



# EASY STAGES GUIDES

## Friendship Links

### Introduction

A number of Clubs have asked for guidance on how to initiate, develop and maintain strong Friendship links. This document is purely for guidance and seeks in no way to be prescriptive. Clubs with positive results and good examples of best practice are encouraged to share these at National Association, Network, Region and Federation level.

### Stage 1: Why develop friendship links?

Friendship Links are vital to all Soroptimist Clubs. They are the key to the International Soroptimist world. Friendship Links can be made across different countries, federations or within the same country.

### Stage 2 What are the benefits?

- ❖ Sharing in Joint Programme Action Projects.
- ❖ Getting to know the life of other clubs.
- ❖ Supporting new developing clubs
- ❖ Appreciating different cultures.
- ❖ Establishing warm friendships.
- ❖ Visiting and exchanging programmes.
- ❖ Enjoying holiday contacts.
- ❖ Practising language skills
- ❖ Taking part in Special Events
- ❖ Offering hospitality, house exchange etc.
- ❖ Sharing good practice i.e. running club meetings

### Stage 3 How do I make a friendship link?

- ❖ Desire to do joint project so view Programme Action Data Base looking for clubs
- ❖ Informal meetings e.g. holiday acquaintances
- ❖ Meeting at conference, convention and federation events
- ❖ Information from website and friendship link newsletter.
- ❖ Established town/city twinning.
- ❖ Simple desire to connect with another club.
- ❖ Wish to link with far-away clubs.

#### **Stage 4: What do I do next?**

Request forms from Federation Friendship Link Co-ordinator, details on the webpage.

<http://www.sigbi.org/>

#### **Stage 5: Once the link has been formalised what do I do?**

After the formal acceptance of a new Friendship Link the success and continuity depends on the full backing,

co-operation and involvement of all club members. The appointment of a correspondent or a small committee to be responsible for maintaining links and reporting to club on progress is important.

1. First, it is important to introduce your club e.g. by taking a group photo or better still a short video with each member introducing themselves.
2. Write a short "history" of your club; send a list of all members with categories and interests.
3. Describe former projects and club goals.
4. Ensure that your club and your members are interesting to your Friendship Link Clubs by reporting regular contacts to your members.
5. Share Regional/Union Reports many of which can be of great inspiration to others.
6. Email is a wonderful communication tool; it is so immediate and easy. It is not vital that long letters are written, sometimes just a quick, thinking about you message particularly in troubled times, or had a good meeting tonight, or a friendship link/Christmas/club newsletter can be produced  
Please remember however, not all clubs have this modern technology and they still have wonderful, warm, long lasting contact with their Friendship Links.
7. Shared Projects: One of the important ideas of Friendship Links is the possibility of participating in Joint Projects.  
A joint Project can be suggested by one of the clubs pointing out the possibility of making it a Shared Project. So much support can be offered with an exchange of ideas. It may be that financial aid is necessary, if this is the case, do not be put off by sending money overseas. One easy way to consider is to pay Federation Capitation fees for the club and the members to use money saved to fund the Project, many clubs use this method for transferring cash safely.
8. Visiting Friendship Links: It may be the wish to have a Link in a neighbouring country and thereby have the possibility for visiting one another. Very often three or more clubs have formed links and reports have been received of these very strong friendship ties. When there is a special event in your club do invite your Friendship Links.
9. Grant of Friendship: Your Region may wish to consider offering a Grant of Friendship. In order to arrange this an advertisement is placed in the Soroptimist Magazine/ International Soroptimist inviting two Soroptimist's outside the UK to visit for two/three weeks. All accommodation and travel between hosting members will be provided. Recipients will be responsible for travel expenses to and from UK and also for any medical expenses that may be incurred.  
This is a fantastic opportunity to travel and obviously a way of sharing ideas and reporting back on experiences.

## **Stage 6: Organisation within the Club**

Please request some quality time during a meeting for Friendship Link issues, during this time, consider how you organise your links.

- a) Is this done by one person?
- b) by one person per link club?
- c) by a small committee?

Maybe the club has a Friendship Link Co-ordinator  
Whichever way is good but if the first method is preferred do make sure that there is a contingency plan available.

There also comes a time when a good look at long-term projects is important.  
Clubs are encouraged to have a time of reflection and part of this maybe to look at friendship links and update contacts. You might like to discuss with members:

- ❖ Why have Friendship Links?
- ❖ Who do they benefit?
- ❖ What does the club gain from such links?
- ❖ What does Soroptimist International gain?
- ❖ How many links can your club manage?
- ❖ Have we had contact with all links this year?
- ❖ Can we work on a project together? Does this involved funding?
- ❖ What skills do we have to offer?
- ❖ How can we make links more successful?
- ❖ Can we fund a project?
- ❖ Do we have IT experience to access other countries easily and them with us?
- ❖ Is Friendship Links an agenda item at all club meetings? Are we keeping members informed?
- ❖ How can we make this a fun activity?

There are no right or wrong answers your club must do what is right for them.

## **Stage 7 Friendship Link Newsletters**

Please keep sending information and pictures to the Friendship Link newsletter about your visits and projects. The newsletter is produced three times a year in January, May and September

## **Stage 8 Updating**

Please ensure you complete your friendship link registration form each January and return to the Friendship Link Coordinator to ensure all your link information is correct. The form is emailed out to each club and is also available on the website at this time you may like to re-evaluate and focus on the link correspondents and consider continuation of link clubs.