

81st Federation Conference Glasgow 5th – 7th November 2015.

Federation President Jenny's theme for the 81st SIGBI Conference held in Glasgow was "Delivering the Difference". 1200 delegates attended the conference including 31 Soroptimists from the ROI. Conference is a wonderful opportunity to learn more about Soroptimism, make new friends and renew acquaintances. Our Federation was honoured by the visit of HRH Princess Anne.

The conference opened on Thursday 5th November with the parade of flags carried by members of the Scottish Girls Brigade and members of FPAC .National Programme Action Officer, Mary Hession, accompanied the Irish Flag. Federation President Jenny officially opened the 81st Conference asking us to celebrate our organisation and how we deliver the difference to women and girls. The evening concluded with west African traditional music and dance by Awayara Ensemble.

Friday morning was an early start with high security in preparation for HRH. Guest speakers were introduced by Dr Joan Smyth CBE, Past Sigbi President.

Jo Fairley, Co –founder of internationally successful Green and Black organic chocolate told us how a teacher's negative comment about her ability to achieve made her very determined to succeed. Jo's ambition and desire to do things differently led her on various career paths and eventually to become co – founder of Green and Black organic chocolate. She looked for ways to support cocoa farmers in the Fairtrade movement. In 1994 Green and Black organic dark Maya Gold Chocolate was launched thus enabling 80% of Maya children to go to secondary school. Jo and her husband are involved in many Fair trade products and her advice is; be prepared to work hard and be part of a team; try to do good at all times; what we do should make a difference and support each other with a smile.

Dame Stella Rimington DCB MA was the first woman to be appointed as Director General of the Security Services MI5. She told us about her early years in MI5 and the difficulties she encountered. In the 1970's under Dame Stella's leadership and a long and complicated battle the dynamics of MI5 began to change. She said "if you want to get your way it is better to do it quietly than shouting about it". The media was not always kind to her but she is very definite that being a woman changed the image of MI5 to the outside world. In her autobiography she is open and candid about how MI5 adapted to its new status. Dame Stella is known as the role model for the character "M" played by Dame Judi Dench in the James Bond 007 films.

Her Royal Highness, The Princess Royal, arrived to a very warm soroptimist welcome and was introduced by Federation President Jenny. Princess Anne praised Soroptimists for their work on Delivering the Difference in the lives of women and girls and thanked them for their continuing support of Save the Children Fund. For some time, the money raised was used for programme support but now it is all used for the Children's Emergency Fund, most recently in Sierra Leone, Katmandu, Nepal and Freetown. The aim is to end the cycle of extreme poverty and hunger, end deaths of children under 5 years and ensure girls go to school. President Jenny presented HRH Princess Anne with a cheque for refugee children in Syria. Princess Anne left to a standing ovation and was joined by a small delegation of

Soroptimists for coffee. ROI was represented by Bernadette Rothwell SI Ballinasloe and Sarah Mc Cormack, Incoming President, SI Mullingar.

Sarah Montague BBC Broadcaster and Presenter spoke to us about her journey in life and “Women in the Media”. Her career path started in Science, then Finance and at 24 changed to Journalism. Sarah is one of the main anchors on Radio 4’s Today Programme, presents Hardtalk on BBC world Television and has worked on many other channels. Sarah talked about her work/family balance and how appearance on TV is so much more criticised when you are a woman. Women are still under represented in the media even though it is improving. Sarah is known for her meticulous attention to detail and her own style of informative, informed and good humoured interviewing.

The morning session concluded with delegates questions to the panel.

The Friday afternoon session began with the presentation of **the SIGBI Projects for 2016 – 2019**. The three nominated projects were;

1. Meru Women’s Garden Project – SI Cantebury
2. Child Mortality in Malawi –SI Kenilworth
3. HEAL Malawi – SI Manchester.

Meru Women’s Garden Project was selected by voting delegates as 2016 -2019 Sigbi Project.

The AGM followed chaired by President Jenny and went according to plan.

President Jenny’s address included references to;

Third year of Building the Future of Sigbi,

Sigbi delegation to CSW59 in New York;

Programme Action at the centre of what we do;

Recognition of world issues – migrants in Europe;

Leadership and Development Day in Nottingham May 2015:

Chartering 7 New Clubs;

Communication, Website, Facebook, Thunderclap;

Working with other organisations, not reinventing the wheel.

AGM Accounts and Reports were adopted, seconded, voted upon and accepted.

There were 10 Resolutions.

Resolution 1. Associated Membership. Adopted by 77.2% vote.

Resolution 2,3,4,5,6 all referred to resolution 1 and therefore changes necessary in the constitution arising from the adoption of Associate Membership. All resolutions adopted between 89% and 95%.

Resolution 7. Capitation fees for Bands 1,2 and 3 to be reduced to £15, £16 and £20 for a trial period of 3 years. Adopted 87%.

Resolution 8. Capitation Fees for Band 4 to be reduced by 10% for 3 years. ROI £43. Adopted 75.8%.

Resolution 9. No inflationary increases to be applied for 3 years. Adopted 94%.

Resolution 10 withdrawn as resolution 7 accepted.

Friday evening concluded with a Civic Reception and Friendship Evening in the Glasgow Science Centre and entertainment by the Pipe Band of the High School of Glasgow.

The Honorary Justice Rowan Downing (President Jenny's Brother in law) was the keynote speaker on Saturday morning. Justice Downing has held senior judicial positions in the Pacific Region, dealing with serious criminal matters. He has worked internationally for 23 years dealing with matters including law reform, human rights law, refugee law and anti – corruption law. In Australia he acted as an advocate for human rights cases especially in areas concerning the rights of women and children. He has recently completed over eight years as a judge on the Extraordinary Chambers of the Courts in Cambodia. His address was based on his experiences there. Justice Downing currently sits as a Judge of the United Nations Dispute Tribunal in Geneva.

Programme Action.

The following Club Projects were presented highlighting the work of clubs in the federation.

- SI Richmond and Dales – Share your Skills.
- SI Katmandu/ Nepal -- Before and after the Earthquake.
- SI Wales (joint clubs) – Raise awareness of Modern Day Slavery.
- SI Poole – Purple Teardrop.
- SI Downpatrick – Climate Change.
- SI Barry and District – Economic Empowerment of Women all over the World.
- SI Dunfermline – See Solar, Cook Solar.

The next speaker was Andrew Bevan. Andrew works for International Justice Mission UK. With a background in law he has worked in Washington D.C. and Geneva with the United Nations Human Rights Committee. Andrew told us about his work as Regional Development Executive for Scotland where he is raising awareness and mobilising action across targeted sectors of society including professionals, parliamentarians, community groups, churches, students and the media.

Sue Biggs, Past Federation Programme Director, thanked the speakers and the clubs for their presentations and all clubs for their presentations over the last four years.

Saturday afternoon began with an address from **International President Yvonne Simpson.**

She gave us five areas to focus on; Take 5

1 Care for yourself. 2 Be Grateful. 3 Validate others. 4 Give and Receive. 5 Celebrate.

“Take 5 and come alive”

Pat Black SI Director of Advocacy 2015 – 2017 spoke on the Sustainable Development Goals and targets. There are 17 goals and these have been adopted by every member state with a commitment to achieve some of these by 2020 and the remainder by 2030.

Many of our speakers were inspirational but **Olivia Giles** was truly inspirational. She was working as a Lawyer in 2002 when she caught meningococcal septicaemia and had to have her hands and feet amputated to save her life. This was a turning point in her life, she was

alive. She went through many months and years of rehabilitation and trauma but always grateful to be still alive. Her advice on Delivering the Difference

1 Live and use every minute of every day.

2 Take on a challenge, adversity and trauma are powerful.

3 Be true to yourself.

In 2007 Olivia founded the charity 500 miles, which supplies prosthetic limbs to developing countries and manufactures them in these countries when possible.

Olivia reminded us "Life is not a dress rehearsal"

Programme Action Update.

SI Republic of Ireland, Positive Mental health and SI India, Gravity of Rape gave an update on their work since winning the joint programme Action Trophies in Harrogate in 2014.

Presentation of Programme Action Award Winners.

Advocacy – SI Grenada – GBV

Environmental Sustainability – SI South Africa – See Solar, Cook Solar.

Food Security and Healthcare – SI Wolverhampton – Nets for Nets.

Economic Empowerment – SI Jamestown – Growing their Money.

Conflict Resolution – SI Grenada GBV

Learning Opportunities – SI Cirencester – Writing Stories.

OVERALL WINNER – SI CIRENCESTER – WRITING STORIES.

President Jenny called Immediate Past International President Ann Garvie to the stage and presented her with an Honorary Life Membership of Soroptimist International of Great Britain and Ireland. Ann was lost for words.

The Closing Ceremony and Change of Insignia brought the conference to a close.

President Jenny gave her final address and handed over the Chain of Office to Margaret Emsley, Federation President 2015 – 2016. The FMB was installed and the Change of Insignia took place. National President Margaret Geraghty stepped down as the Chain of Office was passed to Incoming President Sarah Mc Cormack.

The conference flag was accepted by Malta for 2016 conference.

To finish the evening Rebecca Vince sang a beautiful solo and the Gospel Phoenix Choir performed their special blend of choral music.

The 81st Federation Conference Did Deliver the Difference and delegates left Glasgow both Inspired and Energised from listening to speakers, club programme action work, networking with members from other clubs and countries, making new friends and gaining a better understanding of Soroptimist projects around the world.

IPP Margaret Geraghty.

