



## Soroptimist International Global Impact Report 2012-2013

### Executive Summary

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### About this Report

Soroptimist International's flagship global programme of work encourages all 3,103 clubs across 127 countries to educate, empower, and enable opportunities for women and girls to support them in achieving their fullest potential. This report shows the global impact of this programme of work, including examples of best practice club work, advocacy efforts, and awareness raising.

Each year, SI chooses a different focus topic, reflecting what SI had identified as a priority issue. This year's report focusses on violence against women and girls.

## In Focus: Violence Against Women and Girls

**Research concludes that education and empowerment are two of the best possible tools to prevent gender-based violence.**

It is a well-known statistic now that 1 in 3 women will experience some form of gender based violence in their lifetime. This figure rises to as much as 70% in some countries, particularly those mired in conflict.

According to international law and the UN, VAWG includes domestic violence, intimate partner violence, sexual assault or harassment at work, school, or any other public location, trafficking, harmful traditional practices including FGM/C, or any form of violence against women perpetrated by the state, such as rape as a weapon of war.

Working to eliminate violence against women and girls presents unique challenges that require unique solutions. Existing in the private sphere, derived from historical gender inequalities and power imbalances, and involving taboo subjects or matters of extreme sensitivity are just a few of the reasons the epidemic remains so pervasive.

Violence is also one of the key barriers women and girls face in accessing education and leadership. Schools are, sadly, one of the main sites where violence against girls occurs . from strangers on the way to school, from peers (both boys and girls) in the school setting which often goes unpunished, and, perhaps the worst abuse of power, from teachers and school officials. Women who go on to seek higher education or positions of leadership are often targeted for violent attacks to put them in their place+. Even some microcredit programmes have unfortunately resulted in increases in intimate partner violence as the man perceives the woman's newfound economic independence threatening and feels he has no other way to assert his society-defined masculinity.

Yet, research is now showing that interventions, policies, and programmes can and do make a difference. The most successful tool is education.

The Soroptimist three E model is one of the most effective ways to address violence against women and girls. Education is shown to reduce incidents of violence and acts as a protective factor for both victim/survivors and potential perpetrators. Empowerment supports women to overcome violence and to reduce re-occurrences. Working within the larger community to enable opportunities for women and girls will change the attitudes and behaviours that allow violence to continue. We must also acknowledge that working with, not against men and boys is absolutely necessary for lasting, meaningful change.

The following projects, selected as Soroptimist case studies, show just how successful educating, empowering, and enabling opportunities can be in preventing violence from occurring and supporting those who have been victim/survivors.

**All over the world, in locations with different cultures, economies, politics, and religions, one key intervention is working to address violence against women and girls: education.**

## **Soroptimist Action on Violence Against Women and Girls**

**Back to Basics, SI Sllay, Philippines** uses education as a tool to improve access to services and criminal justice for victim/survivors. This club developed a series of gender sensitivity trainings for police officers on the topic of domestic violence and other forms of violence against women.

**New Times, SI Rio Negro, Brazil** empowered victim/survivors with skills and confidence through a project training women in cooking and home management skills. 40% of project participants reported successfully gaining employment as a direct result of the training.

**Holistically supporting a local domestic violence shelter, SI Izmir, Turkey** allowed this club to enable opportunities for victim/survivors. The project improves the living conditions of the women and children who have sought refuge in such houses within our province, educating them with regard to their legal rights and how to deal with the violence to which they have been subjected, and enabling them to live productive lives in the future.

**Preventing Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting, clubs across SIGBI** use education and enabling opportunities to prevent harmful traditional practices. Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C) has been part of the awareness raising work of SIGBI since at least 2007 and possibly before. Clubs undertake all kinds of projects to address the issue, from film screenings to fundraisers to facilitating alternative rites of passage.

**Walk the Talk, SISWP** educated communities and empowered women to prevent violence against women and girls through public events and doing walks across respective countries. During the "16 days of Activism Against Gender Violence" from 25th November until 10th December walks occurred throughout the Federation to educate and advocate that violence in any form must not be tolerated by any country, community or home.

**A scholarship Program from SI Fremantle (Australia)** increased access to education for victim/survivors. The project provided scholarships for two women, victim/survivors of violence, who had successfully completed the Soroptimist Leadership Development Program and who wanted to continue further studies but who were unable to fund this themselves.

## **57<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on the Status of Women**

One of the main events in SI's calendar is the annual meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women, which takes place at the UN HQ in NYC. Every year, a large group of Soroptimists from all levels of leadership attend to achieve four goals:

1. Influence the outcome document, which is passed as an official UN Resolution by submitting a written statement, using our global network to lobby governments, and by securing a space to deliver an oral statement directly to government officials during the meeting.
2. Learn about best practice and emerging trends by attending parallel events and panels and reporting to SI HQ.
3. Strengthen existing organisational partnerships, forging new ones, and establishing individual connections to build SI's global network.

4. Raise the profile of SI by hosting events and spreading the word about what we do and who we are.

Here are the highlights from this year's CSW:

- Over 40 Soroptimist leaders, lobbyists, and learners attended this year's CSW.
- Delegates attended meetings and events at the Missions in order to reach Ambassadors and those of influence in the decision-making process. Delegates also distributed one of our key documents *10 Reasons why Governments must Act Now on Violence against Women and Girls* and networked with other NGOs that took place.
- Soroptimist International held two side Events - one was entitled *Stop the Tide: Tackling Adolescent Dating Violence* and included speakers from The World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS) and Take Back the Tech. This side event included four panelists who explored the topic of teenage dating violence and preventative initiatives. This event was so popular that sadly 60 people had to be turned away. The second side event was entitled *From Girl Child to Mature Woman: A Life Course Approach to Gender Empowerment and Violence-free Life* This was solely a Soroptimist International side event and included a panel of Soroptimist International members who are professionals in the field of gender violence. Speakers stressed an urgent need to identify evidence-based and promising prevention strategies that tackle challenges experienced at various stages of a woman's life from girl child to mature woman.
- Soroptimist International expressed alarm at the increasing incidence of femicide and called for urgent, concerted action in this area. Anusha Santhirasthipam delivered an oral statement prepared by SI with the Vienna NGO Committee on the Status of Women and participants of the Vienna Symposium on Femicide in 2012. Soroptimist International made recommendations to Member States, UN and other International entities and civil society organisations.
- SI succeeded in lobbying efforts and is pleased to report that the Agreed Conclusions make specific reference to femicide, linked directly to SI's oral intervention. Every Member State country is now expected to bring its national policies into line with the Agreed Conclusions. The benefit of the Agreed Conclusions is that it gives countries guidelines for accepted practice and a leverage point to pressure one another. So the work must not stop, and the lobbying must continue in every country so that member states honour the commitments they have made.

## **Enough is Enough International Women**

On International Women's Day, March 8th 2013, which fell during the 57<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission on the Status of Women, Soroptimist International clubs around the world took part in a global day of action to call for an end to violence against women. From Pakistan to the Philippines, the Netherlands to Nepal, Soroptimists took to the streets, radio stations and the internet to raise awareness in their communities and around the world.

As 2012 began, the world was shocked by the horrific rape and murder of a student in Delhi, India. Other cases of violence against women and girls started making the news; finally the world seemed to be waking up to this terrible epidemic, affecting 1 in 3 women worldwide.

The aims of the Enough is Enough campaign were to:

- encourage and assist clubs to organise events to raise awareness of violence against women in their communities,
- maintain pressure on Governments to act at CSW,
- highlight the fact that SI acts locally and thinks globally, via a wave of local/regional events with a common theme.

The event was promoted via Federations, Global Voice, the SI website and social media and series of Enough is Enough resources were provided to assist with organising local events.

Well over 1000 Soroptimists and supporters in at least 15 countries, representing all 4 Soroptimist Federations, took action in their communities.

The campaign also reached many more people through social media.

- 10,000 people reached us through Facebook, with one post alone reaching 7535 Facebook users.
- One of our IWD updates on Twitter was retweeted by UN Women and UN CSW, with a potential audience of over 200,000.
- 224 people used the Facebook event to indicate that they would be participating in the event.
- Photos of Enough is Enough events on Flickr were viewed 10715 times.

## Global Action

**SI evidence shows that small scale projects, together, can have huge scale impact improving the lives of women and girls.**

**Nearly 110,000 women and girls were educated, empowered, and enabled through Soroptimist projects in 2012.**

- 3,727 Soroptimist projects in 2012 used education, empowerment, or enabling opportunities to transform the lives of women and girls across the globe.
- The lives of 109,632 women and girls were improved through Soroptimist club work.
- 720 projects targeted communities or countries to change the social and political environment for the betterment of women.
- \$5,743,307 was raised to support this work.
- Non-formal education for young women, second chance programmes for adult women, and community awareness raising are the most widely reported areas of Soroptimist club work.
- Over 10,000 women and girls who have experienced domestic violence were supported in their recovery through Soroptimist work. 7% of all projects raised awareness in the community about gender-based violence.
- 52% of Soroptimist scholarship helped young women pursue higher education.
- 19 projects worldwide supported women in prison.
- 11% of projects crossed geographic boundaries.

## Global Voice

**SI was invited to present our policy recommendations to government officials on 10 occasions.**

**SI's language around femicide was included in the UN Resolution adopted at the 57<sup>th</sup> Commission on the Status of Women.**

SI works with international networks and partners, such as the UN and its agencies, the Commonwealth, and the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID), to ensure that the real needs of women and girls are represented in global policy and agenda-setting. We use our far-reaching network of Soroptimists covering the globe to formulate policy recommendations and campaigns to transform the lives of women and girls for the better. Our General Consultative Status with the UN gives SI the privilege and the responsibility to speak on behalf of Soroptimists and the communities they serve.

At bottom, SI's advocacy is built on this: development simply is not possible without including those affected *by* the decisions *in* the decisions.

SI works in three main areas to advocate on behalf of Soroptimists worldwide and the women and girls they serve:

1. Influencing law and policy
2. Bringing the voices of women and girls to the UN
3. Strengthening SI's global network

Key achievements:

- SI's network of permanent representatives to the UN, 19 women strong across 6 centres, participated in 36 meetings focussing on education and leadership for women and girls.
- SI submitted 3 written statements for consideration by government officials at UN meetings.
- SI hosted 3 panels at the UN, bringing our work to the forefront of sharing of best practice and ensuring that the voices of the women and girls we represent are heard.
- Soroptimists delivered 10 oral interventions to different government officials, ensuring that our policy recommendations are conveyed to those who write legislation.
- Dr. Alice Odingo, one of Soroptimist International's UN Representatives in Nairobi, was elected as one of four Global Co-ordinators of the Women's Major Group at the UN Environment Programme (UNEP).
- Soroptimist International has also publicly launched a position statements on what is referred to as the 'Post-2015 Agenda'.
- At the 39th Session of the Committee on World Food Security FAO in Rome, Programme Director Hilary Ratcliffe spoke at a High Level Plenary meeting about the work SI do with regards to sustainable development, encouraging governments to pay due attention to the education and empowerment of women and girls.

- SI was honoured at a UN Women, NYC event titled 'Empowering Women for 25 years' for our work making a difference for women and girls worldwide.

## Projects of Excellence

Each year, a selection of projects, spread across the globe and across SI's key areas of need, are selected to showcase best practices. This year, 38 projects have been named as projects of excellence, with five further recognised as Programme Directors' Picks.

### Glacytramujuas Cooking School, Brazil

This project set out to address the lack of job opportunities available to marginalized women of the Campo Comprido district, who are susceptible to trafficking, drug use and unwanted pregnancy as a result of their poor economic situation by facilitating cooking classes and classes addressing other issues facing women in the community.

Caroline, IAPD, says: "This project was creative in finding a solution to give women and girls with no job opportunities and no skills a new positive direction in life. The training led to job placement while both ultimately led to confidence and self-esteem. This project clearly showcased: Education and Empowerment."

### Knickers for knowledge, UK/Zimbabwe

This club worked in partnership with their friendship link S.I. Bulawayo by financially supporting the purchasing of sanitary wear and 'knickers' for the girls in need. Locally they collected used clothes, textiles etc, bagged them, and sold them to a clothes recycling company to raise funds. The funds were then transferred to the club in Bulawayo to buy knickers and sanitary wear for girls living in the poorer rural areas to enable them to attend school regularly. This project is enabling girls to continue their education uninterrupted.

Hilary, IPD, says: "This project is a very simple idea that has real effect helping young girls to attend school. Absolutely what our Educate Empower Enable focus is all about. A clever and catchy title helps with publicity, an ask that can be fulfilled easily and can widen out to ask the general public, and a good use of friendship links. All in all a winning Soroptimist project."

### Crews, cliques and catfights, New Zealand

Clubs in New Zealand recognised that bullying and violence is not just from men and boys, but comes from girls as well. To address this incredibly damaging form of violence, clubs organised workshops and presentations based on the research of leading expert.

Hilary, IPD, says: "A very well thought out project; a great deal of forward planning went into this. Due to extensive advertising, use of community envelopes, and follow up visits, a good audience came to workshops. A lot of excellent publicity for Soroptimist International and a very worthwhile subject tackled in the local community."

### Teen Programs across the USA

Several clubs across the USA have identified adolescent girls as being at risk in their communities. A variety of after school-type programmes have been developed, all with the same basic concepts and the same goals, but tailored to each individual community. These programmes all show exciting successes in empowering young women.

Hilary, IPD, says: "The variety of approaches used by the clubs is very impressive. An extremely good example of how working together on one theme or topic can have real impact. It increases our reach and our credibility to have a relevant voice on a subject as important as this."

### **Overall champion:**

#### **Water for St. Mary Mutito Girl's Sec. School, Germany/Kenya**

Thanks to this project, about 400 girls of the Mutito Girls' Secondary School in Kenya will have increased access to clean water. Rain-water will be collected in tanks so the girls don't have to walk 7 kilometres to fetch water from a well during the dry season. The girls will have more time for their work at school and it will improve their results.

Caroline, IAPD, says: "This project provides access to one of life's necessities to women and girls - safe, clean water. By eliminating the need to walk 7 kilometres to fetch water during the dry season, the girls have more time for education. The partnership between Germany and Kenya in this project, demonstrates the impact of being part of an international organization can have in the world."

The breadth and scope of the projects of excellence is quite exciting - addressing everything from creating a safe school environment for girls to providing funding and mentoring for young women to continue onto tertiary education to literacy and numeracy classes for adult women to recognising women in business. The projects cover the globe and show the success stories behind the impact numbers shown in this report.

## **In Sum**

This report details the impressive and wide-reaching impact that Soroptimist clubs, collectively, have in transforming the lives of women and girls in need through educating, empowering, and enabling opportunities. Although we try to quantify the work to measure outcomes, it is important to remember the countless hours that go into each and every project, and the passion and drive that brings this work to life. Without the 80,000 members worldwide, none of this work would have been possible.