

## Where We Stand Water and Sanitation

### Where Things Stand....

Equitable access to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation is recognized as an integral component of the realization of all human rights. Similarly, adequate sanitation, hygiene and safe water are fundamental to good health and social and economic development. Unfortunately, progress to ensure the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all is unequally implemented across the world.

The advantages of using clean water and sanitation are clear: improved health, privacy, convenience, and safety. For women and girls, the availability of household sanitation reduces the risk of rape or attack experienced when traveling to public latrines or the bush to defecate. Additionally, for girls the provision of school sanitation facilities means that they are less likely to miss school as a result of staying home during menstruation.

The link between women, water and sustainable development in policies and implementation is strong (SDG 5, 6 and the Human Right to Water) and should be recognised;

### ..... And Where Things Need to Go.

#### Fundamental Action

Soroptimist International recognizes that a lack of safe water and sanitation affects the well-being of individuals and poses a risk to sustainable development. Soroptimist International believes that an immediate integrated effort to provide universal water and sanitation that includes strategies to protect the interests of women and girls is necessary to ensure sustainable development.

By submitting country-specific reports, Soroptimist International can critically engage with the reporting and monitoring processes of [CEDAW](#), [UPR](#), [UNFCCC](#), the [Sendai Framework](#), the [Convention Against Torture](#) and the [2030 Sustainable Development Agenda](#), demonstrating the link between SDG 5 & 6 and thus ensure the voices of women and girls are heard, all while inducing governments to act.

#### Additional Action

Governments, non-governmental organisations, civil society, the private sector, other institutions and individuals who interact with women and girls must ensure that women share the decision-making on an equal footing with men and should ensure universal access to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation for all.

**Raise Awareness of Water and Sanitation.** No woman or girl is immune to the adverse effects of unsafe water and poor hygiene, including disease, interrupted education, and limited employment opportunities. Training programmes and capacity-building that target women and support their role in implementing water and sanitation policy should give women and girls an awareness of the benefits of good water, sanitation and hygiene, and of how to adapt one's life to include sanitation and hygiene, which in turn gives women and girls power to recognise and choose options that improve their situation.

**Conduct Research and Monitoring, Collect and Use Disaggregated Data.** Systems to collect accurate and reliable qualitative and quantitative data that are disaggregated by place, gender, age, ethnicity, language, marital status, and other descriptors that are relevant to monitoring inequalities experienced by women and girls must be developed and uniformly implemented to assist development of water and sanitation related policies, laws, and plans, and when designing, monitoring, and evaluating projects that provide aid and services to women and girls.

Promote the allocation of funds for software, i.e. capacity building, (vocational) training operation and maintenance, monitoring and evaluation at all levels for women and their organisations

**Provide Education and Access to Decent Work.** The lack of water and sanitation disproportionately worsens the earnings and employment opportunities for women. Educational facilities and workplaces should provide women and girls with adequate safe water and the opportunity for sanitation and hygiene.

### Where Soroptimist International Stands

These are the principles that Soroptimist International strongly supports and will advocate for on behalf of women and girls:

- States, the private sector and NGOs should take care to protect the rights of women and girls, and empower them to be leaders, experts and agents of change.
- States, the private sector and NGOs should provide for effective remedies to water and sanitation related violations of human rights.
- States, the private sector and NGOs should assess and provide information about the effects of inadequate water and sanitation and about the benefits of safe water, sanitation and good hygiene, so as to allow water and sanitation related decisions to be made with the participation of an informed public.
- Each State should adopt a legal and institutional framework that assists those within its jurisdiction to manage water resource allocations and to restore, protect, and maintain high quality water and land resources.
- States must protect the rights of freedom of expression and association in relation to all water and sanitation, even when the rights are being exercised in opposition to projects supported by government entities.
- Women & Water need a mechanism for capacity development, awareness raising and communication: therefore we support the next decade for Water and Sustainable Development.
- Women & Water i.e SDG 5 & 6 require a recognized place in any intergovernmental process connected to HLPF and ECOSOC;

*The water and sanitation challenge is everybody's business. We need everyone to play their part. National governments need to lead by making commitments. Local governments can work with communities to help them to help themselves. The private sector can invest in the health of their employees and the environment. And civil society organizations can monitor progress and advocate for solutions. ~Jan Eliasson, Deputy Secretary of the United Nations, 2013*

Soroptimist International supports implementation of the [2030 Agenda](#) through its Federations, Unions, Regions, and Clubs, by working on the ground with partner organizations and UN agencies to Educate, Empower, and Enable women and girls everywhere.