

EDUCATE, EMPOWER, ENABLE.

Achieving SDG4 for
women and girls.



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SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL

Introduction

About This Report

This report showcases selected projects conducted by SI members within their communities across countries at different stages of sustainable development. Whilst focusing on projects in countries that are submitting their Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) this year, this report also features SI's two most recent International Appeals as models of civil society sustainable development programmes that address the humanitarian-development nexus and demonstrate how international networks can be mobilised to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Through this information, this report aims to

support the sharing of information about sustainable development efforts in VNR countries and raise awareness of SI best practice.

The projects in this report address the educational needs of some of the most marginalised women and girls in societies, including those in prisons, from rural communities, who are homeless, and those living in communities who have experienced recent humanitarian disasters. Each project features a different form of intervention, demonstrating the wide range of successful, and relatively low cost, means of implementation available to achieve SDG4 and its targets.

About Soroptimist International

Soroptimist International (SI) is a global women's organisation that actively contributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals through empowering local communities to create their own transformative change, supporting the 2030 Agenda. By supporting communities to identify their needs and promote their unique innovations that address the sustainable development challenges facing them, SI projects build local capacity, infrastructure and skills. Active in over 3,000 communities across

122 countries worldwide, SI contributes to the achievement of gender equality through its aim to 'Educate, Empower and Enable' women and girls. The information in this report is based upon the tried and tested experience and knowledge of Soroptimist International grassroots projects which respond to the needs of marginalised women and girls. The projects that Soroptimists undertake which contribute to the achievement of the SDGs demonstrate that together civil society and NGOs can achieve transformational breakthroughs to achieve a sustainably developed world.



70 Years of Supporting UN Work

Soroptimist International's history is intertwined with the work of the UN, long supporting humanitarian and social development aims. After World War Two, Soroptimists demonstrated their commitment to those aims by responding to the impacts of war, the needs of refugees, and supporting women who lost husbands, family members and social support networks, and who needed to find new ways to support themselves and their families. Soroptimists across Europe, who had experienced war first-hand, were proactive in supporting the work of the UNHCR both through funds and action. In recognition of SI's commitment and community-based expertise, SI has held forms of consultative status with the UN since the 1950s and has maintained its General Consultative Status granted in 1984.

SI UN Representatives are instrumental in translating and expressing SI's grassroots knowledge into advocacy positions, representing the views and needs of women and girls for high-level conferences, that can seem very far away from communities not experiencing the benefits of development. Accordingly, SI UN Representatives have been present and active during major UN milestones including the agreements of the Beijing Declaration at the 4th World Conference for

Women in 1994, the Millennium Development Goals, the Paris Climate Agreement, and more recently the Migration Compact.

Today, SI Representatives not only respond to UN initiatives, but they input into those processes too. Active in seven different UN centres, New York, Geneva, Vienna, Nairobi, Paris, Rome and Bangkok, SI's Representatives participate in CSW, CSocD, the HLPF and other conferences, as well as human rights processes including UPR and CEDAW. An essential part of SI UN Representative's roles is to transfer the knowledge gained through SI projects to seek to guide international policy decisions, highlighting that all UN activities have to mainstream gender. At the core of this knowledge and experience is an awareness that it is vital not to silo the role of women and girls in sustainable development, nor consider them merely as recipients of development efforts. Instead, women and girls must be considered agents of change, for themselves and their communities.

Through the Major Groups, SI joined other NGOs and civil society organisations in participating in the unprecedented global consultative processes that led to the creation of the 2030 Agenda. Throughout that process

SI joined the call for there to be a standalone goal on gender equality, and for that goal to be crosscutting for all other goals, understanding that no Sustainable Development Goal can be achieved without the inclusion of women and girls – their equal leadership, their equal participation and experiencing equal benefit from the results of development efforts. Achieving global consensus over SDG5 should continue to be celebrated, remembering it is critical in realising the entirety of the 2030 Agenda, including SDG4.

Civil Society Organisations and Achieving the SDGs

Civil society organisations, such as SI, are in a prime position to observe and respond to gaps in efforts to achieve the SDGs. CSOs implement multidimensional projects that recognise the interconnected nature of the SDGs every day.

For many, this ‘innovative approach’ of the 2030 Agenda is not new, and so it is important

to recognise the expertise of NGOs and CSOs as agents for sustainable development. NGOs and civil society are often uniquely placed within societies to support vulnerable groups; they are able to access information and perspectives that it is harder for governments and other services to access. State authorities and services at all levels should therefore respond to information and citizen generated data (both quantitative and qualitative) collected by NGOs and civil society, and use that information to guide policy development and implementation.

This report is one such example of the unique, grassroots perspectives that NGOs and CSOs bring in the spirit of a global partnership for development. Just as the 2030 Agenda was developed through a consultative process, so should its implementation be carried out in consultation with all stakeholders. Only then will no one be left behind. Reports such as this one, are key in highlighting the progress, challenges and gaps that face us in achieving the ambition of the SDGs.

The Role of the High-Level Political Forum

The High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) provides a critical opportunity to review progress to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. In particular, this year, we have an opportunity to renew our fervour for achieving the SDGs, with a global review in September. The HLPF is a space to review current progress towards achieving the 2030 Agenda. Often this means reviewing what we know, what is going well, and what can be improved upon. But the HLPF is also an important time to explore what we do not yet know. Through working with communities, civil society organisations play a critical role in identifying gaps in implementation – it is important to continuously ask, ‘who is not being included in development efforts’ and ‘who is not fully benefiting from development efforts’? All too often, it is women and girls who are not being equally included or fully benefiting. To support the HLPF process, Soroptimist International will provide key information on its efforts at the grass roots level to realise the universal achievement of the SDGs, ensuring that no one gets left behind.

EDUCATE, EMPOWER, ENABLE: Achieving SDG4 & the 2030 Agenda

The importance and value of SDG 4 ‘ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all’, strikes to the heart of SI’s mission – to educate, to empower and to enable women and girls. Many SI grassroots projects use education as a critical cross-cutting mechanism to unlock the potential of women and girls, both as individuals and as members of a community who can promote development. These projects take a broad interpretation of education, understanding the need for life-long education and training to ensure that the benefits of education are experienced by all. These benefits include promoting gender equality, reducing poverty, improving health outcomes, peace promotion and social stability. The projects highlighted in this report, each demonstrate how education interventions can contribute to the empowerment of women and girls, and the achievement of the SDGs.

SI grassroots projects show that providing girls with an education helps break the cycle of poverty: educated women are less likely to marry early and against their will; less likely to die in childbirth; more likely to have healthy babies; and are more likely to send their children to school. Tackling adult illiteracy and promoting employable skills facilitates women’s inclusion in sustainable economies, empowers them in their communities and ensures better outcomes for women and their families. By educating, empowering and enabling women and girls, SI understands women’s and girls’ education as both an intrinsic right and as a critical lever to reaching other development objectives; the benefits of education are clear.

However, poverty and economic disenfranchisement are not only outcomes of a lack of education, they are also significant factors in preventing women and girls accessing education. Policies and actions taken to

improve educational access for women and girls must also address economic barriers to education at all levels. Discrimination, gender stereotypes, the impacts of poverty, child labour, child marriage, inadequate sanitation and violence at schools all create environments that prevent women and girls from achieving their fullest potential.

Gender equality and access to quality education for all are both cross-cutting development issues, and unless addressed in a multidimensional way and used as a mechanism to achieve sustainable development, neither will become a reality.

As well as structural challenges to women’s and girls’ full and equal participation in education,

there can be individualised barriers to education including school fees, safe transportation and uniform costs, early pregnancy, or being kept home to work in a family business.

From the evidence witnessed across SI projects, it is clear that investing in girls' and women's education needs to be seen as equally

important as investing in the education of men and boys. To improve women's and girls' access to quality education, policies and actions must directly tackle situations that contribute to unequal outcomes. This will require more political will at all levels to confront prejudice, social inequality and the marginal regard for girls that can all be identified as a root causes of many of these problems.

Gender Mainstreaming, Gender Budgeting and Financing for Development

Commitments on gender equality are not new, but the agreement of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs in 2015 marked a global agreement that gender is a cross-cutting development issue, and that gender mainstreaming is a means critical policy measure and means of implementation for countries who want to achieve their full development potential. For SDG4 to be achieved, there must be gender equal access to, participation in, and benefits from education. Therefore, women and girls need to be agents, and not only recipients of sustainable development, if ambitions of the 2030 Agenda are to be achieved.

Specific efforts to include women in policy setting and decision-making processes are essential and need to be developed by all countries. States, development organisations, the private sector and other relevant stakeholders to adopt gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting measures, and it is essential that these be adopted by Regional and National Action Plans. These measures will not only expedite the implementation of sustainable development, but are themselves intrinsic to achieving the 2030 Agenda. Only by systemic policy action at every level can the systemic disadvantages that many women and girls face be addressed, ensuring that no one will be left behind.

By using gender mainstreaming, gender-specific interventions can and should be designed in accordance to the needs of societies to overcome historical, cultural and systematic discrimination and enable all women and men to benefit equally from sustainable development efforts. Using gender mainstreaming as a policy approach does not replace the need for targeted, women-specific policies and programmes that rectify inequality and discrimination. Instead gender mainstreaming can support the efficacy of those policies and programmes. Gender mainstreaming is not about adding a 'woman's component' into an existing policy measure, rather, it is a holistic mechanism that recognises that all issues are women's issues and ensures

that women's and girls' experiences and concerns are of equal value to those of men and boys, and that therefore their needs should be included and assessed equally in policies and actions. Consequently, gender mainstreaming is an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes across the three pillars of sustainable development to ensure that all people equally experience the results of sustainable development efforts. When gender mainstreaming is effectively implemented as a policy approach and strategy, it drives transformational change as envisaged by the 2030 Agenda.

For gender mainstreaming efforts to be properly effective, those efforts must include gender budgeting and financing for development. Gender budgeting and financing for development incorporates a gender perspective at all levels of the budgetary process and a restructuring of revenues and expenditures to address the discrimination, and economic and social inequality experienced by women and girls. It therefore supports their access and realisation of human rights, including the right to education. Gender

budgeting and analysis should be part of implementing social protection systems and public services, including education, to ensure that women and girls, and men and boys, equally benefit from those national policy areas consistent with sustainable development aims and strategies.

Not one of the SDGs will be achieved without including women and girls as equal partners; the implementation of programmes to achieve the SDGs is not gender-neutral.

As the SDGs are agreed to be interconnected and indivisible, it is impossible to address one goal without addressing others. As gender equality cuts across all of the SDGs, gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting are essential measures to achieve the 2030 Agenda. Education remains one of many sectors where there must be increased political will to make the changes needed so that no one is left behind.



Indicators and Data: How We Understand SDG4

The information collected through the indicators for SDGs is the basis for our understanding of how things are moving forward to achieve SDG4. So, we have to ask, what do the indicators tell us, and what do they tell us about gender equality in education? But we also have to question what SDG4's indicators *do not* tell us. Whilst the 232 SDG indicators currently agreed upon represent one of the most ambitious indicator frameworks ever developed, which includes many newly created indicators, it is important to recognise that those indicators do not measure all aspects and ambitions of the SDGs. Two of the biggest barriers to knowing how far we have progressed to achieving the SDGs are a lack of state capacities for data collection, management and interpretation, and a lack of indicators that demonstrate the *quality* of programmes to achieve SDG4.

For example, SDG target 4.1 By 2030, “ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes”, is measured by indicator 4.1.1 “Proportion of children and young people (a) in grades 2/3; (b) at the end of primary; and (c) at the end of lower secondary achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in (i) reading and (ii) mathematics, by sex”. Notably, target 4.1 is about education that is free, equitable and of quality, yet indicator 4.1.1 does not measure the upfront or hidden costs of education, nor whether teaching methods and standards are equitable or of quality. All this indicator measures is minimal learning outcomes in two subjects. Whilst this is an important aspect to measure, it does not represent the clear aims and ambitions of SDG4 and this target – indicator 4.1.1. alone is insufficient to assess whether SDG4.1 has been achieved.

Additional information is required, and efforts to develop additional measures for assessing progress on the SDGs should be supported and

encouraged. Reaching agreement on the current SDG indicator framework was difficult and is important; the indicators we have will ensure the collection of key information needed to assess progress. Unfortunately, due to limitations in capacity, for many countries it will not be possible to collect data on the current indicators. It is critical that states, NGOs, civil society, the private sector and other development agents cooperate to increase capacity for SDG data at all levels.

Current indicators should be considered the minimum level of information required, and not simply aspirational.

Supporting countries with less infrastructure for data collection and statistical analysis so that they can improve their data collection and interpretation, is a key opportunity to demonstrate the global partnership for

development. Equally, it is vital that all states recognise and use the data that other development agents have, including micro, geospatial and qualitative data.

Whilst recognising the critical role numerical data plays, it should be acknowledged that purely numeric data can be deceptive, and may not show the full picture. Women and girls may be 'enrolled' in education but not present in classes due to unsafe transport, menstruation or caring responsibilities. Girls and women with recorded high educational outcomes may not be able to translate those outcomes into the work environment due to discrimination. Without fully disaggregating collected data by age, geography, income, disability, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity and other factors, it is impossible to understand the factors that can

influence women's and girls' experience of sustainable development efforts. Many of the indicators for SDG4 call for data to be disaggregated by sex, but not by other factors. This means that it is easy to lose sight of the intersecting impacts that these different factors can have – different ethnic, race and age groups can get lost in the statistics, and the experiences of development that those with disabilities have is diluted by the experiences of the majority. Without this full picture it is impossible to tailor programmes and interventions to address the reasons why some disproportionately benefit from sustainable development efforts and why others are left behind. Fully disaggregated data and micro data is essential in order to ensure that the SDG implementation is effective and reaches everyone.

Qualitative Data

Proper data collection, monitoring, evaluation and capacity building processes is essential to ensure the full implementation of actions that will contribute to the end of gender inequality and the empowerment of all women and girls, to promote dialogue, interaction and cooperation between stakeholders, and to improve accountability. Proper data needs to include both quantitative and qualitative data – only when women and girls report that they *experience* equal access to quality and equitable education and lifelong learning opportunities can we consider SDG4 to have been achieved. Crucially, qualitative information is essential in establishing the *quality* of the education available. Therefore, the following is recommended:

- That micro-level data must be collected and used to develop the most effective policies and practices that will benefit communities and individuals.
- Actions must be taken to better develop links and collaborative work between communities, NGOs, CSOs, academia and governments to improve information sharing and the capacity of effective programs for improved education and gender equality.
- All data collection, monitoring, evaluation and capacity building processes must take a human rights-based approach, be inclusive and non-discriminatory, provide disaggregated information and include gender-sensitive mechanisms.

Call to Action

This report addresses the critical importance that education has in the empowerment of women and girls, and the achievement of gender equality. SI grassroots projects show education can transform individuals' lives and their communities, and so should be considered a global strategic priority. Increased efforts must also be made to achieve gender equality within formal and non-formal education systems, including vocational training and apprenticeships, as a critical aspect of the 2030 Agenda. Based upon the projects carried out by SI members within the communities, as showcased by the projects in this report, SI calls upon all development actors to expedite efforts to achieve SDG4 by:

- Ensuring education is inclusive and accessible for all – this requires renewed and increased efforts to reach older women and those who have not attended school, who come from marginalised or rural communities, who have caring responsibilities and those who are leaving prisons and other institutions.
- Requiring all actions to implement and achieve the SDGs adopt a human rights-based approach, including the human rights of women and girls.
- Urgently addressing the educational needs of migrating and displaced women and girls, regardless of whether they are 'on the move' or have arrived at their destination.
- Creating educational opportunities appropriate for women and girls of all ages, understanding that for a variety of reasons many older women have been unable to participate in education and develop new skills or adapt skills they have, to support the ability to gain a stable income.
- Adopting a broad understanding of education, apprenticeships and vocational training, that responds to the needs of the economy, and the individuals participating in forms of education.
- Taking urgent steps to ensure that education institutions are free from violence, including gender-based violence, and journeys to and from schools and education facilities are safe.
- Ensuring all education facilities are equipped with WASH facilities that are safe for menstruating girls and women can use, and adapted for the needs of those with disabilities.
- Responding to the impacts of climate change upon rural and urban communities, with the understanding that those impacts exacerbate and compound the impacts of poverty, and can cause migration, therefore changing the requirements education systems need to address.
- Continuing to develop capacities for data collection, including the creation of new qualitative indicators. Understanding the quality of education and other sustainable development activities is vital to assessing whether the 2030 Agenda has been achieved.

The current global context of climate change, increased migration, and conflict means that we need the 2030 Agenda more than ever. The success of the SDGs requires the concerted and collective actions of all stakeholders, including governments, civil society and industry. For the full range of sustainable development benefits SDG4 can provide, efforts to 'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all' throughout women's life course, must remain ambitious and implementation must be gender-sensitive.



The International Appeals

Addressing the Humanitarian-Development Nexus

It is increasingly clear that how humanitarian interventions are carried out impacts subsequent sustainable development initiatives. Similarly, how sustainable development is implemented can alleviate the impacts of future humanitarian crises and contribute to disaster risk reduction. Humanitarian action needs to take into account how it contributes to the empowerment of communities. Rather than bringing in external labour and expertise, local approaches, suppliers, and expertise should be used to ensure the safe management, maintenance and continuation of projects after humanitarian actors have left. Both of SI's most recent international appeals have embraced this approach and exemplify how including local communities in their own humanitarian interventions can have lasting impacts, particularly for women and girls.

Educate to Lead: Nepal

On 25 April 2015, a devastating earthquake, followed by aftershocks, displaced millions of people in Nepal. With women and girls often suffering disproportionately after humanitarian disasters, the 2015-2017 SI President's Appeal, 'Educate to Lead: Nepal' sought to provide support, education and vocational training to women and girls. Through these efforts, the Appeal aimed to build community capacity to recover and rebuild after the earthquake.

In Thulipokhari, the 'Removing Barriers to Education' project, initiated by SI Truckee Meadows, Nevada, USA, used a comprehensive programme of scholarships to encourage and ensure that girls were able to attend school after the earthquake. Having already facilitated the building of a school dormitory to expand access to education to girls living in rural areas who would not be able to travel every day. This dormitory was equipped with clean cooking

technology, solar generated electricity, computers, and safe sanitation facilities, thus building resilience and ensuring that the school's facilities were gender sensitive and environmentally sustainable.

Additional funding from 'Educate to Lead' allowed for room and board to be provided for an additional twenty girls, and support their education through tuition, supplies and uniforms. Education scholarships were also provided to enable girls to attend school, with 900 girls successfully graduating the programme. To provide the girls who had graduated with an income, 'Educate to Lead' provided finances for a micro-loan programme that supported graduates in establishing small businesses and transition from the world of education into the world of work. This had the added benefit of supporting the development of the local economy after disaster, which is key for community recovery.

In the spirit of partnership for development, SI Oita-Midoro, Japan, has long supported the indigenous women of Nepal's Tharu Village (Badrahani), located near Sauraha, at the edge of the Chitwan National Park. Their ongoing support has facilitated the building of three training centres, where thousands of women have completed literacy courses and gained vocational skills to generate income opportunities that cater to the needs of the local community, such as dress making and food preparation. Scholarships also have a role to play here, with tuition fees being a common barrier to girls staying in education; awarded

scholarships cover tuition and provide recipients with micro-loans upon graduation to support their entrepreneurship and economic empowerment.

'Educate to Lead: Nepal' has been able to impact the lives of over 1,000 women and girls in Nepal affected by the earthquake, by improving school facilities, supporting teacher training, providing literacy classes and microfinancing.

Through funds donated from the Educate to Lead Appeal, it was possible to expand the facilities at the training centres to include twenty computers and to offer computer literacy classes to 80 women and girls, as well as ten teachers. This computer literacy programme is set to continue over five years, and aims to train 200 women and girls with key skills that will help them with their businesses and find improved employment opportunities.

Through the Educate to Lead Nepal Appeal, educational facilities for girls have been rebuilt with dormitories, safe sanitation, clean water, and sustainable electricity sources. This has supported the expansions of educational and training opportunities, especially in rural areas where there needs to be concerted efforts to encourage girls to attend schools and continue their education.

Women, Water, Leadership: Indonesia

The Indonesian island of Lombok was hit by two major earthquakes on 5 and 19 August 2018, causing devastation and officials estimating that at least 80% of structures in North Lombok were damaged and nearly 390,000 were displaced. Following the humanitarian disaster, many people were facing a public health crisis, as access to water and clean sanitation was very limited. The earthquakes also halted the tourism industry, a critical source of income.

After the earthquakes, the women from the central Lombok villages of Rembitan and Rebuk Satu were without water, sanitation and health facilities. Their traditional livelihoods of weaving took the double hit of having no one to sell to, and a lack of water necessary for the local natural dyes.



Photo: a village in the Palu area after the earthquake

Through the ‘Women, Water, Leadership’ Appeal, toilet blocks with bathrooms and 125 male and female toilets will be built, with approximately one toilet per five people. This will allow women to wash in privacy, instead of having to wash outside once a week, depending upon rainfall. The project will also include upgrading the well to ensure safe water all day and building community clothes washing

centres. Crucially, the project in Lombok funded by the ‘Women, Water, Leadership’ Appeal seeks to empower women in the rebuilding of their community; a water committee led by women will be established to initiate a programme to increase awareness and understanding of water conservation.

A local education centre will deliver vocational training on the subjects of water, waste water, waste management, hygiene education, and including lessons on hand washing and the consequences of open defecation. This education centre will also serve to confront the serious issues of women’s trafficking and child marriages that affect the villages. Local women will be trained in water infrastructure maintenance and management. With their new skills being essential to the community, they will be able to take up positions of community leadership and have more opportunities at home, therefore combatting the perception that they have to move abroad to be able to work and support their families. Through women’s empowerment, vocational training and raising awareness of women’s rights, the unfortunately common problems of trafficking and child marriages will be addressed.

Therefore, this project simultaneously addresses both humanitarian and development issues facing the area. First, by addressing a lack of water access and second, by providing education and training to local women and addressing actions of violence against women. Importantly, the means of humanitarian action, by being focused upon enabling the local community and facilitating its continuing development, itself contributes to the achievement of the SDGs.

EDUCATE EMPPOWER ENABLE

Soroptimist International Community-based Projects

Quality Early Childhood Care and Pre-Primary Education

Crèche Interentreprises: Martinique, France SI Fort-de-France

SDG 4.2 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education

A lack of affordable childcare and pre-school education, combined with the expectation that women will be the primary care givers, serve as critical barriers to women continuing in or re-entering the workforce after childbirth. Addressing this dual SDG challenge of pre-school education and women's economic empowerment, SI Fort-de-France established the first ever inter-company crèche in the French overseas department of Martinique. First opening its doors in 2016, the crèche now has places for 40 pre-school aged children.

At the time of building the crèche, the central region of Martinique was severely underserved in terms of preschool care and education. Without available preschool childcare, both mothers and their young children were disadvantaged – it was harder for mothers to gain employment or return to work, and children were unable benefit from

preparations for primary school and early years education. Without providing facilities that allow women to reconcile work and family life, they are often left with caring responsibilities and lose out on economic opportunities that would support them and their families.

Recognising the barriers that the mothers of young children face in their own community, SI Fort-de-France mobilised with great effect. They were able to recruit the required support of key state institutions, such as the regional women's rights delegation, the family allowance agency and the local authorities, creating a large-scale project that would cost a total of Euro 1,704,000. The town of Lamentin made available a 2,685m² plot of land, and SI Fort-de-France formed a partnership with the company "Crèche Attitude", a national leader in the creation and management of "turnkey" company crèches, to help create the crèche.

Developing Skills for Entrepreneurship and Sustainable Development

Lifting Women from Poverty through Life-Long Learning: Mongolia

SI Darkhan

SDG 4.4 By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship

Homelessness and inadequate housing is a key barrier to education and other social services. Access to these services, in turn, is essential for promoting the economic empowerment of women and developing a sustainable economy. Through improving access to accommodation by providing traditional gers, or yurts, to homeless women and children, SI Darkhan have enabled women's vocational training and participation in the local economy.

The ongoing Ger project in Darkhan, Mongolia's second largest city, has ensured that eighteen families, a Kazak kindergarten and an orphanage have access to accommodation. Responding directly to local need, SI Darkham, with support from other SI clubs, purchase the gers after an application from a homeless woman has been received. The gers are then erected on a block of land that has been obtained from the Mongolian Government.

Providing homeless women and their families with a ger has shown to be a foundation through which those women can develop their livelihoods, whilst knowing that their families are safe and secure. This baseline social security is critical for women to turn their attention towards enriching their lives in other ways, including entrepreneurship. Equipped with stable accommodation, the previously homeless women are now able to focus upon skill development via vocational training

courses established by the agricultural scientists who are members of SI Darkhan. These courses support women in learning how to grow fruits and vegetables, that not only feed them but that can be expanded into a business. This produce and products made from it, are sold at a local market.



Photo: a project participant stands with her ger

With growing ambitions, and business acumen, ger recipients with the support of SI Darkham are seeking to establish greenhouses that will enable them to be more economically productive, as Mongolia's cold winter temperatures mean that there is only a short growing period. Currently the households with greenhouses, have seen their family incomes increase and become more stable as a result of having the greenhouse. Looking to the future, the women are continuing to diversify their product range, and are planning to soon be producing wine

Vocational Training and Economic Empowerment: Two Projects in Turkey

SDG 4.5 By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations

KIMIM Vocational Training and Employment Support Center for Women – SI Etiler

Many of the women in Istanbul's famous, historic district of Fatih have received little formal education over the course of their lives. Living in an area that has one of the lowest women's employment rates in Istanbul, women are left vulnerable to economic insecurity, poverty, and its associated socio-economic impacts. Engaging with these local realities, SI Etiler established the KIMIM Vocational Training and Employment Support Center in 2018.

At the center, women aged 18-40 are able to participate in three vocational programmes that allow the women participants to formalise skills that many already have. Three programmes were conducted in conjunction with professional organisations such as USLA (the International Hospitality Academy). Each taught programme focused upon a different aspect of hospitality. To enable the participants to find stable employment after, a full-time recruitment

specialist was employed to help women prepare for interviews and write their CVs, providing essential support as the participants were entering the job market for the first-time.

Recruitment to the vocational training courses initially focused upon Fatih, later expanding to other areas in Istanbul in order to ensure women living in shelters and eligible Syrian refugees (as permitted by Turkish law) could participate. So far 53 women have participated in the project, with 43 having completed their certification. 20 of those have found jobs so far. For these women, the employment gained through their vocational training is critical for their economic empowerment. Their employment unlocks a series of benefits for themselves, their families and communities, including stable incomes that lift them out of poverty, boosting local economies, and the realisation of their human rights.

Inspiring Hope in Prison – SI Icel, Turkey

Re-joining the workforce is key for the rehabilitation of those leaving prison. Many of those entering prisons have a lack of employable skills, which contributes to recidivism rates. Seeking to support the rehabilitation of imprisoned women and assist them in reintegrating into society, SI Icel provided vocational training to 22 women in Tarsus Prison for Women. The aim was to equip these women with appropriate skills that would allow them to join the workforce after release. With permission from Turkey's Ministry of law, SI Icel created a hair salon within the prison that could be used to train the 22 participants to be hair stylists. In addition, a professional trainer was hired and brought into Tarsus Prison to carry out the vocational training programme. With the salon now established in the prison, it will be able to go on to serve the women prisoners and can be used for future training opportunities.

Women in prisons are some of the most marginalised, and they face many challenges in accessing training that promotes rehabilitation, economic empowerment, reintegration into society, and the self-esteem that evidence shows is vital for preventing reoffending. Isolated from society, it is easy for women in prisons to be left out of implementation efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

Literacy for Rural Women: Fiji SI Sigatoka

SDG 4.6 By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy

The challenges faced in reaching rural women often mean that they experience the benefits of development unevenly – they face the risk of being left behind. Accordingly, despite a global increase in literacy rates during the course of the MDGs and now the SDGs, rural Fijian women often have limited literacy. SI Sigatoka observed that without the ability to write basic information, including their name, next of kin, address and date of birth, Fijian rural women faced significant difficulty in accessing basic services such as health and banking, and were unable to find out basic information needed to participate fully in civic life.

Without literacy, rural women are also unable to grow their small businesses and identify opportunities for entrepreneurship. Many of the women travelled to the markets in the town of Sigatoka to sell their produce once or month or less. Without the ability to properly access banking services, the women were unable to demonstrate their budgeting, set up savings accounts or seek financing which would provide

them with greater financial security and allow them to take up entrepreneurial opportunities.

Importantly, it is often not the local language that is required to fill out health documentation and other forms, but English, which is a second language in Fiji. Still, this is the language used to communicate with doctors, state services and banks. Working in partnership with the Market Association and the Town Council, SI Sigatoka worked with the women at the market, developing an ‘essential information’ document. This document contained personal information about the women that they could then take to a doctor’s office or a bank. This form then acted as a stopgap, ensuring that the women could register for and access services whilst other literacy efforts were ongoing. With support of SI Sigatoka, the women were able to fill the forms out themselves, and they were encouraged to keep them with them at all times and amend them as necessary.



Education for Sustainable Development

STEM Challenge – 2018-2019: UK SI Bournemouth

SDG 4.7 By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development

SI Bournemouth's annual STEM Challenge aims to engage secondary school girls aged 12-14 in science, technology, engineering and maths. Interventions at this age are particularly crucial in the UK, as aged 14 girls need to select the subjects they will study for national exams and their choices will determine what opportunities are open to them later in life. STEM subjects traditionally disproportionately attract male students, and so concerted efforts are needed to ensure gender-equal participation in STEM subjects. This year's STEM Challenge asked participants to design, build and cost a sustainable development project.

Nineteen teams of girls from twelve schools participate in the STEM Challenge, coming up with innovative solutions to problems ranging from the provision of shelter, improved sanitation, food security, solar power and recycling. The invented solutions need to be sustainable, fit for purpose and cost effective so that they could be used by communities few resources.

One of the winning projects produced a sustainable, eco-friendly sanitary pad to prevent menstruation being a barrier to participating in secondary education, whilst the other focused on reducing the consumption of wood for fuel, to reduce pollution and deforestation. For the runner up projects, one designed a drain pipe made from plastic water bottles that used

rechargeable batteries to generate and provide electricity, and the other outlined a system for growing food in a water conserving, transportable greenhouse.



The innovative approach used by these projects caught the eye of the STEM Challenge judges who included lecturers from Bournemouth University, and staff from Jaguar LandRover, the Royal National Lifeboat Institute, CNC Precision Engineering, South West Water and architecture and construction companies. The judging and awards ceremony were hosted by Bournemouth University, and enthusiastic university students acted as STEM Ambassadors, giving the girls a tour of the STEM departments. The encouragement of current students, professors and professionals were all important in breaking down stereotypes and showing how the participants had the skills and attributes to have a STEM career.



Cash Awards and Career Support

SDG 4.4 By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship

SDG 4.b By 2020, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes, in developed countries and other developing countries

Dream It Be It: Career Support for Girls

The 'Dream It, Be It' curriculum was launched in 2015. Since then, more than 35,000 girls have participated across the Americas, the Philippines, Japan and other countries. This career mentoring curriculum is designed to empower and enable girls to take steps to change in their lives and achieve their education and career goals. Although all girls face barriers because of their gender, the Dream It, Be It programme prioritises working with girls who have faced additional obstacles.

Globally, sexual violence, poverty, growing up in foster care, domestic abuse, teen motherhood and an unstable home life all create barriers that prevent girls from realising their potential. These barriers often center around the home and are hidden from public view, making interventions harder to develop and implement. It is these obstacles that Dream It, Be It: Career Support for Girls seeks to overcome by giving girls the tools they need to achieve their education and career goals, empowering them to break cycles of poverty, violence and abuse.

Through the Dream It, Be It curriculum, SI members are able to provide individualised support to girls are a crucial juncture in their lives, ensuring that they stay safe and healthy in the short term and equipping them with the personal skills they need to be successful throughout their lives. The curriculum covers career opportunities, setting and achieving goals, overcoming obstacles to success, and moving forward after setbacks or failures. The curriculum is a prime example of recognising the value of supporting the soft skills necessary for education and career success, and therefore addressing gender inequality.

Live Your Dream: Education and Training Awards

Through the Live Your Dream Awards, more than \$2million in education grants are distributed to about 1,500 women across 21 countries in territories. The Live Your Dream Awards are designed to put financial power into the hands of the recipients and trust that recipients will make the right decisions for them – women may use

their awards to offset any costs associated with their own personal efforts to attain higher education. Many choose to spend their financial award on childcare, tuition and transportation. These education and training awards are provided to women who are the primary financial support providers to their families, and seek to ensure these women have the resources and support they need to pursue further education, develop skills and promote their employment prospects.

Over half of the Live Your Dream recipients are women who are survivors of domestic violence, trafficking or sexual assault. Nearly all of the women and their families who participate in the programme have direct experience in overcoming obstacles in accessing further education, including poverty, addiction, and teen pregnancy. The Live Your Dream Awards seek to widen participation in third level education, promoting positive outcomes to both the individual recipient and their families.

Rochelle's Story: Surviving Poverty, Sexual Abuse and Teen Pregnancy

Growing up in the Philippines, Rochelle dreamed of becoming a primary school teacher; she looked to her own teachers not only as role models, but as second mothers. However, Rochelle faced challenges and responsibilities at home that too many girls who are trying to progress through school face.

“Unlike other kids, I did not have time to play and have fun because there were so many household chores and responsibilities to undertake. My mother worked abroad and as the eldest, I also had to be the mother to my three younger siblings, one of whom has special needs.”

Already facing a difficult childhood, at only 14 Rochelle was raped by her father, and she became pregnant as a result. Living with the

trauma and fear in her own home, she found the courage to tell an aunt who helped Rochelle file a rape case. After a three-year trial her father was found guilty and sentenced to a three-term life imprisonment.

Acting as the head of a household, Rochelle had to put her own education on hold between primary and secondary school due to financial constraints. However, with the support of a Live Your Dream Award, Rochelle has been able to return to education. She is currently studying for a bachelor's degree in education; she is scheduled to graduate in 2021. With the support of the Live Your Dream scholarship, Rochelle is not only working towards her dream of becoming a primary school teacher, but she is in a better position to support herself, her family and, one day, her community.



“I will be more than a teacher and a second mother to my students. I will help them find value in life no matter how difficult it can be ... and help others the way kind-hearted people are helping me now.”



Since 2016: the Kori Project

A Multifaceted Approach to Sustainable Development in Sierra Leone SI Thames Valley, UK & Rose Moriba Simbo

SDG 4.a Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all

Using education and economic opportunities to empower women and girls in a post-conflict environment, the Kori Project aims to enable communities to reject female genital mutilation whilst maintaining their cultural heritage. As part of the Kori Project's multifaceted approach, local schools across the Kori region of Sierra Leone become focal points in the community, providing a place for meetings, a library, and evening classes outside of school hours. Since the start of the project, it has expanded to reach over 2,500 women and girls. Started by Roe Moriba Simbo, a lecturer in midwifery specialising in FGM and originally from the Kori area, she is supported by SI Thames Valley; they use their international partnership for development to enable increased funding and resources to the project.

Since last reporting on the Kori Project to the HLPF in 2016, the project has continued to grow. Recognising the need for a focal point for education and training outside of school, as well as a place to do homework, or to read with children, the Sandy Raffan Memorial Library was

opened in 2017 as part of the Kori Project. Equipped with sustainable solar power, the library can be open 24 hours a day. It is staffed by two full time librarians and a night watchman – this means that all members of the community are able to use the library. During the day, it is used by local school classes, in the evening by secondary school pupils to do their homework, after 8pm by college students doing their assignments, and at weekends by grandparents taking their grandchildren to read. The Project has truly provided safe learning environments for all.

Embracing a multifaceted approach to development, the library employees' wages are paid via profits made by a local pig farm, also established through the Kori Project, that is managed and staffed by local women. This holistic approach to sustainable development therefore ensures not only environmental sustainability, but also promotes the empowerment of local women to take up positions of leadership, equips them with

Recap of 2016 HLPF Submission on the Kori Project

The Kori Project was started to reduce the practice of female genital mutilation (FGM). By approaching FGM as a multidimensional issue, the Kori Project sought to raise the status of women within their communities, so that women are able to adapt cultural practices to suit them and adjusting definitions of what an ‘honourable woman’ is. By maintaining coming of age ceremonies without ‘cutting’, communities are able to maintain their cultural heritage whilst also eliminating FGM as a harmful, traditional practice. Crucially, local Chiefs have supported the project, donating land for women to farm and generate their own incomes. Ensuring no one is left behind, former cutters are able to maintain their community status by administering the project’s micro-loan fund. The communities participating in the Kori Project were hit hard by the Ebola outbreak in 2014, as well as Sierra Leone’s eleven-year civil war, and the farming businesses and micro-loan fund have proved invaluable in supporting the rebuilding of local economies.

financial security, and enables them to further develop their community.

Expanding the library, a Women’s Room has been built where women can participate in vocational training sessions in sewing, making washable sanitary towels, and soap making. These vocational training courses have proved popular and have been able to support young women whose education was interrupted by the outbreak of Ebola in 2014, during which many became pregnant. Other participants have since escaped early marriages. Choosing their own career paths, these young women decided that they wanted to learn to become seamstresses, so the project was able to support a retired Bo College Lecturer to tutor them. The Women’s Room therefore has quickly grown into a vocational training centre.

“All of the work undertaken by the Kori Project is intended to educate the women to become independent and to have a voice of their own.”

*Rose Morimba Simbo
& Johanna Raffan*

The Kori Project continues to forge relationships with a number of schools. Local schools have remained at the heart of community action, and with changing definitions and cultural understandings of what an ‘honourable woman’ is, staying in education has become an increasingly popular option for girls and their families. For example, the school in Gbuwuhan Village has welcomed ever more students, and pupil numbers have increased from 75 to over 200. It is important for school facilities to meet this increased demand: the school in Gbuwuhan had extremely limited facilities, with only three walls and no roof. Through the Kori Project, the school building was renovated to ensure it has four walls and a roof, as well as sanitary latrines for the pupils – essential to ensure girls stay in school after they begin menstruating – and a well. The Project has also supported the school in hiring more staff. They now have four teachers, instead of just one, excellent, Headmaster.

The Kori Project’s close and collaborative relationship with the community means that as well as identifying ways to support students and their families, it is also able to recognise bigger systemic problems that limit the way that people living in the Kori Region experience development.

Even with their enthusiasm and skills, four teachers at a school of 200 students hampers learning. States should do more to ensure schools are fully staffed and that those staff are properly paid. Additionally, although the Kori Project supported local primary school students to take the secondary school entrance exam by providing basic equipment like uniforms, paper and pencils that stood as a financial barrier to participation. Unfortunately not all the students who took the exam were able to take up their places as to go to secondary school as they were unable to leave home and live in Taiama for school. It is clear that to meet SDG4, secondary school access needs to

be expanded so that those living in more rural communities do not have to travel and live away from home; something that would particularly prevent or limit girls from being able to take up secondary education places.

NGOs and civil society organisations have an important role to play in supporting communities and identifying gaps and challenges in ensuring essential services reach everyone. However, these services are essentially state services and so states must continue to scale up efforts to achieve SDG4.

Conclusions

It is essential that the focus of future policies and mechanisms that contribute to the empowerment and equality for girls and women of all ages must have gender-sensitive, human right-based approach and address the specific needs of vulnerable groups. Further concerted, sustained and accountable actions must be taken to close the gender gap and achieve the full realization of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. The knowledge and perspectives that NGOs and civil society bring are essential in ensuring that no one is left behind in efforts to achieve the SDGs.

To achieve gender equality in and through education, the following actions and policies should be implemented:

- Implementation efforts should use gender mainstreaming approaches and principles, including gender budgeting and evaluation methodologies.
- Programmes and projects should be implemented in consultation with stakeholders and in response to their needs.
- Develop and introduce qualitative data measures.
- Promote and ensure the use of available technologies to increase access to quality education, particularly for women and girls living in vulnerable situations.
- Take action to include women in humanitarian action, to ensure the success of sustainable development.
- Ensure the existence and availability of accessible community-based safe spaces for inclusive, continuing and lifelong education.
- Establish effective, accountable and gender sensitive monitoring systems and promote capacity building, including the involvement of NGOs and civil society.