

**a global  
voice for  
women**



**CSW68**

**DELEGATE HANDBOOK 2024**

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## A Word from SI President, Siew Yong Gnanalingam

"Soroptimist International President Siew Yong Gnanalingam is delighted that you are joining CSW68 either in person or as a virtual attendee. The greater our presence, the greater our influence, especially if we are all thoroughly prepared with knowledge of our key asks and messaging. CSW presents an important opportunity and high-level platform for Soroptimist International to raise our Global Voice for women and girls to be heard and to bring forth the issues that matter to us and ensure that Member States are accountable for the policies they have agreed to implement. Our actions and our voices support the Sustainable Development Goals and we as an organisation with General Consultative Status must ensure that no one is left behind. Collectively as Soroptimists, we have a voice for change and CSW is one of the most important events when we must ensure our voice is heard and has **impact!**"

## Delegation Information

Congratulations on being selected to be a part of the Soroptimist International Delegation for CSW68, the 68th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, where you will work with Soroptimists from all over the world to advocate for women and girls. As we wish for you to have a successful trip to CSW68, we have created this SI Advocacy Resource Pack that will help you with details, links and information to understand both concurrent meetings, CSW68 and NGO CSW68 Forum.

***Please review the pack carefully as it contains important resources about the focus of SI at CSW68 including the relevant SI Where We Stand Position Papers for these meetings at CSW68 and Soroptimist key asks.***

The SI delegation for CSW68 includes over 90 representatives from all five Soroptimist Federations, including Federation officers, SI Officers and Board members, SI United Nations (UN) Representatives from New York and other UN Centres, and our Advocacy Policy Advisor.

SI's UN Representatives do invaluable work at the UN in New York and another six UN Centres – and as such, they are critical to SI's 'Global Voice'. They have extensive experience and knowledge and have been working on Committees throughout the year to ensure a successful CSW and to raise Soroptimist International's profile at the UN. They are happy to meet you and willing to answer your questions. Please include them when you are visiting Permanent Missions (a country's official representation to the UN), so that they can follow-up when you leave New York.

## Part (i) - Advocacy Resources

### About the UN Commission on the Status of Women

The **United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)** is the principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of global gender equality and the rights and empowerment of women. It was established by the UN's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) on 21 June 1946.

CSW happens every March in New York. Representatives of Member States, UN entities, ECOSOC-accredited non-governmental organisations (NGOs) from all regions of the world are invited to contribute to the session concerning some of the most significant challenges facing women and girls across the world.

This year, it will be held from Monday 11 March to Friday 22 March 2024. It will be the 68<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission, and you will likely see this abbreviated to "CSW68".

UN CSW68 is organised by the Secretariat of CSW, UN Women (official UN agency):  
[www.unwomen.org](http://www.unwomen.org).

The meetings of CSW are held inside the UN Headquarters in New York City. To enter, you must be a representative of an ECOSOC-accredited organisation, like Soroptimist International. **To enter the UN Headquarters, you are required to receive a UN grounds pass. For more information, please see page 21.**

Note: It is the responsibility of your ECOSOC-accredited organisation (i.e., Soroptimist International) to approve your registration. Invitation letters will be sent closer to commencement to the email address you applied with.

### About NGO CSW Forum

Held Sunday 10 March (Consultation Day) to Friday 22 March 2024 - concurrent dates to CSW.

The NGO CSW Forum is linked to CSW, but officially a separate event with different organisers. NGO CSW New York hosts the NGO CSW Forum as a civil society gathering, parallel to the official UN CSW.

The goal of NGO CSW is to inform, engage, and inspire grassroots efforts and gender equality advocacy around the world. NGO CSW events are held in buildings outside of the main UN Secretariat building. The events are held in buildings nearby, including CCUN (Church Centre for the United Nations) and Salvation Army buildings.

Throughout the two weeks of the NGO CSW Forum, more than 750+ events and engagement spaces will be open to you, including:

- In-person and virtual parallel events
- Consultation Day (Sunday 10 March 2024). Updates soon via the NGO CSW NY Newsletter.
- Conversation Circles
- Orientation Sessions
- Advocacy Training Session
- Artisan Fair
- Healing and Community Space - an in-person space for attendees to recover energy during the events of the Forum. Updates in the NGO CSW NY Newsletters.
- Regional Caucuses
- In-person and virtual exhibit booths
- Handbook Ads
- Networking
- Youth Leaders and Young Professionals (YLYPs) events and activities

NGO CSW has put together a useful 'Advocacy Training in Negotiations and Women's and Human Rights'. You can view and download it here: [Advocacy Guide | NGO CSW/NY](#)

For up-to-date information, download the NGO CSW mobile application here: [Advocacy Guide | NGO CSW/NY](#)

### **What are the addresses of the in-person Parallel Event venues?**

1. Church Center for the United Nations (CCUN)  
777 United Nations Plaza (on the corner of 44<sup>th</sup> Street and 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue)  
New York, NY 10017
2. Salvation Army  
221 East 52<sup>nd</sup> Street  
New York, NY 10022
3. Armenian Cultural Center  
630 Second Avenue  
New York, NY 10016

#### **Important!**

Registration for the NGO CSW Forum will not get you a UN grounds pass or access to the UN building.



### **What are the NGO CSW Youth Leaders & Young Professionals (YLYPs)?**

The YLYPs are a youth-specific space within NGO CSW New York and the NGO CSW Forum. They host a Youth Preparation Series leading up to the NGO CSW Forum and the CSW. The program also hosts other professional development events throughout the year and shares information related to youth at the CSW and the UN system more broadly. The YLYPs are open to anyone under the age of 40. See: [NGO CSW68 Forum FAQs | NGO CSW/NY](#)

For more information:

see NGO CSW General Youth Advocacy Training Deck, including Tips on Digital Advocacy: <https://ngocsw.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/General-Youth-Advocacy-Training-Deck.pdf>



### **Registration for in-person**

UN CSW and the NGO CSW Forum are two parallel, concurrent meetings.

### **You must register for both separately, as follows:**

- UN CSW: <https://indico.un.org/event/1007954/registrations/13012/>
- NGO CSW Forum: [NGO CSW68 \(2024\) | NGO CSW/NY](#)

### **Cost**

**Please be advised that the United Nations does not charge fees for participation in the Commission on the Status of Women sessions.** The United Nations will not pay for any expenses in connection with the participation of NGO representatives in the sessions of CSW. Such arrangements and costs are the exclusive responsibility of participants.

### **Registration for virtual attendance**

You don't have to be in New York to participate! If you are joining virtually, you can watch UN CSW meetings and events (e.g., from the UN General Assembly Hall) via a live broadcast on UN Web TV here: [Home | UN Web TV](#)



## CSW68

- **Priority theme:** Accelerating the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls by addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective.
- **Review theme:** Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls (Agreed Conclusions of the sixty-third session: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/LTD/N19/085/48/PDF/N1908548.pdf?OpenElement>)



## CSW68 Advocacy Priorities

The following six key asks have been agreed by many organisations in conjunction with the NGO CSW's Advocacy Resource Group. See: [Advocacy Research Group for CSW68 | NGO CSW/NY](#)

1. Social Justice and Poverty
2. Education and Poverty
3. Gender Bias in Economic Policy
4. Debt Crisis and its Impact on Women
5. Women's Poverty and Climate Change
6. Youth



## SI Key Messages

- **Women and girls are among those most impacted by poverty, but poverty and gender inequality are not inevitable.** The intersection of social, economic, climate, and legal injustices impose heavy penalties on all women and girls.
- **Education plays a transformative role as a driver for sustainable development, peace, equality, and social justice.** Access to quality, lifelong education empowers and equips all women and girls with the essential skills required to access the labour force and develop self-sustaining futures, and is an important protection against child, early and forced marriage and unions.
- **Critical health services and education must be made available to all women and girls.** This is essential to protecting their health and wellbeing by reducing stigma, increasing decision-making autonomy, and providing quality information on diseases.



- **Intended financial support at the local level is not reaching women and girls who need it.** The methodology on disbursing/allocating funds must change, enabling them, not giving them more administrative burden.
- **Equal pay for work of equal value must be implemented without reservation,** as a step to address the gender pay gap.
- **The persisting care crisis is a gender crisis that impedes positive intergenerational development and progress towards gender equality.** States must adopt inclusive strategies to recognise, reduce, and redistribute unpaid care work and allocate sufficient resources to respond to the growing need for childcare and care for older persons.
- **Empowering women and girls to take a central role in developing innovative solutions is crucial to improving community responses to the climate crisis.** This can be done by enhancing their participation, decision-making, and leadership in climate change mitigation, adaptation and disaster risk reduction strategies.
- **All policies and legislation must hold gender inclusivity and human rights at their core to ensure equal protection for all, in accordance with international law.**

## SI Written Statement

Each year, SI submits a written statement to CSW. The document outlines SI's key messages, calls to action and recommendations.

Make sure you read this document and familiarise yourself with it. See Appendix A on page 26 of this Resource Pack.

## SI Where We Stand Position Papers

SI has a collection of Where We Stand Position Papers, which are saved on the SI website.

Make sure you familiarise yourself with those most relevant to CSW68:

- [Access to Education and Training](#) (Appendix A of this document, see page 26)
- [Economic Empowerment](#) (Appendix B of this document, see page 31)
- [Poverty](#) (Appendix C of this document, see page 35)
- [Social Protection Systems](#) (Appendix D of this document, see page 40)

## Substantive Preparations



### How Can I Prepare?

Prepare yourself for CSW by reviewing the official documents for CSW68: [CSW68 Official Documents | UN Women – Headquarters](#)

An important report to become familiar with is the Report from the Secretary General, released in January 2024: [https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-01/e.cn\\_6.2024.3\\_-\\_advance\\_unedited\\_version.pdf](https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-01/e.cn_6.2024.3_-_advance_unedited_version.pdf)

This report will be the basis for the Zero Draft. The Zero Draft is prepared by UN Women as the Secretariat of CSW. During CSW, negotiations continue on the Zero Draft to eventually become the Agreed Outcomes with UN Member States, with the aim of reaching Agreed Conclusions that advance the status of women and girls.

NGOs, including Soroptimist International, provide suggested additions and changes to the draft documents. These proposed changes are shared with Member States.

## Who Speaks for SI?

The official spokesperson for SI is the International President. UN Representatives, the Director of Advocacy and others may make statements that are aligned to our official policy. Individual Soroptimists who wish to speak during parallel events or side events should identify themselves as a member of their Club, for example, Soroptimist International of Vienna.



## SI Core Delegation

<b>Name</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Email</b>
Siew Yong Gnanalingam	President	<a href="mailto:siew.yong@soroptimistinternational.org">siew.yong@soroptimistinternational.org</a>
Leigh Ellwood-Brown	Chair of Global Impact	<a href="mailto:leigh.ellwoodbrown@soroptimistinternational.org">leigh.ellwoodbrown@soroptimistinternational.org</a>
Hana Smith	Global Policy Advisor	<a href="mailto:globalpolicy@soroptimistinternational.org">globalpolicy@soroptimistinternational.org</a>
Linda Witong	Advocacy Advisor	<a href="mailto:linda.witong@soroptimistinternational.org">linda.witong@soroptimistinternational.org</a>
Beverly Bucur	Advocacy Advisor	<a href="mailto:beverly.bucur@soroptimistinternational.org">beverly.bucur@soroptimistinternational.org</a>

## SIHQ Points of Contact

<b>Name</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Email</b>
Deborah Thomas	Global Executive Director	<a href="mailto:deborah.thomas@soroptimistinternational.org">deborah.thomas@soroptimistinternational.org</a>

Martyna Wykrota	Executive Assistant	<a href="mailto:admin@soroptimistinternational.org">admin@soroptimistinternational.org</a>
Margaret Daly	Communications Manager	<a href="mailto:communications@soroptimistinternational.org">communications@soroptimistinternational.org</a>
Hana Smith	Advocacy Policy Advisor	<a href="mailto:globalpolicy@soroptimistinternational.org">globalpolicy@soroptimistinternational.org</a>
Joe Mason	Advocacy and Communications Coordinator	<a href="mailto:advocacy@soroptimistinternational.org">advocacy@soroptimistinternational.org</a>

## SI Delegation: Advocacy Objectives

The objectives outlined below are designed to support the members of the Soroptimist International Delegation achieve the most possible at CSW68 by advocating to government representatives to change the trajectory of the status of women around the world. Each Soroptimist Federation may have additional objectives that will be communicated to their delegation.

1. **Objectives for Delegates:** During CSW, raising Soroptimist International's profile is mainly done through contributing to the NGO CSW Forum, participating in events, and other activities including providing reports. Other ways to raise SI's profile include:
  - Networking with other organisations, government representatives and other relevant parties;
  - Providing information on Soroptimist International through distributing materials where appropriate; and
  - Providing information on SI's key asks and messages, project work and UN involvement.
2. **To make our SI delegation presence seen and heard across CSW68.** Many events will have an interactive element and may have rapporteurs reporting on what happens at the meeting. If possible, you can make an intervention explaining the Soroptimist position on the topic, and possibly giving examples of projects from your Federation.
3. **To promote our SI focus** during CSW68 as widely as possible and to as many people/ organisations as possible. CSW68 provides a wonderful opportunity for you to share the Soroptimist position with whoever you meet and wherever you go. Please review the SI Advocacy Resource Pack which is in Part (i) of this document for SI's key asks and our relevant Where We Stand Position Papers for this meeting, these are our Global Voice.

4. **To obtain new contacts and extend networks.** Government delegates will be at CSW, and what you say could influence what their government does to help women through international development in the future. Other NGOs will also be present for the duration of CSW68, this makes CSW an important networking opportunity for Soroptimists, building alliances and sharing information.
5. **To inspire Soroptimist International's advocacy work.** Advocacy is one of the main 'Pillars of Action' for SI. Please share your experience and knowledge of CSW68 with others, both while you are in New York, also when you are in your own club, region or country. It is a marvellous opportunity which Soroptimists have in being personally involved on the world stage at the UN supported by so many other like-minded women. This is your chance to inspire others whilst improving the lives of women and girls globally!
6. **Network with other Soroptimists and NGOs.** Meeting and making friends with other Soroptimists is a rewarding experience. To extend your networks with other like-minded women's organisations working in the same field of interest, including those within your own country e.g. trafficking, land rights, child marriage, poverty, climate change.
7. **Have fun, learn lots and don't forget to ask fellow delegates for guidance!**
8. **Advocate on your return to your home country.** Implementation of the Agreed Conclusions from CSW68 is essential, so they do not become empty promises. Advocacy at your local/regional/national level is crucial. SI's written statement to CSW68 (see Appendix A in this Resource Pack, as well as our Where We Stand Position Papers (Appendices B to E) become our reference points for our Global Voice. Furthermore, the input and negotiations for CSW69 will start not long after CSW68, with regional meetings and Caucuses. Soroptimists can be involved at the local/regional level to advocate in the early stages.

### Country Delegations

Please contact [leigh.ellwoodbrown@soroptimistinternational.org](mailto:leigh.ellwoodbrown@soroptimistinternational.org) if you are on your country's negotiating team or have a connection to your country delegation. We can then provide you with the information you need and answer your questions.



### Getting involved as an SI Delegate

- Know what Soroptimist International and your Government stand for
- Familiarise yourself with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):  
<https://sdgs.un.org/>

- Familiarise yourself with the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA)(Beijing+25):  
<https://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw64-2020>
- Contact your country's Permanent Mission to the UN and share the SI CSW68 Statement (Find their contact details in the "UN Blue Book"):  
<https://www.un.org/dgacm/en/content/protocol/blue-book>
- Have your talking points ready (refer to SI's key messages)
- Interact with the CSW process in your region by attending regional meetings each year
- Get ahead by reading UN Women Expert Group Preparation Documents to expand your background knowledge on the CSW68 themes:  
<https://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw68-2024/preparations/expert-group-meeting>

## Events

### CSW68 Official Meetings and Side Events

The official meetings at CSW are available to watch on UN Web TV and YouTube. Follow the agenda here: [CSW68 Official Meetings | UN Women – Headquarters](#)

A list of **side events** (involving Member States) will be posted on the UN Women website: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw68-2024/side-events>

NGO CSW 68 Forum will have 750+ parallel events, their programme will be available electronically via their website.

### What meetings should I attend?

- Side events should be a priority as Member States are in attendance and you may have the opportunity to ask questions.
- UN Women official meetings as they are informative and often interactive.
- Parallel events on the subjects of your choice. Full programme will be made available in late February or early March. Parallel events are a great opportunity to network with other NGOs.
- Town Hall with UN Secretary General. This is an opportunity for the Secretary General to interact with civil society. This will take place on Monday 18 March 2024. Member States are not in attendance.
- UN Women morning briefings. Further information to follow.

### SI Parallel Events

SI has organised three parallel events during CSW68. Save the dates and times!

#### 1. **Addressing Gendered Poverty: Best Practices and Lessons Learned (in-person)**

**Organiser:** Soroptimist International & SI Federations

**Event ID #:** 15410

**Date:** Monday 11 March 2024  
**Time:** 16:30-18:00 EDT  
**Venue:** CCUN 8<sup>th</sup> Floor, 777 United Nations Plaza

2. **Access to finances locally for Women through Gender Budgeting (virtual)**

**Organiser:** Soroptimist International, co-organised with Women for Water Partnership

**Event ID #:** 15411

**Date:** Thursday 14 March 2024

**Time:** 10.30am EDT

**Register in advance:**

<https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZctdeCtqDqpGNziZJwXyY2taLHY7BjWjXam>

3. **The Intersections of Gender, Poverty & Climate Change (virtual)**

**Organiser:** Soroptimist International

**Event ID #:** 15412

**Date:** Tuesday 12 March 2024

**Time:** 10.30am EDT

**Register in advance:**

<https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZwsf-2rrljGtFdt3jLqWn-8iTZhfN3cxJ2>

Our SI Federations, SIGBI and SISEAP, have each organised an in-person event. We encourage you to sign up early:

### **Federation Parallel Events**

1. **SIGBI Showcase of Federation Projects to Combat Poverty (Virtual)**

**Organiser:** Soroptimist International Great Britain & Ireland (Virtual)

**Event ID #:** 15368

**Date:** TBC

**Time:** TBC

2. **Educate, Empower, Enable – Feminist Financial Freedom (In-person)**

**Organiser:** Soroptimist International South East Asia Pacific (SISWP)

**Event ID #:** 15583

**Date:** Wednesday 13 March 2024

**Time:** 08:30-10:00 EST

**Venue:** CCUN 11<sup>th</sup> Floor

### **Explainer: Parallel vs Side Events?**

Parallel events are organised independently by NGOs, vs. side events, which require the participation and support of a UN Member State.



### Explainer: Parallel vs Side Events?

Parallel events are organised independently by NGOs, vs. side events, which require the participation and support of a UN Member State.



## SI Reception

This will be an opportunity for you to meet our new SI President Siew Yong Gnanalingam, Soroptimists from around the world and the Soroptimist International delegation.

**Venue:** Aragvi Restaurant

**Address:** 230 East 44<sup>th</sup> Street, New York City

**Date:** Tuesday 12 March 2024

**Time:** 6-8pm

**Cost:** USD \$60 per person to be paid by Monday 04 March 2024 (Process to pay will be emailed to you)

This will give each person six pieces of appetisers each, and red wine (dry and sweet), white wine (dry and sweet), plus ginger ale or coca cola will be available.

## Get connected and stay informed

### SI WhatsApp Delegate Group

Get connected with other Soroptimists via the SI CSW Delegate WhatsApp group.

Please email Margaret Daly ([communications@soroptimistinternational.org](mailto:communications@soroptimistinternational.org)) to be added to the WhatsApp group, confirming that you accept that your phone number will be visible to other SI delegates.

The WhatsApp group will be structured with **community channels**. Community channels are essentially sub-groups to the main WhatsApp group. You are welcome to join as many or as few of the community channels as you would like. The community channels will include channels for:

- First time delegates
- Photos/videos
- Social events

Kindly remember that the WhatsApp group may have up to 90 other SI delegates on it. The purpose of the WhatsApp group is to stay informed about important events and Soroptimist meetings. Please not send messages to individual Soroptimists on the chat.

## **SI Daily Briefings**

SI's Core Delegation will lead daily briefings for Soroptimist delegates. These briefings will aim to group together Soroptimists and provide important updates for the day.

**When:** Daily, starting Wednesday 13 March

**Time:** 08:00 local time (New York)

**Location:** Conference Room 4 (lower ground floor of UN Secretariat)

## **UN Women Daily Briefings**

In previous years, we have been able to attend daily briefings with members of the UN CSW Bureau and UN Women staff. These briefings are a helpful way to stay informed with progress on advocacy activities and can help you to lobby more effectively to your government representatives. Be aware that we will circulate the details on the WhatsApp Group if they happen at CSW68.

## **SI Communications**

By working together, our global voice can be stronger than ever. Here are some ways you can do just that:

### **News and Blogs**

Soroptimist International is looking forward to posting news stories and blogs during and following CSW68. We strongly encourage you to send us your blogs or stories during CSW, whether you are physically in New York or attending virtually. Coverage of the events you attend; emerging issues you note and speeches you are inspired by help to keep us connected and enable us to share the knowledge we are learning.

**Idea!** If you are discussing an event you attended with other Soroptimists afterwards, why don't you each put a few paragraphs together to write a combined blog of your experience?

Your blogs may cover what Soroptimists are doing at CSW68, SI and other events, news from the Consultation Day, great speeches you hear – anything you feel is interesting and relevant to Soroptimists back home.




### **SI Social Media Toolkit**

CSW68 provides an opportunity for Soroptimist International to maximise its voice and presence, through communications and social media output.

When using social media, please remember that you are using your own voice. When using social media as a Soroptimist at the NGO Forum, please try to do the following:

- Use your own voice and experiences as Soroptimists;
- Try to add value by providing worthwhile information and perspectives;
- Use relevant quotes where possible and credit the speaker.

**Please remember that whatever you say will affect how other Soroptimists are thought of and tone can be easily misinterpreted.** This is important as Soroptimists will be working and advocating together as a united delegation at CSW68. If you are unsure about a post or comment you want to make, please email SI's Communications Manager ([communications@soroptimistinternational.org](mailto:communications@soroptimistinternational.org)), or talk to a member of the Core Delegation (names on page 10 of this document).

<u>Platform</u>	<u>SI Handle</u> <u>(username)</u>	<u>Link</u>
X (previously known as Twitter) 	@SoroptiTweet	<a href="https://twitter.com/SoroptiTweet">https://twitter.com/SoroptiTweet</a>
Instagram 	@Soroptimistglobal	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/soroptimistglobal/">https://www.instagram.com/soroptimistglobal/</a>
YouTube 	@SoroptimistGlobal	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/user/SoropH0/videos">https://www.youtube.com/user/SoropH0/videos</a>

## Hashtags

When you share a post on any social media platform, you are encouraged to include the following three hashtags in your caption. Hashtags are a simple way to organise content across social media platforms. By consistently using these three hashtags, the Soroptimist voice will be amplified, and we will have greater reach:

- #CSW68

- #BreakTheCycle
- #EndPoverty

## **Photography Guide**

Please do try to take photographs and share them whenever possible. In particular, please try to take photos of Soroptimist action shots:

- Group shots involving Soroptimists
- Soroptimists attending and participating in CSW events
- Pictures of CSW events and important speakers

When sharing and submitting photographs for communications purposes, please make sure that they are clear, a high resolution, focused and well lit. If you send any of your photographs of Soroptimists to SIHQ please say who is in the photograph (name and Federation) so that you and they can be appropriately acknowledged. Please ensure you have the permission of individuals photographed to use the photos on social media or websites.

You can provide SI with quotes and photographs for the SI website and social media platforms, but please make sure you have permission to post any stories and/or photos which mention or show other people.

**Please send your news, blogs and photos to SIHQ by emailing**  
[communications@soroptimistinternational.org](mailto:communications@soroptimistinternational.org).

Thank you for your contributions to the Soroptimist Delegation, and SI's communications during CSW68.

## **Soroptimist International Lab**

Join the Soroptimist Lab to connect with Soroptimists from around the world and receive the latest information on CSW.

Learn how: <https://www.soroptimistinternational.org/introducing-the-soroptimist-lab/>

## **Further Resources**

## What is the Women's Major Group?

The Women's Major Group (WMG) was created at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, where governments recognised women as one of the nine important groups in society for achieving sustainable development. The WMG is an official participant in the United Nations processes on Sustainable Development. Other processes use the major group or similar systems, with the WMG active in the processes of the United Nations Environment Program since 1996. On Behalf of Soroptimist International, Bette Levy, our Main Centre Contact, at UNHQ in New York has a leadership role with WMG that includes coordinating efforts and influencing policy for the WMG at the global level. See more: <https://womensmajorgroup.org/>

## Reading Resources

- NGOs' Written Statements to CSW68: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw68-2024/official-documents>
- Proposed Organisation of work UN Women for CSW68: [https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-12/csw68\\_pow\\_13\\_december\\_2023.pdf](https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-12/csw68_pow_13_december_2023.pdf)
- Gender Snapshot 2023 – UN Women Progress report on the SDGs: <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-09/progress-on-the-sustainable-development-goals-the-gender-snapshot-2023-en.pdf>
- Directory of National Mechanisms for Gender Equality / Women's Affairs 2022: <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/Directory-of-National-Mechanisms-May-2022-en.pdf>



## UN Women Resources on Gender-inclusive Language

As the global champion for women and girls, UN Women recognises the importance of language in tackling gender bias and promotes the use of gender-inclusive language in all contexts.

Gender-inclusive language refers to language that places both women and men at the same level, and which does not convey gender stereotypes. Learn more here: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/genderterm>

## What is gender-responsive budgeting?

Learn more here: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/explainer/2023/11/what-is-gender-responsive-budgeting>

## How to create safe digital spaces free of trolls, doxing, and hate speech:

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/explainer/2023/11/creating-safe-digital-spaces-free-of-trolls-doxing-and-hate-speech>

## **A Word from Director of Advocacy, Leigh Ellwood-Brown:**

“As we gather together from across the globe in New York at the 68<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on the Status of Women Session, we will be one of the largest non-governmental organisation delegations at this United Nations meeting. This resource pack has been created to support you in your advocacy, action and influence. Let us collectively advocate decision makers and governments at every level to achieve the best possible outcome from this meeting.

“The progress to eradicate poverty needs to be 26 times faster to reach Sustainable Development Goal 1, ‘No Poverty’, by 2030. The latest Gender Snapshot Report, released in September 2023 highlights that “1 in 10 women is living in extreme poverty, (10.3%)[of the global female population]”.

“The report goes on to underline that “[t]he dearth of sex-disaggregated data is a major constraint for policymakers and gender equality advocates” and “[a]chieving zero poverty for all women and girls by 2030 will require simultaneously acting on long-standing gender disparities, including in access to land, health care and family planning, education and the labour market.

“Gender-responsive social protection is essential, as is combating gender-based discrimination that limits women’s leadership”. One of SI’s goals is to achieve gender equality which includes eradicating poverty and hunger. It is well documented that gender equality accelerates the drivers of human progress, economic growth and sustainable development.

We need your help! It is time to use your global voice to end poverty of women and girls!”

## **Part (ii) SI Delegates Handbook – Practical Information**

### **General Information and Logistics**

#### **How do I get a UN pass?**



**Address for you to collect the UN pass and ID office:**

Ground floor at 320 East 45th Street, New York, 10017.

It is open between 09:00 and 16:00 Monday to Friday.

To collect your UN grounds pass, you must bring your security form/letter (emailed to you by UN Women) and a valid photo ID issued by a government authority, such as a passport or a driver's license.

**If you fail to present these documents at the ID office, you will not be issued your UN pass.**

Each delegate is responsible for collecting their own UN grounds pass.

**Top tip:**

Go to the ID office as soon as you can upon your arrival in New York. Queues can be long, and you should be prepared to queue for hours if you arrive at a busy time. For CSW, the office is usually open 7 days per week.

**Daylight Savings**

Please be aware that daylight saving time starts on Sunday 10 March 2024, i.e., the clocks will turn forward in New York by one hour.

**Social Activities in New York****1. Whitney Museum**

**Location:** 99 Gansevoort Street.

**Transport:** Taxi or #1 subway to 14th Street.

**Top tip:** Purchase your tickets online ahead of time.

**Further information:** The museum has a café restaurant inside. See website:

<https://whitney.org>

**While you're there:** Next to the Whitney Museum is a NYC favourite, the High Line, a park built on abandoned railway line (entrance right outside Whitney). Recommended to walk this before/during sunset or before visiting the museum. Chelsea market is nearby for shopping and eating (07:00 to 22:00), located on 10th Avenue and 14th Street. See more here: <https://www.chelseamarket.com>

**2. Metropolitan Museum**

**Location:** 5th Avenue and 83rd Street.

**What:** Music and light refreshments of wine and cheese available on museum balcony.

**While you're there:** Grazie, an excellent 4-star restaurant is nearby, located at 26 East 84th Street.

### 3. Broadway Theatres

**Location:** 42<sup>nd</sup> Street

**Top tip:** Try the Ticket Booth in Times Square for discounts on the day of the performance.

### 4. Dizzy's Jazz Club

**Location:** Time Warner Building, Columbus Circle.

**What:** Experience nightly jazz music in the heart of NYC.

**When:** Monday to Saturday at 19:30 and 21:30; Sunday 17:00 and 19:30.

**Further information:** <https://jazz.org/dizzys/>

### 5. Red Rooster Harlem

**Location:** 125th Street & Lenox Ave.

**Transport:** Taxi or subway lines 2 or 3. Stop only a few steps away from door).

**What:** Nightly music and dinner (see <https://redroosterharlem.com>)

**When:** Monday to Thursday 12:00 noon to –21:00; Friday 12:00 – 22:00; Saturday 11:00–22:00; Sunday 11:00–21:00.

### 6. Ford Foundation Art Exhibition

**Location:** 320 East 43rd Street.

**Opening hours:** Monday to Saturday from 11:00 to 18:00

**Admission cost:** Free

**Further information:** [www.fordfoundation.org](http://www.fordfoundation.org)

### 7. The National 9/11 Memorial & Museum

The 9/11 Memorial and museum remembers and honours the 2,983 people killed in the horrific attacks on 11 September 2001.

**Location:** 180 Greenwich St, Ground Zero

**Memorial opening hours:** 08:00 to 20:00 daily

**Museum opening hours:** Wednesday to Monday from 09:00 to 19:00. Last admission 17:30. Closed Tuesdays.

**Admission cost:** From \$27. See [Visit the Museum | National September 11 Memorial & Museum \(911memorial.org\)](https://www.visitthemuseum.org/national-september-11-memorial-museum)

### **Travelling from the airport to Manhattan**

There are 3 major airports for international travel to serve the New York City area. Be aware all 3 airports have been undergoing massive updates causing construction related detours and potential road delays in and around the airports:

1. John F Kennedy International Airport (JFK) – (46km). Serves most long-haul international flights.
2. La Guardia International Airport (LGA) – (25km). Serves largely regional and domestic flights.
3. Newark Liberty International Airport (EWR) – (35km). This serves mostly North American airlines like United and Air Canada.

**Check in advance of your travel to New York to see if your hotel has a transfer bus or vehicle and plan your transfer from the airport ahead of time.** Each hotel will have instructions as to where to catch this transport from. If you notice other Soroptimists on your flight, consider sharing your transfer from the airport to the city centre.

1. **John F Kennedy (JFK):** The Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) now makes it possible to get from Grand Central Terminal (Manhattan's main train station) to and from JFK via train. travellers can transfer to JFK's AirTrain.

A single train ticket between Grand Central and Jamaica costs between \$7.75 and \$10.75, depending on peak or off-peak times.

JFK's AirTrain is \$8 for those starting or ending their journey at the Jamaica stop. Note that, due to ongoing construction until late 2023 or early 2024, the [AirTrain's Terminal 1 station is temporarily closed](#). Instead, a shuttle bus is transferring passengers to and from Terminal 4 and Terminal 8, where they can pick up the AirTrain to Manhattan.

Taxi or rideshare is also possible, however, you are likely to hit major traffic congestion which can add up to 45 mins to your trip and may increase the taxi fare substantially.

2. **La Guardia:** The most common option is a taxi or rideshare service. It's about a \$30 to \$45 [taxi ride](#) from Manhattan to the airport (and vice versa), not including tolls or tip, and it takes from around 40 minutes with no traffic up to one hour during peak hours. Thankfully, [the rideshare experience](#) has become more convenient at LaGuardia. There is a dedicated pickup area for each terminal. Passengers call for their car and walk over to a designated parking spot to meet their driver—it works pretty well. At press time, it cost in the range of \$45 to \$65 for an Uber or Lyft between Manhattan and LaGuardia.

3. **Newark Liberty International:** Travel to Newark by **train** is quite good by New York standards. From New York's Penn Station, you can get to Newark Liberty International Airport Station with a New Jersey Transit train. It's about a 25-minute trip and costs about \$15 per person. Unfortunately, you can't use a MetroCard or other MTA passes on New Jersey Transit trains. You then transfer to the free AirTrain, which stops at each terminal. The entire trip from Manhattan takes about one hour, including transit to New York's Penn Station.

**Shuttle Bus:** [Airlink NYC](#) and [ETS Airport Shuttle](#) are among the companies that operate shuttles between Manhattan and Newark, with rates starting at around \$40 per person.

How to get to Newark by **taxi**: A ride to or from Newark is approximately between 30 minutes and one hour. That said, taxi rides and rideshare services to Newark are expensive. Your fare from Manhattan can be upwards of \$100, plus a surcharge and a charge for the return tolls paid by the taxi.

**Caution:**

It is important to know that scams do operate in a large scale, especially for tourists and at airport settings. If you do decide to take a taxi, make sure you take a registered New York cab with fixed rates.

If you are approached by a non-registered New York cab, do not agree to take the taxi ride - it is likely the driver is unlicensed and will charge an exorbitant fee. If you will be travelling on a toll road, check in advance what the additional fee is to avoid being scammed and charged a higher price.

## **Accommodation**

Accommodation in New York is expensive. Make sure you contact others attending in your Federation, or from your country if you wish to share accommodation. In New York, you can find all types of accommodation, from apartments to studio apartments, and hotel rooms, etc. This is your responsibility.

It is recommended that you book accommodation as close as possible to the UN building which is located at: **405 E 42<sup>nd</sup> Street, New York City, NY 10017, USA.**

The UN Building borders 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue on one side and the East River at the back. The entire complex sits between 42<sup>nd</sup> and 46<sup>th</sup> Streets.

## **COVID-19 Data in New York**

New York State is closely monitoring the COVID-19 epidemic across data sources related to testing, hospitalisation, fatalities, vaccination, and a variety of other topics. The dashboards, reports, and data sources contained below summarise key information on

these topics. Please see details in link: <https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/covid-19-data-new-york>

### **What to wear and pack for New York City**

It often snows in New York City around the time of CSW – you can experience rain, sun and snow, and the weather can vary from -1 to 7 degrees Celsius, so please take appropriate clothes, including a warm coat or jacket. A scarf, hat, and gloves can also be essential accessories to keep you warm.

**Shoes:** Wear comfortable shoes! Each day you can walk for miles to and from the UN building as well as within the building itself to attend different events and meetings.

### **Acknowledgements**

I wish to thank and acknowledge SIE President Hafþís Karlsdóttir and members of SIE who helped SI with content and the basis of Part (ii) Delegates Handbook. I also acknowledge Hana Smith, SI Global Policy Advisor and SIHQ with their assistance in compiling content, editing, and production.

Leigh Ellwood-Brown  
Soroptimist International, Director of Advocacy 2022-2025

## **Appendices**

- Appendix A: SI CSW68 Written Statement
- Appendix B: SI Where We Stand Position Paper – Access to Education and Training
- Appendix C: SI Where We Stand Position Paper – Economic Empowerment
- Appendix D: SI Where We Stand Position Paper – Poverty
- Appendix E: SI Where We Stand Position Paper – Social Protection Systems

## **Appendix A: SI CSW68 Written Statement**

### **Commission on the Status of Women**

#### **Sixty-eighth session**

11-22 March 2024

#### **Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special**

**session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”**

E/CN.6/2024/NGO/XX

Distr.: General December 2023

Original: Language

**Statement submitted by Soroptimist International, a non- governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council\***

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

\* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

Soroptimist International and the signatories of this statement recognise that rates of poverty globally have exponentially increased as a result of intersecting crises. We also recognise that all women and girls are among those most impacted but poverty and gender inequality are not inevitable. Poverty and gender inequality are the result of structural discrimination which has been at the heart of law and policy for decades. In line with UN General Assembly Resolution 74/235, we must strive for justice through a gender lens which is inclusive of social justice, economic justice, climate justice, and legal justice. The intersection of these issues imposes heavy penalties on all women and girls.

1. Social Justice

a) Education

Education plays a transformative role as a driver for sustainable development, peace, equality, and social justice at large. Access to quality, lifelong education empowers and equips all women and girls with the essential skills required to access the labour force and develop self-sustaining futures, and is an important protection against child, early and forced marriage and unions.

With the shift to online learning and working since the COVID-19 pandemic, the need for universal access to the internet and digital technologies is essential to realising gender equality. The digital gender divide must be bridged through increased government investment in national electricity grids, digital technologies, digital literacy training and lifelong learning for all women and girls. Fully funded programmes must be implemented to expand all women and girls’ participation in science, technology, engineering, art and math (STEAM) to reach gender parity and equal opportunities to work in the field. High priority should be placed on those at risk of being left behind, including rural and



indigenous women and girls, those living through conflict, refugees and internally displaced persons, and women and girls in care and state institutions.

## b) Universal Healthcare

The World Health Organisation's definition of universal healthcare is based on principles of equity, yet gender equality in healthcare remains a real challenge. Women and girls living in particularly vulnerable situations lack access to basic quality healthcare, hygiene, sanitation, and face increased risks of exposure to disease because of unsafe water. Healthy ageing must be promoted across the life course, including through action as part of the Decade of Healthy Ageing and ensuring universal health coverage is fit for all women and girls. Critical health services and education must be made available to all women and girls, with specific priority placed on young girls, rural women, indigenous women, women with disabilities, and women of childbearing age. This is essential to protecting their health and wellbeing by reducing stigma, increasing decision-making autonomy, and providing quality information on diseases like cervical cancer.

## 2. Economic Justice

Wealth and income inequalities have continued to increase both within and between countries and disproportionately impact all women and girls, contributing to increasing levels of poverty. In addition, intended financial support at the local level is not reaching them. The methodology on disbursing/allocating funds has to change, enabling them, not giving them more administrative burden.

### a) Gender Pay Gap

Equal pay for work of equal value must be implemented without reservation. The gender pay gap remains a reality in most countries and has been on the rise again because of the way post-Covid wage compensations have been framed and implemented (see recent EU report) – and continues to unfairly impact women. Establishing non-discriminatory liveable wages is an essential first step to women's participation in full, equal, and meaningful paid work. Furthermore, women should be considered for all positions of employment, including at the highest level. States must recognise that, given their unique lived experiences, women have the potential to drive innovation and propel societies towards social and economic justice.

### b) Unpaid Care Work

Unpaid care work and unpaid work done for public services like water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) remains a significant challenge for women and girls who continue to work as the primary caregivers of children and families. The persisting care crisis is a gender crisis that impedes positive intergenerational development and progress towards gender

equality. States must adopt inclusive strategies to recognise, reduce, and redistribute unpaid care work and allocate sufficient resources to respond to the growing need for childcare and care for older persons.

All care work must be recognised as valued work deserving of remuneration. Inclusive parenting policies like paid parental leave for both parents are a critical starting point to tackling the care crisis.

No child should have to participate in care work in lieu of learning and developing: shifting social narratives can increase access to education for all women and girls, providing them with equal opportunities to learn from a young age. As well as working to address embedded social ideologies and gendered stereotypes on care work, it is the responsibility of States to commit to investing in inclusive, lifelong education, to empower and enable all women and girls with equal opportunities in paid employment.

### c) Pensions

Gendered income poverty is a real issue that can have catastrophic implications to the health, wellbeing and status of older women. In a context of gendered labour markets, contributory pension systems face challenges to guarantee universal and adequate pension benefits for women. Over their life course, women spend longer periods dedicated to caregiving, lower labour market participation, more part-time work and lower earnings than men. These components compromise their pension entitlements in pension systems that link benefits to paid work, contributions and earnings. States must recognise the lack of access to an equitable pension for women as a genuine problem contributing to poverty, and act immediately.

Social protection system floors must be implemented to ensure basic income throughout the life course, including at pension age. States are required to ensure that all women and girls have fair and equitable structures for lifelong contributions, including times when they are working as unpaid carers, to ensure financial security throughout their life course. Social development policies must be underpinned by basic human rights that guarantee the full protection of women of all ages. When women and girls are included in social protection systems, they can positively contribute as part of the solution to achieving economic justice.

## 3. Climate Justice

No integrated justice can be achieved without climate justice and the guarantee of a safe, healthy, and sustainable planet. Research has highlighted that unless climate change is curbed, it will drive up to 130 million more people into poverty in the next decade and displace up to 3 billion people by the end of this century. Climate migrants face heightened barriers to accessing basic healthcare, safe water and sanitation, education, food security, and shelter. In addition, all women and girls face accentuated risks of gender-

based violence, trafficking, and child, early and forced marriage and unions, placing them in particularly vulnerable situations.

Empowering women and girls to take a central role in developing innovative solutions is crucial to improving community responses to the climate crisis. This can be done by enhancing their participation, decision-making, and leadership in climate change mitigation, adaptation, and disaster risk reduction strategies. Gender-sensitive humanitarian relief is vital to ensure the wellbeing and dignity of all women and girls during and post-disaster. States must commit to fully implementing the UN Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration which holds at its core respect for the rule of law, due process and universal access to justice. It is also critical that States fulfil their legally binding commitments agreed upon in the 2015 Paris Agreement and following Declarations. All new investments in fossil fuels must be halted immediately; and a swift, just transition to clean, renewable energies must be implemented.

#### 4. Legal Justice

To achieve social, economic and climate justice, universal human rights must be fully respected, protected, and fulfilled in line with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

A disconnected approach to social, economic, and environmental policies has not produced the desired results towards poverty eradication and reducing inequality. Policies on economic, social, and environmental development should therefore be interconnected to ensure that people, in particular women and children living in poverty and other vulnerable situations, benefit from inclusive economic growth and development. Crucially, all policies and legislation must hold gender inclusivity and human rights at their core to ensure equal protection for all, in accordance with international law.

We also draw attention to the recommendations of UN Women that address some of these issues and call for Member States to support these.

#### 5. Key Asks

Soroptimist International and the signatories of this statement recognise that achieving social, economic, environmental and legal justice are crucial to accelerating the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.

We demand that Member States and stakeholders:

- Apply a gender-sensitive and human rights-based approach to all policies, legislation, discussions, and decisions related to all aspects of development;
- Increase investments in quality education and lifelong learning, and create specific, targeted programmes, including on digital technology and literacy at both secondary and

- tertiary level, and science, technology, engineering, art and math (STEAM) subjects and careers, focused on enabling all women and girls into paid work, education and training;
- Establish and implement laws and policies that regulate technology, ensuring that they apply a gender- transformative approach and contribute to the achievement of gender equality and the eradication of gender- based violence, including online violence;
  - Ratify International Labour Organisation Convention 190 on the elimination of violence in the world of work, to promote women's and girls' access to education, training and careers;
  - Adopt inclusive, universal healthcare via increased investments in quality healthcare provisions, staffing, training, and community education programmes;
  - Bridge the gender pay gap by providing equal pay for work of equal value between men and women and establishing non-discriminatory liveable wages;
  - Ensure that care work is recognised as a valued job and can contribute to pensions;
  - Implement inclusive parenting policies like paid parental leave for both parents;
  - Ensure appropriate and quality disaggregated data collection;
  - Sign, ratify and implement the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration as well as all other international agreements that protect the rights of migrants;
  - Place a higher priority on increasing women's participation, decision-making and leadership in climate change mitigation, adaptation and disaster risk reduction strategies;
  - Fulfil legally binding commitments agreed upon in the 2015 Paris Agreement, and further Declarations; and - Ratify and remove all reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

#### Co-signs:

Association d'Aide à l'Education de l'Enfant Handicapé  
 Federation of American Women's Clubs Overseas  
 Girls Not Brides: The Global Partnership to End Child Marriage Graduate Women International  
 Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary - Loreto Generalate  
 International Alliance of Women  
 International Association of Applied Psychology  
 International Association of Charities  
 International Council of Jewish Women  
 International Council of Women  
 International Federation of Business and Professional Women International Health Awareness Network  
 International Inner Wheel  
 International Presentation Association  
 Make Mothers Matter  
 National Alliance of Women's Organizations  
 NGO Coordination post Beijing Switzerland  
 Passionists International

Red Dot Foundation  
Regards de Femmes  
Servas International  
Sikh Human Rights Group  
Sisters of Charity Federation  
Soka Gakkai International  
Soroptimist International of Europe  
Tandem Project, The  
United for Equity and Ending Racism  
Virginia Gildersleeve International Fund, Inc.  
Women for Water Partnership  
Women's Federation for World Peace International  
Women's International Zionist Organization  
Worldwide Network Nigeria: Women in Development and Environment Zonta International

## Appendix B: SI Where We Stand Position Paper – Access to Education and Training

### Position Summary:

- Universal access to safe, inclusive and high-quality education and training for women and girls is a fundamental human right and is crucial to ensure sustainable development, particularly Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 on quality education;
- Global cooperation is required to address the challenges associated with access to education and training. Unified actions from States, the private sector, NGOs and civil society are necessary to promote gender equality in education and remove systemic barriers facing women and girls.

### Where Things Stand:

Access to high-quality education and training throughout the life course transforms lives and communities. Recognised globally by SDG 4 on quality education, the cross-cutting benefits of education on sustainable development and its fundamental role in achieving gender equality are established human rights under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The United Nations Human Rights Council reaffirmed the Human Right to Education in its 41st Session on 11 July 2019.

Educating women and girls goes beyond individual empowerment; it produces better health outcomes, fuels economic growth, and contributes towards stable and peaceful societies. The social and economic imperative to improve access to education and training for women and girls is evident, with better-educated women contributing to informed healthcare, reduced fertility rates, and healthier children. A 2018 World Bank study underlines the economic impact, revealing that restricted access to 12 years of education for girls globally costs countries US \$15-30 trillion in lost lifetime productivity and earnings.

Despite progress, recent data reveals persistent disparities in access to education driven by income gaps, gender-based violence, socio-economic barriers, conflict, and climate change. Poverty and education are interconnected, with high poverty levels making education less accessible. Furthermore, even when education is available, children – especially girls – are often expected to work and earn money rather than attending school.

Regional disparities also persist, particularly in West and Central Africa and South Asia, whilst child marriage compounds the issue, reducing the likelihood of girls completing



secondary education. Missing out on education impedes the abilities of children and young people to find safe, paid work – and can make them more vulnerable targets of modern slavery. In 2023, approximately 781 million adults, 66% of whom are women, remain illiterate in terms of reading and writing capabilities, the majority from developing countries. Numeracy is also important, but comparable data at the global level is lacking.

Conflict is increasingly linked to exclusion from education. The statistics of attacks on education in conflict-affected regions underscore the severity of the issue, impacting over 9,000 students and teachers across 85 countries in 2020 and 2021, according to the United Nations. In some countries, girls are being specifically targeted with extreme levels of violence in a bid to dissuade them from attending school.

The COVID-19 pandemic introduced new challenges to education globally, with a shift to online learning due to school closures. However, the digital divide widens gender disparities, as 52% of women globally lack internet access compared to 42% of men. In low-income countries, only 25% of women have internet access. Recognising the significance of innovation, technology, and education in the digital age is crucial for gender equality. Bridging the gender digital divide is essential for fair representation in tech jobs, managerial roles, and academic careers. The achievement of SDG 4 is dependent on embracing opportunities and challenges presented by technology.

### **Where things need to go...**

Education must be safe, inclusive of a high quality, and accessible to all.

**Safe:** Where girls and women have safe access to education, they have the potential to contribute to their communities' social, cultural, political, and economic advancement. Urgent steps must be taken to ensure that all education and training facilities are free from violence, including gender-based violence. Journeys to and from schools and other facilities must also be made safe.

**Inclusive:** Those who are the furthest behind must be reached as a priority. This requires renewed and increased efforts to reach older women and those who have never attended school, those who come from marginalised or rural communities, women and girls with caring responsibilities, disabilities, and those who are leaving prisons, state care and other institutions. The educational needs of migrating, refugee and displaced women and girls must be urgently addressed.

**High quality:** Standard curricula should be set to ensure standardised and quality education at all levels with appropriate and relevant assessment and recognised qualifications.

**Accessible to all:** Poverty and economic disenfranchisement are not only outcomes of a lack of education, but they are significant factors in preventing women and girls from accessing education and training at all life stages. Education costs should be limited to ensure accessibility given that financial barriers to education remain one of the biggest obstacles to women's and girls' education. Legal and social action must also be taken to prevent child, early and forced marriage which removes girls from schools and is proven to have negative health, economic and social outcomes. Social protection measures for families can ensure that girls are treated equitably in financing education and training.

**Fundamental Action:**

- Increased awareness specifically about the importance of education and training for women and girls (SDG 4) is required;
- All States, the private sector, NGOs and civil society should protect and advocate for the human rights of women and girls – including education – by empowering them to be leaders, experts, and agents of change;
- All States should expedite efforts across all sustainable development measures and activities to achieve girls' and women's full participation in high-quality education and training through a human-rights based approach at whatever life stage they have reached;
- All schools and educational facilities must have safe water and sanitation facilities enabling women and girls to continue their education safely and with dignity at all stages;
- Safe access must be assured within the education environment itself, including safety from cyber harassment and bullying;
- Transport routes to education facilities must be made safe for women and girls;
- Scholarships and bursary provisions should be prioritised, in particular for marginalised groups, to ensure education is accessible to all;
- All States should embrace gender mainstreaming across all aspects of education and training. Gender mainstreaming should include the institutional measures of gender budgeting and financing for development, supporting and targeting women-specific policies and programmes that address gender discrimination and its impact in education;
- Increase investments in quality education and lifelong learning, and create specific, targeted programmes, including on digital technology and literacy, and science, technology, engineering, the arts, and mathematics (STEAM) subjects which would enable all women and girls into paid work, education and training;
- Support digital literacy adoption and usage by embracing innovative financing solutions that connect women with technology and educational services at low to no cost;
- All States should ratify and honour their obligations under CEDAW, CRC – including by adapting their national laws – and conform to International Labour Organisation standards for vocational training;

- Data collection capacities focused on disaggregated data need to be continually developed to lead to greater understanding of the impact of girls' and women in education, on sustainable development;
- Efforts are required to improve the responsiveness of education systems to the changing needs of communities. High priority should be placed on those at risk of being left behind, including rural and indigenous women and girls, those living through conflict, refugees and internally displaced persons, women with disabilities, and women and girls in care and state institutions; and
- Social and cultural programmes involving men and boys are required to prevent continuing discrimination that devalues women, their abilities, their educational achievements and their economic contributions.

### **Where Soroptimist International Stands:**

Soroptimist International grassroots projects show education and training can transform individuals' lives and their communities. Education is a human right and should be considered a global strategic priority.

Increased efforts must 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 for Sustainable Development.

Soroptimist International demands that all women and girls have equal and fair access to education and training, insofar that their human right to a safe education is respected, protected and fulfilled in accordance with international human rights law, the Beijing Platform for Action and Conventions including CEDAW and CRC.

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## Appendix C: SI Where We Stand Position Paper – Economic Empowerment

### Where We Stand Statement: Economic Empowerment Position Summary:

- Disproportionate numbers of women and girls are living in poverty compared to men;
- Unpaid care work (care economy) and the gender digital divide are among the social factors contributing to women and girl's underrepresentation in paid employment;
- Education is a vehicle towards achieving economic empowerment by enabling opportunities.

### Where Things Stand:

According to UN Women, an estimated 388 million women and girls were living in poverty in 2022. The highest concentrations of women living in extreme poverty live in Sub-Saharan Africa (244 million) and Central and Southern Asia (81 million).

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, many roles which have, in the past, been defined as 'unskilled' are now recognised as vital to maintaining, among others, the running of health, education, retail, and food supply sectors including agriculture. These have traditionally been roles filled by women and have largely been low paid. However, this must now be reassessed. These workers make up the poorest in the workforce and in many countries are not covered by government rescue packages or social protection schemes and thus sink further into poverty.

Care work has also traditionally been categorised as 'women's' job, which has perpetuated systemic social, cultural, and therefore, economic barriers for women worldwide. Specifically, unpaid care work remains a significant challenge for women and girls who continue to act as primary caregivers of children and families, especially given that the care economy is growing in line with the increased demand for childcare and care for the elderly in regions across the world. It is estimated that 606 million women are outside the labour market because of their unpaid care responsibilities.

The persisting care crisis is a gender crisis that hampers positive social development and any progress towards gender equality. Gendered patterns of women's inability to access pensions often stems from their exclusion from waged work throughout their life course, including unpaid care work. Inclusive parenting policies, such as paid parental leave for both parents, is an essential first step to tackling the care crisis.

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, workers in the 'formal' economy – meaning that the work is regulated by government authorities, particularly in the areas of contract and company law and taxation – has seen an overwhelming shift to online work. This also holds true for many educational establishments, including schools and universities.

While the shift to online working and learning can offer more flexibility, those most negatively impacted by this shift have been women and girls, due to their lack of access to the internet, digital technologies, and digital financial services. This is known as the gender digital divide. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) noted before the pandemic struck that 327 million fewer women than men have a smartphone and can access the internet.

The report went on to highlight that women remain under-represented in ICT jobs, top management and academic careers, and men are four times more likely than women to become ICT specialists. According to the OECD, equal access to technology and the internet can provide "leapfrog" opportunities for all and can help to bridge this gender digital divide by enabling and empowering women and girls to earn an additional income, increase their employment opportunities, and access knowledge and general information related to their work.

Economic empowerment, education and training, gender budgeting, and equal distribution of resources and services are critical to the advancement of women, the achievement of gender equality, and the realisation of women's human rights. There is still a long way to go to recognise the role for women in leadership in all sectors of the economy from community leadership to the involvement of women on the Boards of major corporate companies. Cultural attitudes in many communities mean that women are unable to hold local leadership roles, while at corporate Board level there is still an even bigger gender gap. Workplaces must be safe, enabling and empowering spaces for all workers, including women at all job levels. All measures must be taken to ensure places of work are free from all forms of violence as per the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention 190.

Although Soroptimist International recognises the flawed nature of the world's dependence on GDP figures, investing in women in all their diversities and empowering them economically does have a positive ripple effect on local, national, and international economies.

### **Where things need to go...**

Equal pay for work of equal value must be implemented without reservation. Bridging the persisting gender pay gap – which continues to unfairly impact women – is essential to tackling deeply rooted gender inequalities in the workplace and widespread, systemic misogyny.

States must adopt inclusive strategies to recognise, reduce, and redistribute unpaid care work. They must allocate resources to respond to the growing need for childcare and care for older persons. In addition, care work must be viewed as a shared role for caregivers in every context.

In this digital age, access to the internet and digital technologies is a necessity, but this is dependent upon having (affordable) access to electricity. The digital gender divide must be bridged through increased government investment in national electricity grids, access and affordability of networks, digital technologies, digital literacy training and lifelong learning for all women and girls. Fully funded programmes must be implemented to expand all women and girls' participation in science, technology, engineering, the arts and math (STEAM) to reach gender parity and equal opportunities to work in the field. High priority should be placed on those at risk of being left behind.

### **Fundamental Action:**

- All States should ratify and implement the ILO's four key gender equality Conventions:
  1. Equal Remuneration Convention (No. 100);
  2. Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention (No. 111);
  3. Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention (No. 156); and
  4. Maternity Protection Convention (No. 183).
- Ratify ILO Convention 190 on the elimination of violence in the world of work, to promote women's and girl's access to education, training and careers;
- All States and stakeholders must honour their obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms Against Women (CEDAW), including by adapting their national laws;
- Ensure gender equal representation at all levels in economic decision-making and the formation of financial policies;
- Enact and enforce legislation to guarantee the rights of women and men to equal pay for work of equal value by establishing non-discriminatory liveable wages throughout the life course to bridge the gender pay gap;
- Recognise care as a societal responsibility and adopt inclusive strategies to shift resources to respond to the growing need for childcare and care for older persons;
- Remove with immediate effect any and all legal obstacles and facilitate women's access to productive resources, including but not limited to land, credit, capital, property, and inheritance; and
- Engage in gender-responsive budgeting to analyse, plan, implement, and monitor income and expenditure to more equally distribute resources.

### **Additional Action:**

- Stronger encouragement needs to be given to women and girls to reduce the gender digital divide and further STEAM education and training. Women and girls should have equal access to affordable electricity and mobile technology;
- Support the initiatives of governments, United Nations' bodies, the World Bank, civil society organisations and specific companies that promote economic opportunities and leadership for women;
- Actively advocate for equal representation of women in economic decision making in all local, national, and global agencies and boards;
- Prioritise the measurement, quantification, and recognition of currently unremunerated domestic and care activities of women;
- Provide equal access to quality education programmes, employment training, and opportunities to acquire vocational skills in all fields of employment including emerging technologies and businesses for all women and girls in order to secure sustainable livelihoods; and
- Provide social protection measures which enable women to take maternity leave or appropriate sick leave.

### **Where Soroptimist International Stands:**

The following principles form the cornerstone of Soroptimist International's position on the economic empowerment of all women and girls:

- Employ **education** to end occupational segregation and increase women's access to formal economies by offering skills based and vocational training to the diversity of women and girls of all ages especially across all aspects of STEAM;
- **Empower** women and girls by giving them the tools, resources, and knowledge to actively participate in financial and all aspects of decision-making at household, community, national, and international levels including training them to assume leadership positions in all areas of economic, political, social and educational development; and
- **Enable** opportunities by raising awareness and understanding of the positive long-term impact of investing in women and girls in all their diversities.

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## Appendix D: SI Where We Stand Position Paper – Poverty

### Where We Stand Statement: Poverty

- Disproportionate numbers of women and girls are living in extreme poverty globally due to persisting social, cultural and economic barriers;
- An integrated, gender-sensitive, and human-rights centred approach to all policy and legislation is essential to ensure that women and children living in poverty and other vulnerable situations benefit from inclusive economic growth and development.

### Where Things Stand:

As stated in the Report of the United Nations Working Group on Discrimination Against Women and Girls, presented to the United Nations Human Rights Council in April 2023, "poverty is more than the outcome of a lack of income or wealth. It is the result of a blatant systemic failure leading to a vicious cycle of exclusion and discrimination that violates the civil, cultural, economic, environmental, political and social rights of both present and future generations".

In 2022, an estimated 388 million women and girls were living in extreme poverty (1 in every 10 women), compared with 372 million men and boys. This equates to more than 700 million people – or 10% of the global population – that are surviving on less than US \$1.90 per day. The intersection of social, economic, climate, and legal inequalities imposes the heaviest penalties on women and girls.

Wealth and income inequalities – including the gender pay gap – have continued to increase both within and between countries and disproportionately impact women and girls, contributing to increasing levels of poverty. Gendered income poverty is a real issue that can have catastrophic implications to the health, wellbeing and status of all women and girls, including older women. In a context of gendered labour markets, contributory pension systems face challenges to guarantee universal and adequate pension benefits for women.

Over their life course, women spend more time dedicated to caregiving, lower labour market participation, more part-time work and lower earnings than men. These components compromise their pension entitlements in pension systems that link benefits to paid work, contributions and earnings. In addition, 763 million globally – 67% of whom are women – still cannot read or write. According to UNESCO, the literacy gender gap is the result of unequal access to basic education. In today's digital era, women and girls continue to fall behind as they lack digital literacy skills on top of basic literacy skills, which in turn impedes their ability to undertake many forms of paid work.

Last, research has highlighted that unless climate change is curbed, it will drive up to 130 million more people into poverty in the next decade and displace up to 3 billion people by the end of this century. Climate migrants face heightened barriers to accessing basic healthcare, safe water and sanitation, education, food security and shelter. In addition, all women and girls face accentuated risks of gender-based violence, trafficking, and child, early and forced marriage and unions, placing them in particularly vulnerable situations.

### **Where things need to go...**

A disconnected approach to social, economic and environmental policies has not produced the desired results towards poverty eradication and reducing inequality. Policies on economic, social and environmental development should therefore be interconnected to ensure that people, in particular women and children living in poverty and other vulnerable situations, benefit from inclusive economic growth and development. Crucially, all policies and legislation must hold gender inclusivity and human rights at their core to ensure equal protection for all, in accordance with international law and human rights treaties including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

Achieving zero poverty for all women and girls by 2030 will therefore require simultaneous action on long-standing gender disparities, including in access to land, healthcare and family planning, education, and the labour market.

The digital gender divide must be bridged through increased government investment in national electricity grids, accessible and affordable networks, digital technologies, digital literacy training and lifelong learning for all women and girls. Fully funded programmes must be implemented to expand all women and girls' participation in science, technology, engineering, the arts and math (STEAM) to reach gender parity and equal opportunities to work in the field.

Social protection system floors must be implemented to ensure basic income throughout the life course, including at pension age. States are required to ensure that all women and girls have fair and equitable structures for lifelong contributions, including times when they are working as unpaid carers, to ensure financial security throughout their life course. Social development policies must be underpinned by basic human rights that guarantee the full protection of women of all ages. When women and girls are included in social protection systems, they can positively contribute as part of the solution to achieving economic justice. A simulation analysis conducted by UN Women in 2022 demonstrated that an integrated policy approach – including more spending on social protection, investments in the green economy, better infrastructure and education – would lift close to 150 million women and girls out of poverty by 2030.

Empowering women and girls to take a central role in developing innovative solutions is crucial to improving community responses to the climate crisis. This can be done by

enhancing their participation, decision-making and leadership in climate change mitigation, adaptation and disaster risk reduction strategies. Gender-sensitive humanitarian relief is vital to ensure the wellbeing and dignity of all women and girls during and post-disaster.

### **Fundamental Action:**

All States are urged to implement measures for all indicators to achieve United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 1 on No Poverty, with priority being given to:

- Apply gender-sensitive and human rights-based approaches to all policies, legislation, discussions and decisions related to all aspects of poverty eradication and development;
- Honour their obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms Against Women (CEDAW), including by adapting their national laws;
- Increase investments in quality education and lifelong learning, and create specific, targeted programmes, including on digital technology and STEAM subjects and careers, focused on enabling all women and girls into paid work, education and training;
- Adopt inclusive, universal healthcare via increased investments in quality healthcare provisions, staffing, training and community education programmes;
- Bridge the gender pay gap by providing equal pay for work of equal value between men and women and establishing non-discriminatory liveable wages, with the provision of accessible financial support and training to enable those who wish to develop entrepreneurial skills;
- Implement universal social protection system floors to alleviate poverty by ensuring that human rights are respected, protected and fulfilled;
- Measure and prioritise the wellbeing of women and girls beyond GDP by deploying multidimensional indicators to ensure quality, disaggregated data collection;
- Fulfil legally binding commitments agreed upon in the 2015 Paris Agreement and further Declarations on climate action;
- Develop and implement legislation to ensure gender equality across ownership of land and other resources including but not limited to clean water; and
- Develop and implement policies to build gender-sensitive resilience in communities affected by natural and human-made disasters, including safe shelter and food security.

### **Additional Action:**

- Increase participation of women and girls in all levels of education and training by ensuring safe, inclusive access to quality education and training programmes;
- Ensure that care work is recognised as a valued job and can contribute to pensions;
- Promote women's leadership and their full, effective and equal participation in decision-making;

- Invest in and strengthen social policies and programmes that provide necessary support and protection and empower women and girls to take their equal place in communities;
- Provide universal quality health care, especially maternal health and childcare supported by appropriate education and information on sexual and reproductive health rights; and
- Ensure safe access to water and sanitation for homes, schools and workplaces. Involve women in community management of these facilities as a positive action to achieve sustainable development.

### **Where Soroptimist International Stands:**

Soroptimist International recognises that rates of poverty globally have exponentially increased as a result of intersecting crises. We also recognise that all women and girls are among those impacted but poverty and gender inequality are not inevitable. Poverty and gender inequality are the result of structural discrimination which has been at the heart of law and policy for decades. In line with United Nations General Assembly Resolution 74/235, we must strive for justice through a gender lens which is inclusive of social justice, economic justice, climate justice and legal justice.

Soroptimist International understands that education plays a transformative role as a driver for sustainable development, peace, equality and social justice at large. Access to quality, lifelong education empowers and equips all women and girls with the essential skills required to access the labour force and develop self-sustaining futures.

To that end, Soroptimist International works to support the achievement of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through its programmes to educate, enable and empower women and girls at the grassroots level, and by advocating on behalf of women and girls in all their diversity, to demand that legislation and policies are in place to ensure that no- one is left behind.

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## Appendix E: SI Where We Stand Position Paper – Social Protection Systems

### Where We Stand Statement: Social Protection Systems Position Summary:

- Inclusive, effective and comprehensive social protection systems are essential to achieve social justice and decent work, ensure sustainable development and contribute to gender equality;
- To be protected when vulnerable, especially as a woman, is a human right as outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

### Where Things Stand:

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) defines social protection as:

*"Social protection, or social security, is a human right and is defined as the set of policies and programmes designed to reduce and prevent poverty and vulnerability throughout the life cycle. Social protection includes benefits for children and families, maternity, unemployment, employment injury, sickness, old age, disability, survivors, as well as health protection."*

According to the United Nations, social protection systems include social assistance (e.g., cash transfers), social insurance (e.g., health insurance), and labour market programmes (e.g., unemployment benefits). They have the effect of empowering women and girls in all their diversity by enabling their access to education and work.

Social protection floors are nationally defined sets of basic social security guarantees that should enable the fulfilment of basic human rights for all. They would ensure, as a minimum, that everyone has access to essential health care and basic income security throughout their lives, securing effective access to goods and services which are defined as necessary to survival, including the provision of basic public services like shelter, water and sanitation.

Universal Social Protection is a policy objective anchored in global commitments such as Article 22 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that "everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security," and other international commitments, including the ILO.

Despite significant progress in the extension of social protection in many parts of the world, the right to social security is not yet a reality for a majority of the world's population. Social protection coverage often excludes those who need it most, such as informal workers. In 2022, 58% of the informal workforce globally was comprised of women who had limited access to social protection systems.

According to the ILO, only 47% of the global population is effectively covered by at least one social protection benefit, while the remaining 53% – as many as 4.1 billion people – remain completely unprotected. ILO estimates also show that only 29% of the global population are covered by comprehensive social security systems that include the full range of benefits, from child and family benefits to old-age pensions. ILO data highlights that, as of 2021, only 45 per cent of women with newborns worldwide receive a cash maternity benefit. Therefore, inclusive, effective and comprehensive social protection is not only essential to achieve social justice and decent work, but it is vital for creating a fair, sustainable and resilient future.

### **Where things need to go...**

#### **Fundamental Action:**

Quality education accessible beyond the primary level can drive positive change by offering women and girls the opportunity to develop their full capacity; for instance, by engaging in social entrepreneurship or finding meaningful employment, thus enabling an income sufficient to sustain herself and her family. Along with the provision of supportive health systems, adequate housing to meet family needs and the safety of social security financial provisions across the life span, women and girls could be lifted out of poverty and provided with a self-sustaining future.

All States should recognise and implement existing social protection agreements to stem the rising tide of inequality. To be protected is a right stated in Article 22 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and reaffirmed by the Social Protection Floors Recommendation (No. 202) of the International Labour Conference in 2012. The implementation of universal social protection system floors is an essential step to alleviating poverty by ensuring that the most basic human rights are fulfilled.

All States should leverage digital technology to expand the foundations on which to strengthen social protection systems. However, greater emphasis must be placed on disaggregated data collection and the need to recognise the future increased use of financial transfers for benefits payments through technology, including electronic banking. This is necessary to ensure that no woman is left behind.

#### **Where Soroptimist International Stands:**

Soroptimist International recognises that effective and comprehensive social protection is not only essential to achieve social justice, gender equality and decent work, but it is vital for creating a sustainable and resilient future. The meaningful inclusion of all women and girls in all aspects of public life has been statistically proven to advance economies, realise social cohesion, and contribute to sustainable and peaceful communities.



In addition, investments in universal healthcare, including access to sexual and reproductive healthcare, adequate and affordable housing, clean water and sanitation, and low-cost nutritious food are essential to advancing gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. Such investments, alongside access to quality education, can put women and girls on a positive footing to empower and enable them to work towards a self-sustaining future.

Soroptimist International pledges to act now, for present and future generations, to turn our world towards a sustainable and resilient path by 2030 and leave no one behind.

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