award

Our club received a special extension certificate for inducting the most new members (9 + 1 transferred member = 10) throughout the Region of South Queensland Australia SISWP in 2011.

Chris Knight

SI Morton North Inc, Qld.

Photo above: Anne Marsden Region Extension Officer, Region President Maree Lubach and Audrey Martin, SIMNI.



SI Logan Clean Up

Sunday 4 March saw twelve SI Logan members, family and friends have a very productive time cleaning up rubbish on Sunday morning filling 12 bags of rubbish going down the walkway off Park Road. At first there appeared little rubbish but everyone was kept busy they went of the path and near the creek.

**Bev Ditton,
SI Logan, Qld**



SI Lae responds to boat disaster

Thank you for your thoughts, we have a few members including myself who had family members on the boat that sank. My four family members, who were on the boat, survived; Moazin (the club's treasurer) had a cousin who also survived. The club has been busy helping out collecting donated clothes, water and dry food around town to give to the survivors at the disaster office in town.



Their stories of survival are unbelievable.

Most of the survivors were young people who were able to swim away from the sinking ferry. Soroptimists together with tenants from a young ladies hostel visited students who survived this tragedy with donated clothes yesterday.

The Soroptimist club is now one of the contact points for help.

Above is a photo of Moazin and I representing Soroptimists donating cartons of water to the members of the disaster team.

**Jane Kenni
SI Lae, PNG**



Gardens for Phnom Penh

Helen Hutchins SI Mornington Peninsula Inc and Lynn Ciurlionis SI Dusit invited Soroptimists and friends to join them on 18th February 2012 for a tour of two stunning gardens in the Mount Macedon Ranges east of Daylesford, Victoria. All who attended enjoyed the morning in the garden of Paul Bangay's 'Stonefields'. In the picture below, we have paused for a moment whilst exploring one of Australia's most beautiful country gardens.

Then onto the lovely French style garden at 'Camp David' where we given a delicious lunch.

The day was to support the Breast Cancer Awareness Project of SI Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

**Helen Hutchins
SI Mornington Peninsula Inc. Victoria**



Riverina water delegation

Seven Riverina Soroptimists were part of a delegation of two bus loads of women who went to Canberra on 29 February. The trip was organised by Women 4 a Living Basin (W4LB) who have been lobbying for a balanced Murray-Darling Basin Plan which takes into account the economic and social needs of our communities.

effects the proposed draft plan will have on their businesses and communities. We were joined by various MPs who also spoke to us. We were there to show our support for the four W4LB members who were meeting with MPs throughout the day at Parliament House, including Tony Burke, Tony Abbott, Malcolm Turnbull and a representative for Simon Crean.

SI Region of Riverina has been advocating for water justice for all since early 2009 and the five Griffith members and two Coleambally members felt it was very important to support W4LB. The group of about 100 women gathered on the lawn outside Parliament House and listened to a number of speakers who outlined the

Heavy rain all the way there and back, nine hours in the bus, a very early start and late finish did not dampen our spirits. The organisers were pleased with the support they got from local communities and the hearing they received in Canberra.

**Will Mead
SI Griffith, NSW**



*Top: Kerry Beer, SI Melba, Helen Hutchins, Lynn Ciurlionis, Maggie Mitchell, SI BOC
Below: Maggie Mitchell, her friend Lorraine, Linda Baynham, SI BOC, and Kerry Garrett, SI Benalla*

Building bridges - beyond borders

SI Damansara has been involved with literacy programmes in homes/educational centres for the underprivileged for the past eight years. This has been made possible with funding from JP Morgan. Thanks to our sponsor, this programme has grown from strength to strength with STAR pupils receiving scholarships etc.

We now ask ourselves - is this enough input for our centres? Should we now look to new avenues of collaboration to enable the children under our care to improve not only their learning skills but also soft skills, social skills etc. SID has since last year initiated 'Building Bridges-Beyond Borders.' This is a collaboration between 'Just Volunteers' a UK based NGO. University students, and Gap year students who volunteer their services to teach underprivileged children English skills, football, tennis etc at the same



time getting these children interested in affordable hobbies.

A stringent screening process is in place. Volunteers from UK are interviewed via Skype and email after JV has recommended them. Students are met on arrival and SID provides some initial funding but accommodation is arranged at the home where they will be placed.

David Macfarlane, who hails from Liverpool and has a Masters Degree, joined Agape Home/School two months ago. When interviewed he said, " This is the most challenging thing I have ever done but also one of the most enjoyable and rewarding experiences I ever had. I moved into a flat with two other Myanmar teachers. Accommodation was basic and

Pastor Henry with David and SID members - Indrani, Kalavathy and Saradha

about 300 refugees stayed at this block of flats. I was fed well by a family here but I did go to a restaurant nearby to enjoy a meal of rice and hot curry while watching football matches taking place in the UK. I taught Mathematics, Science and General studies with emphasis on spoken English. I also coached them in games. At night parents attended my classes so they could help with what the children were learning at school."

SID has had success with these volunteers and hope Building Bridges-Beyond Borders will grow from strength to strength.

Indrani Manuel
SI Damansara, Malaysia

Malaysian Soroptimists with the Minister of Human Resources

Honorary Membership upon YBhg Datin Paduka Komala Devi Perumal, for her support to SI Sentul.

Entertainment in the form of a Bangra Blast was provided by the Kiren Dancers and the hugely popular doel player. Ashveen Seharan was the Master of Ceremonies (MC) The Minister commented that this was the first time that he had seen an MC who could also sing so well, when Ashveen Sekaran (a friend/supporter of SI Sentul) took the microphone to render several semi-operatic and Tamil classical songs! Fransisca Peter supported the afternoon as Guest Artist.

Amuthambigai Tharmarajah
SI Sentul, Malaysia



Fund-raiser at Banquet Hall

SI Sentul held its annual fund-raiser luncheon at the Banquet Hall on December 11, 2011, under the distinguished patronage of Minister for

Human Resources, Malaysia, Datuk Dr S. Subramaniam. As part of its EDUCARE Programme, the club presented books to 13 high-achieving students from the Sekolah Kebangsaan (T) Batu Caves, who scored 7As in the recent UPSR exams. The club, also conferred its