



# SOROPTIMIST WELFARE ASSOCIATION (SI Bombay Chembur) NEWSLETTER

**Mahatma Education Society, Sion – Trombay Road, Chembur Naka, Mumbai  
400071**

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## OFFICE BEARERS

Dr. Daphne Pillai  
Founder President

Ms. Yvette Lee  
President

Ms. Seeta Desai  
President Elect

Ms. Preeti Pawar  
Hon. Secretary

Ms. Parveen Arif  
Hon. Treasurer

Ms. Munawira  
Kotyad Pillai  
Programme Action  
Co-ordinator

Dr. Betty Sibil  
Club Extension  
Officer &  
Membership Officer

Ms. Susanna  
Cherian  
Publicity Officer

Dr. Celina Joy  
Immediate Past  
President

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Greetings to all!

As I come to the end of my tenure as the President of Soroptimist Welfare Association (SWA), I take this opportunity to thank all my fellow Committee Members and all the members of the Club who have supported me, encouraged me and helped me during these two years. We have done some fantastic projects and nothing would have been possible without your guidance and support.

Similar to previous years, most of our projects have been aimed towards the fulfilment of SDG# 5 of Gender Equality and SDG# 4 of Quality Education. Our flag ship project that we continue to implement is the 'Power of a Second Chance' and this year we launched it for the female support staff/helpers of Dr. Pillai Global Academy. A project that we launched in 2018 that I am extremely proud of is SASHAKT. It is a series of sessions conducted with various target groups of different ages on Gender, Rights and Sexuality. The access to information on sexual and reproductive health and gender rights is one of the keys to improve the quality of life for girls and women around the world (SDG# 3) With this objective we launched this project and over a span of 2 years we have been able to reach out to more than 1000 girls and women in Mumbai and Navi Mumbai. Our other projects have revolved around spreading awareness on various International UN Days like World Environment Day, International Day of Yoga, International Literacy Day, World Mental Health Day, International Day for the Girl Child, International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence, World Human Rights Day and International Women's Day.

*'When women support each other incredible things happen'.* I hope that in the coming years, our Club will grow from strength to strength and continue to Educate, Enable and Empower girls and women in the communities around us.

Let us all pat our backs for the very fruitful year that we have had!!! And let's continue with the good work...

Regards,

Yvette Lee

President, Soroptimist Welfare Association

## PROJECTS AND IMAGES – SEPTEMBER '19 to MAY '20

### IT'S OK NOT TO BE OK

To commemorate World Mental Health Day, SWA conducted an awareness session on mental well-being with teacher trainee students on 25<sup>th</sup> September, 2019. This session was facilitated by Ms. Swati Thoda, a Clinical Dietician- Pregnancy and Lactation Wellness, heartfulness meditation trainer. She discussed the importance of mental well-being and the need to remain calm and composed in our life. She further highlighted the importance of balanced diet in our daily life. The session ended with practicing five minutes silence and concentration to develop mindfulness among the audience. The session was attended by around 50 students. The project serves SDG #3



Soroptimists along with Ms.Swati Thode



Students attending the session

### PROJECT SHARE: JOY OF GIVING

To commemorate World Food Day (16th October) and International Day for the Eradication of Poverty (17th October), SWA in association with Edukidz International Tilak Nagar and Edukidz International, Powai successfully organized the Fistful of Grains drive on 17th October, 2019. Discussions on the issues of poverty, food wastage and hunger instilled the values of empathy, kindness and service to society among the 60 tiny toddlers. Other than providing for SDG 2, this project helped sensitize the students towards the problem of hunger and also how, little acts of charity can go a long way to bring a smile on someone. The donations were sent to the local shelters 'Sulbha', home for differently abled children and 'Vatsalya', an orphanage.

SWA in association with Edukidz International Kharghar organized the fistful of Gains with its toddlers on 17th October, 2019. The students also collected clothes, toys and many more items. The donations were sent to the local shelters Prerna, a shelter at Kharghar, Mumbai that works for girls exposed to trafficking. The inmates were delighted to receive the Diwali gifts from the toddlers.

On this occasion, SWA also collaborated with Pillai College of Education & Research, (PCER) Chembur to provide grains such as rice, moong dal, sugar and glucose biscuits to the marginalised section in our society. SWA members had requested the participants to bring the grains in packets of half a kilogram each. These packets were distributed on 30<sup>th</sup> September, 2019 among the slum dwellers at the Amar Mahal junction at Chembur. The project impacted around 300 hundred people (approx. 100 families).





SWA members distributing food kits in association with PCER , Chembur



Fistful of grains with Edukidz Powai and Kharghar, Mumbai



Fistful of grains at Edukidz Tilaknagar



Media coverage of the event

## **PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT SESSIONS AT SNEHA**

Sorooptimist Welfare Association conducted Personal Development Workshops and Pre-vocational skills training for marginalised girl students enrolled in the Nurse Aide Programme conducted by Society for Nutrition, Education and Health Action (SNEHA). The program taught upon topics like Grooming and Etiquette, Time, Anger and Stress Management, Body Language, Communication, How to prepare for an Interview and Spoken English. The program was initiated on the 21st September, 2019 and ended on 16th November, 2019. The classes were conducted every alternate Saturdays at two centres of SNEHA at Santacruz and Kurla. Sessions on 'Communication skills with special emphasis on Transactional Analysis', 'time management, anger management and Stress management' etc.. were also conducted by the SWA



members. Around 100 girls benefitted from these sessions and it serves SDGs #4 “Quality Education”, #5 “Gender Equality” and #10 “Reduced Inequalities”



SWA members taking classes at SNEHA – Kurla and SantaCruz Centres

## **TREE PLANTATION DRIVE**

SWA along with Chembur English High School organized a Tree Plantation Drive for students from 5th to 10th grade on 23<sup>rd</sup> September, 2019. 400 saplings were handed over to students and teachers who were asked to plant it in their vicinity. State Bank of India and 93 Red FM were the sponsors to the event. The regional Manager of SBI sensitized the students on the need of planting more trees. The project served SDGs 13 “Climate Action” and 15 “Life on Land”.



Tree Plantation Drive at a school in Chembur



## **16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE**

A session on Laws and Rights related to women was arranged by SWA in association with Stree Mukti Sangathan on 7<sup>th</sup> December, 2019 for the mothers of students studying in a school at Chembur, Mumbai. The resource person Ms. Rajashree Damle, lawyer, enlightened the participants on the various issues faced by women and the prospective solutions and guidelines to tackle them through law. There was active interaction and participation from 150 mothers who attended the session.

A similar session with Women Development Cell of Mahatma Education Society - Pillai College of Education and Research, Chembur and Stree Mukti Sangathan, was organized on 'Women's Laws in India' on 19th December, 2019. The resource person for this awareness campaign was Advocate Rajashri Damle. She oriented them with the principle of gender equality which is enshrined in the Indian Constitution in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles. She emphasized that the Constitution not only grants equality to women, but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women. It was a very informative and interactive session which ended on a positive note of holding such more sessions on 'Women's Laws' for women empowerment.



Session on Women's Laws in India

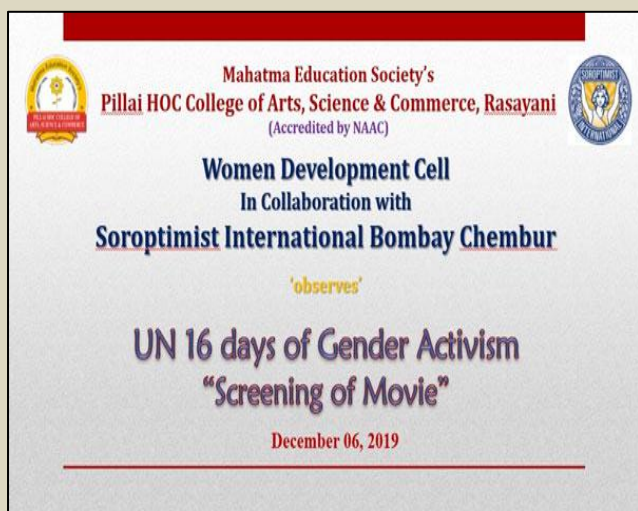
A series of awareness sessions in association with Pillai College of Education and Research and Dr. Pillai Global Academy Panvel were held by President Yvette Lee on 26<sup>th</sup> November, 2019 for varied women groups covering issues of domestic violence and the Domestic Violence Act in India, gender roles and the patriarchal mindset and "How to break the cycle". The sessions helped spread awareness and educate women from varying population - educated and semi-literate women.

Soroptimist International Bombay - Chembur in collaboration with Women Development Cell of Pillai HOC College of Arts, Science & Commerce, Rasayani observed UN 16 Days of Gender Activism with an objective to raise awareness about gender-based violence as a human rights issue at a local and regional level. The movie Period- End of a Sentence was screened for the students. It displayed varied representation

of civil society in the rural section of Hapur in the outskirts of Delhi, India. A total of 142 students attended the session. The panel discussion which followed the movie witnessed an engaged, vocal, inquisitive audience who interacted quite instinctively with the panelists about their opinions and views. SDGs #3,#5 and #10 were focused during the project.



President Yvette Lee taking sessions on “Break the Cycle”



Screening of movie at Pillai HOC College of Arts, Science & Commerce, Rasayani

## **DIL KI BAAT**

SWA in association with Pillai College of Education and Research, Chembur organized a session ‘Dil Ki Baat’ – Introduction to Disability and Inclusion on 30th January, 2020. The session was conducted by Ms. Bhavana and Ms. Leela Trainer and Specialist, Inclusive School. They focused on the preliminary signs of lack of ability shown by students in the classroom that should be clearly and carefully identified by teachers. If these signs go unnoticed, it can further lead to mental health issues. Few demonstrations and simple exercises identifying students with special needs were discussed. The session focused on an inclusive classroom, thereby catering to the needs of every student in the class. The project focused on SDG #3 “Good Health and Well Being”





Session on Introduction to Disability and Inclusion

## **ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES**

Soroptimist Welfare Association (SWA) conducted a Valedictory program of their “English for Specific Purposes program”, one of the initiatives under the “Power of a Second Chance” Project on Tuesday, 25th February, 2020. 55 students received their certificates for this value added course at the hands of our Founder President, Dr. Daphne Pillai, President Yvette Lee and Soroptimists Dr. Lata Menon and Dr. Celina Joy.

The project served SDGs #4 and #5 and it was heartening to witness the students’ built up confidence in the speeches and skits that they performed in English (a skill that they lacked earlier). The students are first generation learners who have taken this second chance opportunity of learning skills which will fetch them an income.

On this occasion, Ms. Bhavana Lalwani a counsellor for mental health conducted a session on dreams and goals and discussed various ways to achieve them.



SWA members at the valedictory function



## **VISIT TO ZOO AND PLANETARIUM FOR SADHANA VIDYALAYA**

SWA organised a visit to the Byculla Zoo and Nehru Planetarium on 28th February, 2020 for 48 students of the Sadhana Vidyalaya for the Deaf. The students thoroughly enjoyed themselves. The main attractions at the zoo were the Humblot penguins. At the planetarium the students had an informative session followed by a one hour documentary on 'Cosmic Life'. The trip focused on SDGs #4 and 10



Students of Sadhana Vidyalaya at the Zoo and Planetarium

## **INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY**

SWA conducted a self-defense workshop for the girl students of Chembur English high School on 9<sup>th</sup> March, 2020 to mark the celebrations of International Women's Day. Mr. Mayur Bansode, Chairman of Mixed Martial Arts Association of India led the session. Around 50 girls attended the session and they were taught the various techniques of self-defense to tackle one or more attackers.



Self-defense class at Chembur English High School



SWA in association with Pillai College of Education and Research Chembur conducted a Street Play Competition on 13th March, 2020 on the theme “Women issues and need for women equality”. Three groups participated and winners were announced. The chief guest of the event was Ms. Suprada Phatrepekar- Ex Muncipal Councillor Chembur ward. SDG#5 was served.



## **SASHAKT**

SWA launched a project named SASHAKT, a series of sessions on ‘Gender, Rights and Sexuality’ for girls and women in the month of August 2019. The project serves SDGs 5 “Gender Equality” and 10 “Reduced Inequalities”

The 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4th session of the project was held on 25th September, 2019 for students of Grade 6-8 & Grade 8-10 on the topics of love, infatuation, consent and social media usage. This session was held in collaboration with NGO Rescue. Around 100 students both boys and girls attended the session which also highlighted on cyber safety, which is the need of the hour.



Session on love, infatuation, consent and social media usage.

SWA in association with Pillai College of Education and Research Chembur conducted a session on "Women Rights and Laws" for the B. Ed students on 19th December 2019 under the project " Sashakt".



A Session was organised on the topic 'My First Period' for girls of Grade 5 of Mahatma International School, Khanda Colony, Panvel on the 11th February, 2020. The session covered the topics of menstruation, menstrual hygiene and myths associated with it. Around 70 girl students attended this session conducted by SWA President, Ms. Yvette Lee.



### **COVID OUTREACH PROGRAMME**

President Yvette Lee who is a Counsellor and Social Worker has circulated her number for those seeking mental health counselling during these uncertain times.

SWA donated a substantial amount to Don Bosco, Nerul towards their COVID- 19 DON BOSCO REACHING OUT Project. The organisation is distributing food and other essentials to migrant workers, construction workers, security guards and their families, daily wage earners, nearby orphanages and other marginalized families in Navi Mumbai.



Distributing food packets to migrant workers



## **‘Flavours from your Homes’**

With India locked-down over the coronavirus and no way to earn money, migrant workers and other marginalised populations are facing many issues. Most of them have either begun walking back to their villages and homes or are fighting hunger and housing issues in larger cities. Millions of migrant workers and daily workers are left jobless and penniless by the full shutdown in the country leading to an exodus from major cities. A leading newspaper published an article on 23rd April, 2020 stating that ‘The nationwide lockdown in India which started about a month ago has impacted nearly 40 million internal migrants’.

To help towards this cause, SWA organised ‘Flavours from your Homes’ a recipe contest for a social cause. As there is strict lockdown in Mumbai, the entire event took place through virtual medium. The event was launched live on You Tube on 3rd May, 2020. This helped the audience to be acquainted with the purpose and objectives of the event. You may find the launch of this event on the following you tube link: <https://youtu.be/xK-rYgWBaI8>

The interested participants had to fill a registration form with a registration fee that was circulated among various group on different social media platforms. This registration fee was directly paid by the participants to Milap, an online fundraising portal.

In the course of a week’s time, the event had 71 registrations and collected a robust amount of Rs 61,224/-. The recipe contest had around 40 entries out of which 28 contestants were validated for the final round. There were two categories: Traditional and Fusion. Mr. Rohit Kankariya, owner of Rossh Company, sponsored the prizes for three winners in each category.

The grand finale was broadcasted on Mother’s Day, 10th May, 2020 on YouTube. The judges Ms. Nimisha Dugar, Managing Director, Morsel & Tissane and Chef Raghu Ramaswamy, The Goodfood Guys congratulated all the winners as well as the contestants and shared their expertise and the criteria based on which they had selected the winners. The amount collected was donated directly to the Gurdwara in Panvel, Navi Mumbai through Milap, the online fundraising portal. The Gurdwara is providing cooked meals for nearly 3000 people every day. You can see the final program which took place on Sunday, May 10, on the following link on YouTube <https://youtu.be/OokMFxgjbio>

This project was initiated towards the fulfilment of SDG#2- Zero Hunger



***“There is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women.”***  
***Kofi Annan***

## **FUND RAISING EVENTS**

### **JUMBLE SALE, CHEMBUR**

The Soroptimist Welfare Association organized a Jumble Sale, one of its mega fundraising events on 9th and 10th October, 2019 at the MES Chembur Campus to raise funds for the various charitable activities conducted by SWA. Clothes, shoes, jewelry, curtains, bed sheets, books, bags, games and other household articles were collected that were in good condition and put up for sale at very marginal prices of Rs. 10 to Rs. 100 per item. The Jumble Sale attracted a huge crowd and the visitors were excited about purchasing items just before the festive season. More than 300 people from the nearby marginalised localities visited the sale.



### **JUMBLE SALE, PANVEL**

SWA members organized a Jumble Sale 16th October, 2019 at Dr. K. M. Vasudevan Pillai Campus, New Panvel. The members collected usable clothes, bedsheets, shoes, bags, toys and other household items and put it up for sale at marginal prices starting from Rs. 10 to Rs. 500. The funds raised from the event were used for the various social welfare activities of SWA. Around 500 people from nearby slums and shanties attended the sale. The unsold items at the end of the day were donated to the SEAL Ashram in Navi Mumbai.





***“Amazing things happen when women help other women” Kasia Gospos***

## **WHY I AM A SOROPTIMIST!!**

*Dr.Daphne Pillai – Founder President - SWA(SIBC)*



*When the Third Wave of Feminism was sweeping all over the world in the 1990's, I was influenced to write my PhD thesis on the 'Gender bias as reflected in English Poetry'. My studies showed me how women were oppressed-suppressed down the ages and how their inherent talents were derogatorily dismissed in a male dominated society. I found numerous examples in poetry and literature where women were marginalised, denigrated and depicted in lowly roles.*

*My thesis theoretically tried to demolish male poets' depiction of women in poetry. With Soroptimism came an opportunity to translate theory into action. Soroptimism gave women who were in business and in careers the mission to work with the marginalised and empower them. We started the club in 1997 and had as our very first project the 'Adult Literacy Drive'. Today we call it 'The Power of a Second Chance'. The idea was to give women who missed out on the first chance in education a second chance opportunity to learn English speaking and other income generating skills. This project has impacted hundreds of women who live in the slums and who through this learning have gained the confidence to rebuild their lives. I am proud of being a Soroptimist because it enables us achieve numerous goals in our mission towards 'Educate, Enable, Empower' the girl child.*



## **WHY I AM A SOROPTIMIST!!**

*Ms.Seeta Desai - President Elect 2018-20*



*As a person dedicated to teaching for several decades, practically since getting my Mumbai University graduation, my focus has always been to be of help to people around me. Helping people is a trait unconsciously intertwined into my nature. Perhaps this has something to do with my upbringing through my childhood in Goa. As a child, I have witnessed my father helping children from poor families in Goa get a good education, bearing the cost from his own Portuguese Government salary. My mother sheltered and fed these students in Pan Jim by converting part of our home into a hostel.*

*Such a childhood must have left an indelible mark on my nature. Ordinarily, a college professor comes in close contact with students of varying means and aspirations. I unerringly found and helped those who would benefit by a little help offered to them. Decades later, some of these students came looking for me from far-away places to thank me for those times which had now escaped my memories.*

*After my retirement from my job, I found an avenue where I could make some meaningful contribution. SADHANA HIGH SCHOOL at Parel, teeming with children with speech and hearing impairment at once caught my attention. My constant attention to their needs made me a regular visitor at the school.*

*At this juncture, my dear friend Daphne Pillai opened up the SOROPTIMIST vista before me.*

*Here was a worldwide organization led by women solely for the education and empowerment of needy women and girls the entire world over. I could see the opportunities I could have to pursue my innate urges for helping people in a more organized manner. Daphne, my friend is the founder President of the Bombay Chembur Chapter. My joining the SOROPTIMIST culture was a natural outcome.*

## **IN LOCKDOWN STORIES!!!**

### **Lockdown experiences shared..... In Soroptimism**

Dr. Sunita Wadikar

*With a total overhaul in the life style created due to Covid -19 all of us were suddenly caught unaware of the serious consequences we had to face. Most of the people were at their low ebb and I was no exception to it. However, I gathered all my resilience and decided to accept the situation very optimistically. This attitude really helped me in seeing situations positively. So I realized that the best part of this period was that I got an opportunity to spend real quality time with my loved ones and sharpen my culinary skills too, it was indeed a pleasure cooking variety of cuisines for them. Another interesting activity which kept my family bonded was that every Sunday we played a family game of Housie / Treasure hunt digitally with our relatives and friends located outside Mumbai. Though this interaction was virtual it gave all of us lot of cheer and joy. Indulging in regular exercise and group Yoga through Zoom kept my dopamine and adrenaline flowing high. Attending a number of webinars for last two months has really helped me in updating my professional as well as other life skills thereby, keeping me abreast with the new normal style of living .*

*During this lock down period I also realized that some of my senior citizen friends staying alone were feeling low because of the disturbing outcomes of the pandemic. So I made it a point to reserve an hour every day to have telephonic chat to cheer them up. A small activity named as 'Homebound Nature shots' was initiated for the senior citizens on the whatsapp group wherein every member had to send one picture of the flora or fauna around their house captured in their phone camera. Pictures of different birds, plants, flowers or the beautiful nature shots were shared by most of the seniors on the group. Some shared their paintings, poems/ write ups composed during these difficult times. The participants expressed their joy in sharing and remaining connected with each other.*

*Happy to say that these and many other such activities helped me immensely in remaining connected, positive & balanced while coping with the harrowing effects of the pandemic .*

*Stay connected, Stay Happy, Stay safe. Karo na 'fear', 'cheer' Karo na .....*

### **Life shadowed by Covid**

Ms. Annamma Paul

*A small virus has proved that neither money nor power is as highly regarded as we thought. This lockdown gave me an opportunity to take a break from my routine lifestyle. I have now adapted to the small balcony talks, hand washing norms, mask wearing and social distancing protocols.*

*Now bonding is more than ever before. It feels good to have 'touched' all the relationships that were left untouched earlier due to lack of time. Being connected today reminds us that we are not alone in these stressful times, and that there are other people who are interested in your well-being and happiness.*

*Rummaging through the cupboards and old photo albums and books revived memories for me that was long forgotten. Live sessions and interactive virtual meetings helped maintain my work-life balance.*

*Evening walks are now a thing of the past. Keeping my sleep schedule consistent has given me ample time to nurture my interests in tending to my plants in the balcony, practising yoga, spending quality time with my family and honing my poetic skills. Be positive and draw closer during these times of social distancing.*



## **UPCOMING EVENTS**

AGM – Soroptimist Welfare Association (SWA) – Postponed from April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020 owing to Covid-19

NASI EC and AGM – June 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>, 2020- hosted by SI Pune Metro East – stands cancelled

### **DID YOU KNOW?**

*The name Soroptimist was coined from the Latin soror meaning sister, and optima meaning best. And so Soroptimist is perhaps best interpreted as 'the best for women'.*

**Stay Home, Stay Healthy!!**