



Soroptimist
International

Soroptimist  International

Educate to Lead

a global voice
for women

2010 Global Impact Report:

FOCUS ON ACTION

The challenges we face

So now we know why education and leadership for women and girls is so important and where we are in today's world in striving to achieve a gender balance in these areas. Our next question is: what is holding us back from perfect gender parity in educational attainment? Why, given the strides that have been made over the past decades, do we still live in a world where girls' and boys' and women's and men's voices are not heard equally?

Below we present the **ten biggest challenges** to achieving gender balances in education and leadership, worldwide:

- 1. Unsuitable and/or unsafe physical environments.** Girls living in rural areas face even more difficulties as the journey to and from school is often seen as being too dangerous. (Levine, et al., 2009)
- 2. Costs.** Not just school fees but uniforms, books, stationery, loss of income or work at home, and other associated costs – it all adds up and sometimes forces families to make very difficult decisions.
- 3. Lack of infrastructure/not enough teachers, particularly female teachers.** In some cultures, girls can only be taught by women in girl-only schools, making it much more difficult to provide the needed number of facilities. (Levine, et al., 2009) Teachers are expected to do much more now than they were in the past – teach subjects outside their core competencies, improving student's learning outcomes with little or no training, managing classrooms with pupil to teacher ratios as high as 78:1, and dealing with lower pay

and less employment stability. (Global Campaign for Education, 2009)

- 4. A historical focus on enrolment** which overlooked quality of education, retention, and transition from one level of education to the next and, eventually, to work. These previously 'hidden' areas are now some of our biggest challenges. There is an emerging mismatch between skills taught and skills needed to secure stable employment.
- 5. Lack of attention paid to adult women/second chance educational opportunities,** particularly in basic literacy and numeracy skills.
- 6. Not enough focus on the specific needs of adolescent girls.** They are at a critical point in their lives, but seen as "too challenging" for many policy-makers. Due to past high fertility rates, this is now the largest segment of the population in many countries.
- 7. Lack of 'girl friendly' spaces** for non-formal education. For example, youth centres generally do not offer girl-only activities (Levine, et al., 2009), and many girls are thus unable to participate in this kind of critical non-formal learning and skill-building which is important for taking on leadership.
- 8. Demands on time.** For a family of six, collecting enough water for drinking, cooking and basic hygiene may mean hauling heavy water containers from a distant source for an average of three hours a day. Women and girls are mainly responsible for fetching the water that their families need for drinking, bathing, cooking and other household

uses. (WHO/UNICEF, 2005) That's three hours a day when they could be learning. In more rural agrarian societies, girls sometimes spend up to eight hours a day fetching water. (Levine, et al., 2009) Statistics show a similar situation for women and girls collecting traditional bio fuels. (Birdsall, Levine, and Ibrahim, 2005)

- 9. Financing and government commitment.** The global economic crisis has put basic services at great risk of cutbacks. A recent survey of 18 low income countries showed that seven had cutback education spending in 2009. International aid has stagnated alongside enrolment rates. (UNESCO, 2011) Political neglect particularly affects adult literacy programmes. (UNESCO, 2011)
- 10. Training and exposure for potential women leaders.** Ensuring that women have the skills and confidence necessary to take on decision-making roles is just as important as ensuring that those doors are opened through quota-type policies. Many women candidates do not receive the same level of exposure as male candidates; women with the skills necessary for appointments must be made as known to decision-makers as are their male counterparts. (Beijing at Ten and Beyond, 2005) *"Given that many women have had little experience with running for political office, it is of utmost importance that training be made readily available to allow women to develop and fine-tune their political skills. Once in office, women may also benefit from leadership training and mentoring to increase efficiency and ensure sustainability."* (UN Expert group on equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes, 2005)



Soroptimists in India and the UK provide clean drinking water in schools

Recommendations for on-the-ground work

So...what do we do about these challenges? Soroptimists are uniquely positioned to do quite a lot. Increasing access to education and leadership opportunities is surprisingly doable, particularly under the E³ model. Solutions are often low cost, easy to implement, and directly linked to encouraging outcomes. In other words, **a little goes a long way!**

Here we synthesise the ever-growing body of international research on best practice to provide a brief overview of how we can affect change in simple and locally relevant ways. Just remember – the first step in any local action is to **consult with the women and girls whom you intend to serve!**

1. Increase enrolment, retention, and survival rates for girls, particularly in secondary education.
 - a. Raise awareness in the wider community; raising awareness about the importance and the benefits of educating girls and young women in the wider community has a strong association with increased enrolment for girls.
 - b. Provide well governed financial assistance to those most in need; as poverty is a well known barrier to accessing education, creating systems that alleviate this financial burden have a lasting impact. At government level, abolishing school fees can often have a significant impact. At local level, financial incentives and free education for those most in need are also successful models.
 - c. Ensure a girl-friendly physical environment, such as proper

sanitation facilities and safe transport to and from school.

2. Support girls and women in the transition from school to work.
 - a. Provide responsive non-formal educational opportunities.
 - b. Ensure that women are equipped with the vocational skills necessary to secure stable employment (particularly in the fields of health, education, and agriculture).
3. Address the learning needs of adult women.
 - a. Roll out 'second chance' programmes providing women with literacy, numeracy, and vocational skills.
 - b. Train female teachers – not only does this improve the lives of the women trained, but it also encourages girls to attend school in many countries.
4. Increasing women's participation in decision-making.
 - a. Offer non-formal education, particularly around leadership skills, to adult women.
 - b. Provide training opportunities specifically for women to take on leadership roles. While quotas are generally effective, *"quotas can have a downside if the nature of the quota-based system results in women members who are seen as having less legitimacy as elected representatives than their male peers."* (Beijing at Ten and Beyond, 2005)

For advocacy and fundraising campaigns, the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative ('UNGEI') undertook a gender analysis of the Global Monitoring Report 2011 and developed a **set of advocacy messages**. Those relevant to SI's work are:

- "The demand for girls' education is highly sensitive to household poverty and therefore responds well to well-designed conditional cash or in-kind transfer measures." In other words, if the financial burden of sending a girl child to school is too high, families will elect not to enrol daughters in school. The 'demand' side of the supply-demand chain is just as important as the supply side.
- "Higher investment in early childhood care and education is crucial for promoting sustained girls' education." A newly emerging body of research shows that access to pre-primary education may be a predictor of girls' eventual educational attainment. The earlier girls are enrolled in school, the better.
- "The notion of quality should be widened to include transformative, gender-responsive educational process and outcomes. Educational curricula and processes can play a major role in changing many gender-related practices, norms, and beliefs, including sexual abuse and violence." Soroptimist work in New Zealand has shown that educating both girls and boys about healthy relationships around age 11 has a positive impact on decreased dating violence in teenage relationships. Schools can teach children so much more than just literacy and numeracy skills, with culturally appropriate and gender-sensitive curricula.

formal education

In the following pages we examine a series of Soroptimist 'projects of excellence' in education and leadership. For each project, we look at the need that drove the project in the first place, how the project was done, the impact it had, and a few tips and pointers about what made the project 'excellent' (we call these 'SoroptimTips'). Congratulations to those projects that are featured here! We hope this provides guidance and inspiration for Soroptimists and others around the world.

These projects focus on increasing access to formal education systems for girls. Formal education is the hierarchically structured, chronologically graded, educational system running from primary through to tertiary institutions.

Building toilets in schools, Zimbabwe, Niger, and India

Soroptimists all over the world understand how proper sanitation facilities in schools can drastically improve access to education for girls. It is well documented that inadequate sanitation contributes to drop out rates and poor educational attainment for girls in particular.

In memory of the late SI President Lynn Dunning, clubs from the Great Britain and Ireland Federation rolled out a **'Loos for Lynn'** campaign, encouraging Soroptimists to build toilets in places which would benefit women and girls. Once such place was Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. A rural primary school with **over 400 children and 10 teachers had one shared small block of toilets** – boys, girls, women, and men alike all had to use the same small facilities. This was vastly inadequate for the school and was having a negative impact on educational outcomes, particularly for girls. It was also hard on the female teachers. Soroptimists mobilised the local community to give their time to make bricks and

solicited local builders to volunteer to construct new toilet blocks. Soroptimists provided cement and roofing material. **Everyone got involved** to help build gender and culturally appropriate toilets to reduce drop-out rates, increase attendance, and improve educational outcomes for girls.

Guptipara Girls High School, West Bengal, India had only **five toilets for 1100 girls**. Because of the lack of toilets, a lot of girls would be absent while menstruating as five primitive toilets were insufficient. This high rate of absenteeism for the girls was having a significant negative impact on their education. Local workers were employed to build six modern and upgraded facilities. With these additional toilets, the school reports **almost zero absenteeism**, and the girls express their eagerness to continue their studies.

Soroptimists in Iceland learned that a primary school in Niger was in dire need of not only proper toilets, but **running water** as well. The clubs across the country banded together to work with the school to build new toilet facilities, vastly improving opportunities for the girls in particular.



Soroptimists in France built toilets at a school in Vietnam

SoroptimTips:

- Sometimes it's not about teaching girls and young women, but about the environment in which they are taught. Imagine if your schooling was interrupted for five days every month! Having gender appropriate and sensitive sanitation facilities is absolutely critical to achieving the best possible educational outcome for girls and young women.
- Don't forget about female teachers. They need proper sanitation facilities in order to perform their jobs. Being absent from work for five days a month is clearly unacceptable. Grown adults should not share toilets with children.
- Getting the community involved is a great way to reduce the cost while getting everyone interested and engaged. Everyone has 'ownership' of the project and can take part in celebrating the outcomes.



*Tanzania Secondary School Education,
Tanzania*

Soroptimists sponsor two Maasai girls to **attend secondary school and live in a safe house** during the school term in Eluwai Village, Monduli, Tanzania. The project is carried out in partnership with a local NGO.

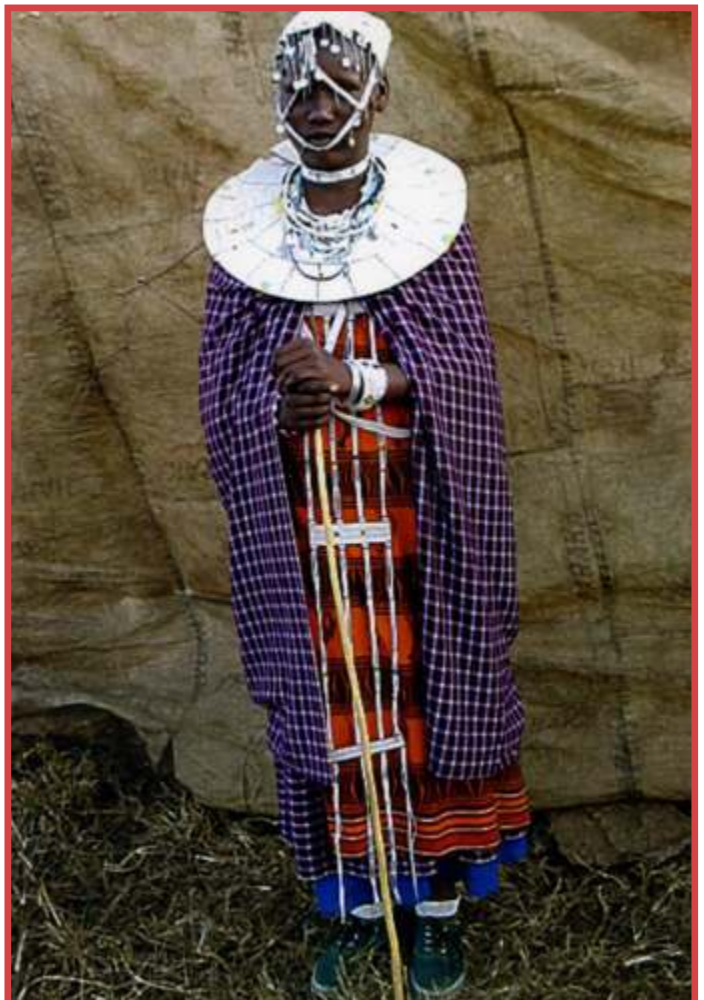
Girls in this area are living in extreme poverty and, without support, would not be able to

attend school. Their vulnerabilities do not stop there – as their families are poor, they are at risk of being sold off into early marriage and would most likely undergo female genital mutilation/cutting.

By providing their school fees and safe, local accommodation, these girls are able to **continue their studies** and look towards a future as a skilled, productive and valued member of their community.

SoroptiTips:

- Work in partnership with a local NGO – this creates instant local knowledge and accountability.
- This project is built on understanding that girls’ ability to attend school is not just about fees, but also about safe and secure physical access to school. Arranging for housing near the school is a ‘must’ to ensure that these girls do not drop out.
- The project coordinators receive regular reports on the progress of the girls. One of the girls is doing very well with her studies. Unfortunately the second girl failed her exams for the second time and had to leave. Although this is understandably disappointing, with proper monitoring and evaluation the project coordinator was aware of these issues and was able to respond appropriately.



Pictured on this page - various aspects of the work being done in Tanzania

Literacy Courses for Adults, Turkey

Soroptimists in Turkey are providing literacy courses for a group of **18 women in a resource poor area** in Istanbul. These are women who have not had access to education and, therefore, have extremely limited opportunities in their personal and professional lives.

In partnership with the country's public education centre, trained teachers were selected and the courses were developed. The course was marketed through the centre to appropriate local women. Classes were held in a local primary school. All related expenses, including stationery supplies, were covered.

Besides providing these women with the literacy skills necessary for meaningfully participating in society, the collegial atmosphere of the course and the **confidence gained** facilitated the socio-cultural development of the students.

SoroptimTips:

- This project targets particularly vulnerable women who are often marginalised and overlooked in society. The social gradient shows that focussing on those at the bottom of the socio-economic spectrum benefits everyone in the society.
- Literacy and reading skills are often overlooked in education programmes, particularly for adult women who were not afforded learning opportunities earlier in life.
- Using an established organisation with local knowledge and resources, in this case the public education centre, ensures that the teachers and course materials will be as appropriate and as effective as possible.

Indigenous Australian Women's Scholarship, Australia

Many indigenous (aboriginal) women studying at Victoria University in Australia are **first-generation university attendees**. They have no model of mothers and grandmothers in higher education. Frequently they do

not have the funds to meet tuition, book costs, and other university charges.

Soroptimists saw this need and awarded a two-year scholarship to a woman who is of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent and who is studying for her bachelor's degree at Victoria University.

They negotiated a Memorandum of Understanding with the Scholarship Office at Victoria University. The University appointed a five-person selection committee comprised of three academic professionals, one Soroptimist and one aboriginal elder. The university posted the scholarship particulars on their website and gathered applications before the committee met to make a selection.

This project has seen **three graduates**: one with a degree in **midwifery**, one with a degree in **sports nutrition**, and one with a degree in **education**. Soroptimists are continuing the project and sponsor one woman per year.

SoroptimTips:

- Focussing on one woman per year is just as valuable as running a course with many women. Being able to offer this kind of once in a lifetime opportunity to a woman will change the course of her life.
- Establishing a proper selection committee is of the utmost importance, particularly, in this case, one that includes both a Soroptimist and an aboriginal village elder. There are countless stories of exploitation of women seeking scholarships and sponsorships. Taking an active part in the selection and awarding of the scholarship ensures good governance and accountability.
- Improving access to higher education opportunities for women of aboriginal decent truly meets a need. Not only do the women themselves benefit, but their communities will benefit, and the university benefits from a more diverse student body. It is important to also recognise that "women" are not a homogenous group, but rather each individual woman has a different background, a different story, and a different set of challenges. This project responds to the particular needs of aboriginal women.

One club which produced and distributed these bookmarks reported "every school [without exception] acknowledged the need to better educate this generation in what is acceptable in good personal relationships in order to minimize the violence and heartache so many suffer today because they did not know it was not o.k. to stay in an undesirable situation."

non-formal education

Here we can see all of the work being done to improve the lives and girls through access to non-formal education and learning opportunities. Non-formal education is organised educational activity outside the established formal system that is intended to serve an identifiable learning clientele with identifiable learning objectives.

"He loves me, he loves me not", worldwide

The "Loves me, loves me not" bookmarks provide information on **rights within relationships**. They are used as a way of addressing personal relationship issues with young people **before** they become victims of domestic violence. The bookmarks started in the US and have spread across clubs all over the world, to the UK, Australia, Canada, Zimbabwe, Pakistan, and India. Dozens of clubs have produced bookmarks, **tailored to their local culture and needs**.

Each bookmark includes a **local or free phone**

help line number and a website address. This is an extremely simple and effective means of giving information.

The bookmarks are distributed in schools, doctors' offices, youth clubs, police stations, universities, libraries, and other youth-based organisations. Each location is visited and this personalizes the distribution of the bookmarks – in order to be sure they are appropriately used within each location's culture and programme.

Tens of thousands of bookmarks have been produced and distributed around the world.

The image shows two bookmarks side-by-side. The left bookmark, titled "Loves Me...", lists "Signs of a loving relationship" with 14 positive bullet points such as "Makes me feel safe" and "Listens to me". It includes the Soroptimist International Yeovil and District logo and two smiling emoji faces. The right bookmark, titled "Loves Me Not...", lists 14 negative signs of abuse such as "Tries to control me" and "Gets violent, loses temper quickly". It includes a warning: "If you recognise any of these signs you may be a victim of abuse. You DO NOT have to suffer alone." and features two angry emoji faces. At the bottom, it provides the "NATIONAL DOMESTIC ABUSE FREEPHONE HELPLINE: 0808 2000 247".

SoroptimTips:

- These bookmarks are an amazing example of collective Soroptimist power – a successful pilot project run by one club in one location has now spread around the world.
- Taking the same tried and true message, but delivering it in a locally appropriate manner has a profound impact and will reach the maximum number of girls and young women in need.
- Making a personal connection with the locations which distribute the bookmarks (i.e. schools, police stations, etc.) opens the door to future work – many clubs report that they have carried out additional activities in partnership with these local groups.

Adopt a Teen Mentoring Programme, USA

For the past two years, Soroptimists have been conducting an on-going after-school mentoring program for girls residing in a subsidised housing development. Many of the approximately 37 teens and pre-teen girls living in the development face not only the usual adolescent challenges, but also

lack a sense of direction and self-worth

because of family instability. Many of the girls will be the first in their family to graduate from secondary school. The girls also face peer pressure and a lack of positive activities to occupy their time.

Soroptimists take girls on cultural and educational outings and facilitate educational workshops focusing on higher education and career choices.

22 girls participate regularly in the programme and **40 mothers** joined the activities as aides and chaperones. The program gave girls an alternative option to the negative conduct which had filled their time. Attitudes and behaviours saw immediate improvement and they are concentrating on **positive life choices**, such as continuing education and even possible careers. One of the biggest challenges for these girls is a lack of transportation and access to constructive and encouraging activities. The Soroptimists saw this need and now arrange for buses to take the girls out for recreational fun. Ensuring that these adolescent girls have the chance to see a better future for themselves is critical at this stage in their lives.

Before rolling out the programme, the Soroptimists organised an introductory meeting and personally invited each girl living in the housing development to attend. All of the girls were given a chance to provide **input into the kinds of activities** and

educational opportunities they wanted. The activities were then planned to show the girls different ways to reach their life goals and to put their free time to good use. The project gives these girls different recreational outlets and reduces the chances that they will engage in unhealthy, illegal, or destructive behaviour, simply for lack of any other options.

Some of the projects undertaken include:

1. Project Design – As some of the girls expressed an interest in **fashion design**, Soroptimists taught the girls basic sewing skills, including how to operate a sewing machine, sketching a design, using a pattern, and putting together a garment. The girls can now design and make their own clothes at a fraction of store cost, giving them a chance to be creative and practical with an end result they can see. To celebrate the work (a core component of this programme), they are planning a fashion show to show off their creations! Members of the group interested in photography will be asked to take photos, and a trip to a Fashion Institute is planned.
2. Project Photography – Soroptimists are purchasing one time use cameras for the girls to undertake a **picture story assignment** to express their feelings. The Soroptimists arranged for a Photo Contest in which all residents of the development were invited to vote and the photos were on display in the local library for a month.
3. Project Chef – Soroptimists are teaching basic **cooking classes**, not only so the girls can prepare simple meals for themselves and their families, but also so that they learn about good nutrition and healthy eating. There are even plans for a Cook-Off Competition in the future!

Soroptimists:

- This project has done an amazing job in listening to the voices of participants – the girls were asked what they wanted to learn and the projects were designed to meet those needs. As SI says, development simply is not possible without including those affected *by* the decisions *in* the decisions.
- By involving the wider community, Soroptimists were also able to connect with many single mums who are joining the programme as chaperones and activity aids – not only benefitting the primary target audience of adolescent girls, but a secondary target audience of single mums.
- Sometimes the simplest things make the biggest difference. Providing transportation for these girls to access activities away from their housing development has had an incredible impact on their lives – now and in the future.

SURFLIGHT
THEATRE



SHOWTIME





COOKING CLASS



MORE.....GOOD NEWS!
WINNERS OF 'GIRLS FORUM'
PHOTO CONTEST

First, I would like to thank all of the residents who came out and voted in the girl's photography contest! It really, really means a lot to our young people to know that parents, seniors and adults come out and appreciate their work! We had over 60 residents who came in to vote! Thank you! For those of you who were unable to get over to look at the photos, you really missed some incredible work! We even had residents commenting that they would love to have some of the works to hang in their apartments! All of the girls did a terrific job! Here are the results of the voting:

TIFFANY NIEVES

LOGAN CLARKE

ANNALICIA ROJAS

DECOISIA BROMELL

ZANA GAINES

BEST OUTDOOR PHOTO

BEST USE OF COLOR IN A PHOTO

MOST ORIGINAL & CAPTIVATING PHOTO

BEST USE OF LIGHT IN A PHOTO

BEST PHOTO IN SHOW

The prizes will be presented at the July 'Girls Forum' meeting at 3:00 on Wednesday, July 22.





Accessible First Aid Training Pack, India

Soroptimists in the UK worked with the Sister Lucy at Maher Home for Destitute Women and Children in India to create a first aid "accessible training pack" to be used by women with little or no literacy skills. This training pack **empowered the women to become First Aid Trainers** themselves in the surrounding villages.

The primary goal is for the women to cascade the training to other women in villages. Many of the women have little or no literacy skills and it was necessary to find a way for them to have a visual copy of First Aid information to maintain their skill/knowledge base. This kind of hands on training also gives the women ownership over the project and a strong desire to continue the training in other locations.

The training pack covered a variety of locally relevant first aid topics. Each topic included step by step pictures

with simple instructions written in Maharati. The final product is a printed booklet.

Over 80 women and girls have already used the training pack and are now training other women and girls.

SoroptiTips:

- A key part of this project is sustainability. Not only do the initial group of women then train other women who train other women and so on, but the project was also designed to be 'taken over' by the partner organisation and the women trainees.
- Focussing on First Aid is an innovative and strategic way to utilise access to education to improve the lives of women and girls. The women and girls acquire new skills, gain confidence, and are able to contribute in a tangible way to the health of their villages and communities.
- This kind of project, with a bit of time and effort, is an inexpensive way to have a significant impact. Designing and printing a small number of booklets intended for extended use is the only real cost for this kind of project.

Paint and Renew, Brazil

Soroptimists in Brazil, in partnership with two local organisations, developed a project which empowers women to enter into the workforce in the field of house painting and construction/reconstruction, or to fix their own homes.

Offering this **home repair and construction** course empowers women to believe in their ability to undertake a traditionally 'male-dominated' field of work, opening up a whole world of new opportunities. Additionally, the majority of women who registered for the course were victims of the 2008 floods and landslides.

The course duration is six months, and the classes are held every Saturday afternoon in local school facilities. The students learn from a variety of painters, technicians, architects, experts in professional development, and even social workers. **20 women** attended the course.

Course attendance was a staggering 100%, and, as one woman said "I can't wait till the week passes by so I can go to the course on Saturday."

SoroptiTips:

- Breaking down gender barriers is all about projects like these, which help women to enter into traditionally 'male-dominated' fields such as construction and house painting. The confidence which these women gain is immeasurable.
- This course is not only geared towards helping women into a field of work, but has the added advantage of giving them practical skills which can be used in their own home and to benefit their own families. Having the skills and knowledge to be able to fix their own homes is an incredible resource.
- Targeting particularly vulnerable women, such as those affected by natural disasters, provides opportunities to those most in need.

leadership skills

Providing leadership skills for women and girls involves any type of training, workshop, course, or activity which is aimed at ensuring they have the skills and confidence necessary to take on positions of leadership and are able to have an informed say in decision making processes. This could be through formal, non-formal, or informal systems.

2010 Leadership Day for Girls Ages 15-16, Australia

This Leadership Day for adolescent girls provided an opportunity for girls to identify and develop leadership skills, to meet and work with **role models**, to establish networks with students from other schools, and to develop an increased awareness of the importance of education. **40 girls**, along with a

faculty member from each of four schools, attended the Leadership Day.

The **entire community** was involved in this Leadership Day – including local government, businesses, schools, and even MPs. Feedback from the girls, their teachers, and the guest speakers was also extremely positive and there are plans in place to run the Leadership Day on an annual basis.



Training for Women: Growing up between career and passion, Italy

The theme for the SI Italian Union for 2009-2011 is "Education, Training and

Information for Women". Under this banner, Soroptimists used research undertaken in the recent years by the "Centre on Diversity Management" at Bocconi University in Milan, which focussed on the skills that could help women to **build a career path** in a

more constructive manner and with lower costs and personal sacrifices.

This training project is aimed at young graduates under the age of 28 years. It seeks to provide an opportunity for them to reflect on the difficulties women face in the labour market, focusing on the limits the majority of women encounter in their professional life. The seminar also provides concrete tools to address the labour market with a proactive and reactive attitude.

92 young women, selected by local Soroptimists, participated in the training.

Soroptimists:

- Adolescent girls face huge challenges with self-esteem, confidence, and access to leadership positions. Creating an entire day just for adolescent girls, focussing particularly on leadership, achieves many goals and can have a profound impact on the attendees.

- Inviting girls from different schools creates a more stimulating and collegial atmosphere - bringing in fresh and different perspectives, perhaps girls from different backgrounds, and giving the attendees the opportunity to meet new friends.

- Community involvement is critical. Seeking support from local government, businesses, and community members will add to the success of such an event, particularly in planning for the future.

Soroptimists:

- Increasing access to leadership skills is important for all women - even those who may already have promising career prospects. The more women are trained in effective leadership, the more they can achieve.

- Using locally relevant, evidence based, peer reviewed research is a cornerstone of strong programme and project design. The Italian Soroptimists have grounded this project in this kind of academic research, making the project stronger, more successful, and more responsible.

- As mentioned earlier in this report, transitions are often the most difficult time for women. Focussing on the transition between tertiary education and career is a critical time to ensure that women are able to navigate through to achieve their fullest potential.



Women's Entrepreneurship Training, Kenya

In partnership with local schools and businesses, Soroptimists in Kenya organised entrepreneurship training for a group of widows from a local slum area. The women were trained over 12 weeks (one day a week) in aspects such as keeping financial records, legal considerations for business, and business financing.

The Soroptimists had previously rehabilitated 40 women's houses and businesses after they had been destroyed in the 2007 post-election violence. The women were maintaining a revolving fund (financing tool that recycles funds by providing loans, receiving loan repayments, and then providing further loans) which had been set up by the Soroptimists. Through this relationship, it

became apparent that the women would greatly benefit from entrepreneurship skills in order to be able to expand their businesses further.

The Soroptimists partnered with a recognised microfinance training provider to train the women while using real scenarios that relate to the women's businesses. At the end of the course, each of the women was awarded a certificate of competence.

Better financial records are now being kept by the women entrepreneurs. They have also been able to make their weekly loan repayments more promptly due to better cash flow management. Three of the women are even contributing to their daughters' education by providing personal items for them while the Soroptimists provide their tuition.



Various photos of work in Kenya

SoroptimTips:

- This is an exemplary project as it is designed to use education and leadership for many different outcomes. First, the women participating gain valuable skills and confidence. Second, they are able to contribute more to their community through their business success. Third, they are able to support their own daughters' access to education, which we know will have a generational impact.
- This project evolved from a long-standing relationship, born out of crisis. It is true that safe housing is absolutely crucial before other goals can be set. Here, the Soroptimists responded to a crisis and re-built homes. But they didn't stop there - they maintained a revolving fund, nurtured and developed their relationship with the women, and responded to a clear need.
- Microfinance is a very "hot" topic these days. But microfinance only really works if the women recipients are provided with the necessary skills and learning to best handle funds. Training which focuses on financial literacy is absolutely essential for any microfinance initiative.

Reaching the most vulnerable

One of the objectives of our work in education and leadership is to target the most vulnerable. Below we show a variety of ways in which Soroptimists are doing just that.⁴

1. "School in a Box": Soroptimists worked in partnership with UNICEF to provide emergency "School in a Box" kits to **earthquake devastated areas**. The kit contains supplies and materials for a teacher and 40 students. The purpose of the kit is to ensure the continuation of children's education within the first 72 hours of an emergency. The contents of the kit are culturally neutral, can be used anywhere in the world, and are often supplemented by locally purchased products, such as books in local languages, toys, games and musical instruments. Exercise books are printed without margins, so that children who write from left to right or from right to left can use them.

2. Bringing traditional education to **street children**: One SI club provides 'rolling cart classes' for street children in the places where they live: cemeteries, church plazas, slums, and swamp lands. The club donated books as the children did not

have enough (one book shared by six children). This is the only education the children receive. There are 70-100 children per class and 10 such classes were being conducted simultaneously in different parts of the city every Saturday. The club decided to donate 150 new books in Science, Mathematics, and Grammar/Language, with plans to donate encyclopaedias and dictionaries in the future.

3. Skills training for young mums: Another SI Club provided materials and expertise to teach doll-making to a small group of **young, single mothers** attending playgroup with their pre-school children as part of early intervention strategy of an Aboriginal education program. A club member attended the weekly session of the playgroup and taught mothers to make a doll (chosen from a variety) for their children. Doll-making promotes talk about value of play in children's development. The process involves basic sewing skills and these were taught as and when needed. The young women learned basic sewing skills and produced a worthwhile toy for each of their children whilst interacting with other young women in similar situations. Workshops provide time to talk about issues with peers and older women. The women gained a sense of

achievement in seeing their dolls taking shape while the children were provided with a special doll made by their own mother.

4. Job training for **victim/survivors of domestic violence**: Members of an SI Club meet weekly at their local library with girls and women from Caafa (Community Alliance Against Family Abuse) teaching them job seeking skills. Many of the women have never held jobs or the proper training needed to obtain employment. In today's market it is even more crucial that they have these necessary skills. The club made arrangements with Caafa to provide the services to the women living in their safe house.

5. Reaching out to **women in prison**: For over 30 years, SI Club members have been conducting a sewing project for the women remand prisoners of Colombo's main prison. Members visit twice a month teaching the women skills they can utilise to earn a living when released. At the time the project commenced women prisoners were a forgotten group and were visited mainly by members of religious organisations. These marginalised women look forward to club visits as it gives them an opportunity to share their concerns.

⁴ These projects are used as examples and are not bound by the timeframe of the work on which we report in our impact assessment.

how much?



Below we audit a variety of Soroptimist projects which provide scholarships or sponsorships for women and girls. You can see that a little goes a long way!⁵

1. \$11 per participant: the club sponsored 27 women and girls to attend locally run literacy courses. The women and girls who completed their reading and writing courses were very happy and they said learning how to read and write changed their lives for the good.

2. \$40 per girl: a club sponsors eight girls in Africa, covering their school fees and uniforms. The funds are raised internally. The club receives photos and stories from the girls they sponsor.

3. Less than \$100 per girl (approximate) for a club to sponsor a self-esteem day for 45 local 10 and 11 year old girls.

⁵

These projects are used as examples and are not bound by the timeframe of the work on which we report in our impact assessment.

They wanted to give these girls valuable tools and resources to help them deal with the issues of peer-pressure, bullying, self-esteem, nutrition, skin care and exercise. They also assembled goodie bags with literature, deodorant, toothbrushes, lip balm, and more. Each girl received a necklace with a charm that said "Girls Rock". The day included a light breakfast and a healthy lunch. The girls also received a booklet with names and phone numbers of local and state wide organisations where they can get help or assistance of any kind.

4. \$250 per girl per year: a club identified two indigent learners who showed potential to do well in mathematics and science, and decided to sponsor them for the final three years of their high school education, covering school fees uniforms, transport and extracurricular activities. The bursaries are performance based and their

results are monitored annually. The club hopes that when the girls have completed their final school year, they will continue their studies at university, and they will try to obtain bursaries for them.

5. \$780 per teacher: a club sponsored a local woman in Zambia to train and qualify as a teacher. She would be the first qualified female teacher at the school. Members also provide books and equipment for the school. Local girls needed a role model to encourage them to attend school. Women also needed the confidence to attend. There are now 4 female teachers at the school.

6. \$2000 per midwife: a club provided a scholarship for a rural midwife from a local hospital. This project is designed to assist a rural midwife to upgrade her knowledge and skills and indirectly to assist rural women who need access to maternity services.