

We are now pleased to officially unveil the first ever Soroptimist International Global Impact Report – Educate to Lead!

This report shows us just what Soroptimists all over the world, including YOU, have collectively accomplished to transform the lives of women and girls through access to education and leadership skills.

This report is just the beginning of our new long term focus, chosen by you. In the report, you can find all sorts of resources, inspiration, and areas where more work is needed. For the next 30 minutes or so, I am going to give you a sneak preview of the report, highlighting some of the most important findings.

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This report aims to answer a few basic questions as we continue our journey of educating to lead.

First, what are we already doing? We know from our data collection that education has traditionally been a very popular programme focus objective. In this report, we delve into much more detail to show where we are.

Second, what should we be doing that perhaps we aren't? To do this, we analysed the global situation facing women and girls and the current work already being done by Soroptimists around the world to develop a set of priority challenges and solutions. We hope that these will guide your work in the future. We also undertook a regional analysis to develop a specific focus for each of six regions: Africa, Asia Pacific, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East, and North America.

Third, what makes a really good Soroptimist project under this theme? Here, we have selected a series of 'projects of excellence' and a set of what we call 'SoroptiTips', pointers for what makes these excellent and what everyone can learn from these model projects.

Fourth and finally, this is a celebration of what Soroptimists around the world can and do collectively achieve! We hope that you take this report and show it to the world!

So, to the first question - where are we now?

The essence of the Soroptimist model is simple: educate women and girls today to create the female leaders of tomorrow. SI knows how important it is for women and girls to be afforded the opportunity to lead and participate in decision making at local, national, and international levels. We also know that,

in order to get to that place, we need to educate, empower, and enable – We **educate** women and girls by increasing their access to the skills necessary to take on whatever challenge they desire – from basic literacy and numeracy skills to vocational training to health or sanitation to climate change to preparation for running in elections and everything in between. Improving physical environments, such as gender appropriate sanitation facilities or building dormitories, also increases access to skills and thus also falls within this framework. In doing so, SI **empowers** women with confidence and choice, giving them the tools necessary to achieve their fullest potential. These two ‘E’s are primarily under our ACTION strategy. Thirdly, we go beyond the individual woman or girl and work within the wider community to **enable opportunities** for women and girls to use their skills and confidence as leaders and role models. We achieve this under our ADVOCACY and AWARENESS RAISING strategies. SI educates individual women and girls with skills, empowers them with confidence, and enables opportunities in the wider community. Put it all together and we have a positive collective global impact which transforms the lives and status of women and girls worldwide, opening doors for women and girls to become leaders in many different ways.

Soroptimist International is also deeply grounded in connecting the local actions undertaken by clubs and members to our global advocacy and

awareness raising work. There is a constant feedback loop between the two – first and foremost, our advocacy and awareness raising work is driven by the voices of the women and girls whom we serve at local level. Being an advocate is a responsibility, and for SI to truly be a global voice for women and girls, we must listen to the needs and solutions which come from those whom we serve. On the other side of the feedback loop, actions taken at local and national levels are informed by our advocacy and awareness raising work – we learn from our international partners and from global policy settings forums and act as a conduit to disseminate that information to members around the world to inform their work. This could be new and emerging trends, successful best practices, issues and challenges that we may not have known about before, and, most importantly – solutions. This constant exchange of information makes our work in action, advocacy, and awareness-raising responsible and responsive.

SLIDE

From a combination of information provided in the Programme Focus Reports and the SIA collected information on women's opportunity awards and violet richardson awards, we can report that in 2010 Soroptimists

- increased access to education and leadership skills for 90,089 women and girls

- reported 2,626 projects in education and leadership

- raised \$3,044,224 dollars towards these goals

- that's an almost 1:1 member to beneficiary ratio

- projects reach on average 34 women or girls

We also developed a 'scorecard' which looks at a selection of variables and gives each SI country a composite score. Our top performing countries are Turkey, Mauritius, India, Kenya, the Solomon Islands, the US, the UK, and Italy.

SLIDE

In our international advocacy work, SI has SI submitted a written statement on education and leadership to the 55th session of the Commission on the Status of Women ('CSW'). Government officials from all UN member states, involved in decision- making and policy setting, read this statement. SI's statement also

influenced the outcome document from this conference which goes on to form the basis of international policies and guidance for governments.

SI, in partnership with the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts ('WAGGGS') and the World Young Women's Christian Association ('YWCA'), was selected to deliver an oral statement to the plenary at this year's CSW on the relationship between violence against girls and young women and barriers in access to education – 192 heads of state heard our voice, representing all of the women and girls with whom we work at local level.

At CSW 55, SI spearheaded two workshops on access to education. One, in partnership with WAGGGS, explored the importance of education across a woman's life course, including an intergenerational dialogue between Soroptimists and Girl Guides. The second, in partnership with UN Women, WAGGGS, and the YWCA, illustrated the importance of creating safe spaces for young women and girls to increase access to education. It is estimated that approximately 200+ attendees learned about our mission and our work.

We are also pleased to report that just last week at the Annual Economic and Social Council Meeting, SI was delighted to be invited to deliver an oral statement in the general debate. The theme for this year's meeting was

"Implementing the Internationally Agreed Goals and Commitments in regard to

Education". Our oral statement, delivered by SI UN Rep Sina Stiffler, focussed on:

The importance of quality and breadth of education

Safe surroundings of schools

Gender and culturally sensitive sanitation facilities

The importance of completing secondary education

In the oral statement the fruitful cooperation between SI women's groups in the Global North and the Global South was highlighted. The bottom up approach of SI projects is SI's trademark and gives us particular insights which we can share with governments, civil society partners and international advocacy platforms.

In preparation for this same forum, SI submitted a written statement. For two years running now our written statements have been selected for distribution to government officials. I would like to read that statement to you now.

A school in India has 700 students and no running water. Without access to proper toilets and sanitation, many of the girls are forced to drop out.

In New Zealand, adolescent girls attend schools every day where bullying destroys their self esteem, confidence, and ability to learn. In some cases, girls turn to self harm, including cutting and substance misuse.

In Cameroon, high dropout rates leave generations of women without opportunity – with no basic literacy, maths, or vocational skills, they are at high risk of extreme poverty. Sex work, unwanted pregnancies, homelessness, and isolation are daily realities.

Pinning the world's hopes for the future of women and girls on increasing enrolment rates obscures the thousands upon thousands of stories like these. An equal opportunity to learn in a safe space, free from violence, exploitation, and discrimination is no less a human right than the right to have one's name on an enrolment roster. Despite increases in enrolment rates in recent years and progress towards MDG 3, we live in a world where millions of women lack basic skills in reading, writing, and numeracy, in both the Global North and the Global South. Quality and breadth of education must be as much a priority as enrolment. Violence against women and girls, gender stereotypes, patriarchal systems, and the undervaluing of females create environments where girls cannot perform to their potential or may not be able to participate at all. These barriers remain a constant challenge throughout women's lifetimes. Most

educational aid targets children and adolescents, leaving already vulnerable women without access to learning opportunities.

How can we ensure that girls can both enrol in school and achieve their full potential? How can we transform schools rife with violence, physical and non physical, into safe spaces for learning? How can we improve the lives and status of the millions of adult women who were not afforded educational opportunities and are now past the traditional age for schooling?

We build toilets. We encourage partnerships. We create safe spaces for learning for women and girls of all ages. We talk to young girls and value, respect, and support their views. We reach out to marginalised women that society has overlooked. We begin a genuine dialogue and, together, address needs. And we see results.

Soroptimist International, a global voice for women and girls representing nearly 90,000 individuals from 124 countries/territories, ensures that women and girls are afforded opportunities to access education in safe, healthy, and equitable environments throughout their lifetime. We operate under a skills and confidence framework to improve educational outcomes whilst creating empowering opportunities. Across the globe, Soroptimists are running hundreds of successful local, national, and international projects supporting women and girls to achieve their fullest potential, providing the tools to

transform lives. Our experiences illustrate both what works and what we still need to do.

The situations in India, New Zealand, and Cameroon are not hopeless; on the contrary, they are easily remediable. Soroptimists in the UK and India teamed up to build six new toilets with proper sanitation facilities in a girls' school in Calcutta. The toilets have come as a great gain to the girls who are eager to complete their schooling now that there has been a vast improvement in the health and sanitary conditions in the school environment. Absenteeism is almost non-existent.

Across New Zealand, Soroptimists are running workshops to educate girls on behavioural issues, text and cyber bullying, dating violence and girl fighting. 225 girls, 45 parents and all teaching staff at a local school were involved in the pilot workshop which is now being replicated in other schools.

Soroptimists in Cameroon started an Adult Literacy Programme to cater for older women who were deprived of education, female dropouts, and street girls. Of the first intake of students, nine candidates were presented with the First School Leaving Certificate Examination (FSLC) run by the Government of Cameroon, and all nine candidates passed scoring 100%. 19 pupils will be entered for the same exam in the programme's second year.

These solutions are not prohibitively expensive or time-consuming. They do not rely on complex policies or research studies. They do not need large powerful organisations with influence and authority to drive change. What they do need are local women and girls, working together, to identify ways to make schools safe, to reach out to marginalised women, and to understand the unique needs of different groups of women and girls. These solutions are simple yet effective, as long as the women and girls affected by the work are involved in the work. This focus on safe spaces for education, marginalised groups, and the importance of both formal and nonformal education across the life cycle improves the social and economic status of women and girls, above and beyond what we can achieve by increasing enrolment rates.

As we all know, '[i]nvestment in girls' education reduces female fertility rates, lowers infant and child mortality rates, increases women's labour force participation rates and earnings and fosters educational investment in children. All of these outcomes not only improve the quality of life, they also foster faster economic growth.' There is no better way to uphold international commitments to women and girls than by empowering them with skills, confidence, choice, and opportunity. Education must be accessible, acceptable, available, and of good quality to women and girls, regardless of economic,

social, political, or geographic contexts. Quality education for women and girls is achievable, sustainable, and beneficial to all.

With this in mind, Soroptimist International then makes a series of recommendations to the Economic and Social Council to meet the internationally agreed goals and commitments with regard to education.

SLIDE

So now that we know what we are already doing, we can turn to our second question – what should we be doing?

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.
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. 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.

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 nonformal education. For example, youth centres generally do not offer girl-only activities, 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. 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. Statistics show a similar situation for women and girls collecting traditional bio fuels.

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. Political neglect particularly affects adult literacy programmes.

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.

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 E<sup>3</sup> 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 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.

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.

## SLIDE

Here we show the SI-identified regional focuses.

For Africa – keeping girls in school, particularly secondary school. What does this mean? Identify the local reasons why girls drop out of school or experience persistent absenteeism and design a project to address those barriers.

For Asia Pacific – adult female literacy. Find the women – often marginalised – who have not been afforded the opportunity to learn to read. Teach them to read.

For Europe – getting more women into decision-making positions. One of the more interesting findings of this work is that one of the problems in attaining gender parity in elections is not that men are getting more votes, but that not enough women are running for office. Training women to take on leadership roles and supporting their candidacy has been shown to address this imbalance, as well as general advocating for family-friendly work policies to make it easier for women to take on these jobs.

SLIDE

For Latin America – intra-country disparities – research in this region shows huge gender gaps within countries between the rich and the poor, the majority and the minority. Work in this region should focus on addressing these disparities by reaching out to the most vulnerable in society and providing them a hand up, not a hand out.

For the Middle East – sadly, in this region, we still need to focus on getting girls into primary school. While this may not necessarily apply to all SI countries in this region, when taken as a whole, this is an area that needs attention.

Finally, for North America – working to increase the number of women leaders in their profession. In the report, we include a study done which explores why there are so few female leaders in academia and so few female professors at tertiary level. Soroptimists should take this study and develop projects to address the identified barriers.

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And now onto the really exciting bit.....the third research question and our projects of excellence! I will not list them now, as I could not possibly do them justice without reading the entire chapter. I will leave it to you to download the report and read for yourselves, but I will review a collated and edited list of the 'SoroptiTips' from these projects:

- Conduct a needs assessment
- Involve the community
- Work in partnership
- Listen to the voices of the participants
- Take the time to design a well thought out project – it's better to wait until you are ready to begin than to rush into something that has not been properly planned
- Education is as much about the learning environment as it is about books and lessons
- Target those most in need
- Learn from best practice
- Make sure your project is locally relevant

- Report, report, report! Actively govern, and demand transparency.
- Think long-term

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Now that we've covered the basics of our findings, we can turn to the fourth and final point – the celebration!

I will now give you a sneak peak of the full contents of the report.

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Chapter 1 introduces the Soroptimist Model, who we are and what we do.

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The report contains a series of 'Soroptimist Spotlights' – one between each chapter. Each presents 2 projects in a given area. Our first spotlight is on our international projects.

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Project Sierra in Sierra Leone and Hopes and Dreams for Everyone in Moldova.

Where possible, we include case studies, quotes, and, of course, photos!

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Chapter 2 provides an in depth analysis of where we are and the global impact of Soroptimist work in education and leadership

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We present a summary of our work in Action, Advocacy, and Awareness Raising, and include definitions of education and leadership and two of our official UN written statements.

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Our second spotlight section presents work increasing access to non-formal education.

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We showcase SI Weston Super Mare's project Skirting Science, which has also just won a best practice award, and an SI Bangsar project in Malaysia which provides support and non-formal education to vulnerable women in Kuala Lumpur.

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Chapter 3 can be read like a white paper – we present a synthesis of global research on the current situation of women and girls. Packed with statistics, challenges, and solutions, this chapter presents the context for Soroptimist work to improve the lives of women and girls.

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We highlight why education is important, how education leads to leadership, why women's leadership is important, where we are today in education and leadership, the challenges we face, recommendations for on the ground work, and a useful list of references and resources for further research.

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And then it's time for another Spotlight section, where we look at how Soroptimists are mentoring women for leadership roles.

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First we explore work being done by Soroptimists in Mauritius through their Women in Networking and Women in Politics initiatives. We then look at a mentoring project started in the German Union which has now spread across Europe.

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Chapter 4 presents the projects of excellence to which I alluded earlier. But it's up to you to download and read about them! Hopefully the pages you are about to see will whet your appetite!

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We present 3-4 projects in each of three categories. Formal education

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Non-formal education

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And leadership.

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Our fourth spotlight section presents an interesting aspect of SI work – reaching out to refugee women. Across cultures and Federations, this is an excellent area of work in which many clubs and regions are working!

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In this section we can only present two such projects – SI Townsville's work and the Dutch Union.

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Chapter 5 presents a more in depth analysis of each of the six regions.

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This is an example of a regional page – showing the SI countries and SI's work.

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The final Spotlight section presents work being done to help women and girls live their dreams

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Here we report on SIA's flagship projects, the women's opportunity awards and the violet richardson awards.

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Finally, the country pages. Each country gets one!

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These are intended to be a one stop shop statistical resource for Soroptimists to learn about their country. The top half is a compilation of several international statistics, such as population, fertility, early marriage, life expectancy, literacy rates, and gender parity statistics as they relate to education and leadership. In the beginning of the chapter, there is a quick

guide to statistics. A technical explanation of statistics is included as an appendix.

The bottom half of the page presents what has been reported to SI under the banner of education and leadership – and this is where we can see some results in the future! We hope that this snapshot of each country can help Soroptimists to meet local need and to improve and progress their work.

So please do visit the resources page on our website which will contain a whole global impact section, with the full report, mini reports, excerpts, and more!