

## **“Visions of Paradise” - Soroptimists Go for Water and Food**

**Concept for the 20<sup>th</sup> Congress of Soroptimist International Europe (SI/E);  
Berlin, 12<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> July, 2013  
Hotel Maritim, Stauffenbergstrasse**

### **Target Groups**

European and African Soroptimists, in addition to members of other Federations (GB and Ireland, the Americas, South West Pacific).  
The wider public by stimulating the interest of governments, local authorities and institutions  
through: Awareness, Advocacy, Action.

### **Common Aims**

Some one billion people worldwide suffer from starvation, while an ever-increasing number of children in industrialised countries face a difficult future as a consequence of obesity and its complications. Soroptimist International of Europe is actively engaged in raising awareness of and disseminating information on both these extremes, whilst also trying to combat starvation, undernourishment and malnutrition. SI/E is aware that the battle against starvation and malnutrition – especially in developing countries – can only be won if women are empowered to contribute to farming and food production, to improve social welfare and personal livelihoods to the greater good of their families and society in general. SI/E wants to stress our human responsibility to preserve the equilibrium of global ecosystems, while also taking into account cultural differences.

### **Aims of the 2013 SI/E Congress in Berlin**

SI/E intends to

- raise awareness of the inequality in distribution of water and foodstuffs, in addition to the problems arising from a lack of water or food; while at the same time stimulating an active discussion of and involvement in these concerns;
- focus on agriculture with emphasis on scientific and technological solutions as well as local and traditional knowledge, to inform members and stakeholders of new, practice-based developments in water management, agriculture and nutrition;
- inform members about the main challenges in increasing farm productivity and biodiversity in a sustainable manner;
- champion food security so that all people have access to sufficient and safe food, thus improving health and preventing the spread of diseases;
- encourage more sustainable forms of energy to reduce the environmental footprint of agriculture
- highlight a problem-oriented approach to biotechnology, such as the use of genetically modified crops

- stimulate a problem-oriented approach to subsidies, political parameters, property rights and land grabbing
- advocate a holistic integration of natural resource management as well as for soil, water, plant and animal diversity and ecosystem services
- report on prior educational programmes and discuss the further development of training programmes based on the results of previous programmes
- promote projects offering sustainable assistance, independent application and practical implementation
- present SI-club projects jointly realised with the help of other clubs or implemented in co-operation with other organisations, and prioritise projects which can easily be replicated elsewhere.
- Present such joint projects as examples of Best Practice
- make good use of all local knowledge and contacts, especially in developing and emergent nations.

Participants shall act as multipliers by passing on the information to their own clubs.

**The range of topics will be divided according to the target groups:**

**1. Developing and Emerging Countries**

- Starvation, securing food supplies, malnutrition
- Consequences of climate change (salinisation, desertification, expansion of desert areas), extreme weather events, weather forecasting, and reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions
- Availability of safe water, cultivation and irrigation techniques (desalinisation, use of fertilisers, pest control)
- New, old and 'forgotten' crops
- Desert flora
- Small-scale farming techniques
- Fishery, forestry, livestock breeding
- Storage, preservation and distribution of foodstuffs
- Investments in equitable development, literacy, education and training to reduce ethnic, gender and other inequalities
- Strengthening the role of women in agriculture by increasing access to education and information, improving knowledge, skills and experience in food-production and biodiversity
- improving access to income generating activities, availability of microcredit facilities, policy frameworks
- Kitchengardens, kindergarten and schoolgardens

**2. Industrialised Nations**

- Starvation, safeguarding of food supplies, and malnutrition
- Sustainability of food supplies
- Raising awareness of healthy eating
- Raising awareness of environmental issues and sustainability of resources
- Changes in the economics of fossil-based energy use
- Reducing food wastage
- Kitchen gardens, kindergarten and schoolgardens
- Home economics/food preparation lessons
- Raising awareness of the immorality of speculation with agricultural commodities

- Lobbying for fairer global trading and taxation systems to make small-scale farming profitable; trade negotiations to minimise trade-related dislocations

The thematic division of the Congress workshops has been organised to reflect the participation of members from developing/emergent and industrialised countries.

**Kitchen gardens and kindergarten/school gardens are the common element for all groups. “Garden in a Basket” stands symbolically as the lowest common denominator,** as gardens in miniature, when land is limited.

**“Garden in a Basket”**

- Manufacture of the baskets in Rwanda
- Sale of baskets to kindergartens and nursery schools in industrialised nations
- Proceeds from basket sales (etc.) can be used to buy seeds for school gardens in Africa

**Overall Concept of the Congress**

The plenary sessions shall offer an overview of the following challenges:

- Current situation in developing/emerging countries and industrialised countries
- Current state of agriculture and water supplies
- Current situation with regard to adequacy of and access to food supplies
- Sustainable methods for the improvement of agriculture and nutrition
- Environmental protection and the best use of resources

The “Theme Sessions” (working groups) will focus on questions pertaining to nutrition, agriculture, and kitchen gardens and kindergarten and school gardens with a view to:

- Concrete problem solving
- training and further education
- practical proposals
- innovative solutions
- Best Practice experience

The plenary and theme sessions are closely interconnected so that long-term findings and recently-acquired theoretical knowledge may be combined to form a ‘Key Message’ of practical results. The Congress as a whole will thus successfully achieve its aim of offering sustainable, “practicable” solutions.

**Key Message: “Seroptimists Go for Water and Food”**

The message which participants will take away from the Congress is particularly important for further involvement with the themes and to ensure long-term changes that will improve their own lives and communities.

**Developing/Emerging Nations**

- Improvement in land usage and levels of nutrition
- Functional literacy, basic knowledge of marketing
- Knowledge of allotment-type gardening, irrigation, and of both new and obsolete crops
- Fishery, forestry, animalfarming

**Key Message**

Women should be enabled to play an active and positive role in sustainable agricultural production, to improve the livelihood of their families and social environment.

Women should be given access to appropriate credit schemes and land ownership.

Women should benefit from market-based opportunities by institutions and policies which give priority consideration for the special needs of women farmers.

SI/E offers information, training or educational opportunities and problem-solving techniques in the fields of farming technology, fish farming and nutrition, and provides enabling mechanisms to use the skills and knowledge gained.

**Industrialised Nations**

- Promote sustainability
- Restrict speculation with foodstuffs
- Protect the environment and resources
- Promote kitchen gardens and kindergarten and schoolgarden projects, particularly as a means to experience the natural world and to help develop nutritional education programmes
- Reduce food wastage

**Key Message**

The underlying causes of price increases in foods will be made clear through public relations programmes. Education and training programmes for parents, children, teachers and group leaders will increase overall knowledge and awareness of the principles of nutrition for an active and healthy life and the need to maintain a better environment to reach the goals of sustainability.

**Overall Message**

Ill health can result from undernourishment as well as overnutrition.

SI/E clubs from 58 different countries have set their ideas in motion through partnerships and joint projects. They network with other NGOs and other organisations (Welthungerhilfe, Women for Water, etc) to work for the common aim of human health, safeguarding nutrition in developing and emergent countries, as well as promoting dietary diversity in industrialised countries.