Soroptimist International (SI), founded in 1921, is a global non-governmental organisation with a volunteer membership of almost 75,000, working to transform the lives of women, girls and communities in 122 countries. Through the creation of sustainable solutions, responding to many of today’s most pressing human rights challenges, the global organisation is focused on the implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDG 4: Quality Education; SDG 5: Gender Equality; and SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation.

The SI membership around the world support the Vision, Mission and Principles of the organisation, thinking global; acting local, creating opportunities for the education and empowerment of women, critical to sustainable development. (Soroptimist International) Limited has General Consultative Status since 1984 with The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), and advocates for human rights and gender equality across United Nations Centres. The international organisation’s United Nations Representatives ensure that the voices of women and girls around the world are included in international decision making, and are each involved with numerous committees.

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See Solar, Cook Solar

Supporting seven projects across three continents, ‘See Solar, Cook Solar’, under the direction of Past SI President, Ann Garvie, 2013-2017, focused on SDGs 4, 5, 6 and 7, facilitating renewable energy to women and girls in rural communities, to increase access to education, food security, healthcare and to improve environmental sustainability. Renewable energy was utilised to pump water for irrigation, process crops and power cottage industries, in addition to lighting homes, schools, and hospitals – all services of premier importance and immeasurable impact in the remote rural areas. Through the provision of light, education could continue after dark. Solar ovens removed the need to spend hours gathering firewood, also eliminating the toxic inhalation of smoke, and opening the doors to opportunity for education, economic security, environmental sustainability and better health.

Women, Water & Leadership

The vision of Soroptimist International (SI) President, Mariet Verhoef-Cohen 2017-2019. ‘Women, Water & Leadership’ (WWL) is designed to respond to the global water crisis, relieving the disproportionate impact on the lives of women and girls across the world. Broadly focused on ensuring this human right is realised, WWL is delivering sustainable programmes to reduce inequalities and tackle discrimination; creating infrastructure for safe access to water; improved food security; and facilitating access to education. WWL implements SDGs 4, 5 and 6, working closely with women living in communities on programmes that move beyond the long-held stereotypes of women as ‘victims’ and ‘beneficiaries’, creating opportunities for women in water resource governance, and in water-related professions. Projects are currently active in Kenya, Bulgaria, Malaysia and Indonesia.

Educate to Lead

In 2015, a devastating earthquake followed by aftershocks displaced millions of people in Nepal. Driven by SI Immediate Past President, Yvonne Simpson 2015-2017, ‘Educate to Lead: Nepal’ shone a light on inequitable access to health, services and education. Through the implementation of twenty projects focused on SDGs 4 and 5, women and girls were empowered and barriers to education removed, minimising the impact of social exclusion. Programmes included: rehabilitation and reintegration for survivors of human trafficking; vocational and skills based programmes; scholarships to increase opportunities for economic stability; menstrual hygiene programmes; and training and mentoring in sustainable business practices.