

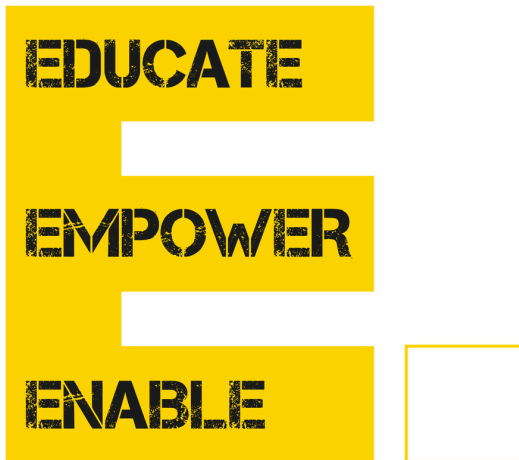
Soroptimist International Annual Report 2023



SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION excerpt



Soroptimist International Foundation



**Maureen Maguire, SI President 2022-2023 and Joseph Mason,
Advocacy and Communications Coordinator**

Soroptimist International Foundation
(Registered in England and Wales 1194895)

In 2023, Soroptimist International Foundation continued to provide funding for projects that sought to Educate, Empower and Enable the lives of women and girls around the world. Soroptimist International Foundation is led by the SI President and Directors and receives funding from Soroptimist donations, legacies, grants, and other funding sources.

Soroptimist International Foundation is managed by the SI Board who act on behalf of the Trustee, SI (Soroptimist International) Limited. The Board ensures that funded projects meet the objectives as detailed below, having due regard to the guidance issued by the Charity Commission, England and Wales in respect of public benefit.

The Objects of Soroptimist International Foundation are to promote either directly or by the encouragement and support of others:

- The advancement of education;
- The advancement of health and saving of lives;
- The relief and/or prevention of poverty;
- The advancement of good citizenship and community development;
- The advancement of human rights, peace, equality and diversity.

To date, Soroptimist International Foundation projects have addressed critical issues such as poverty, education, health, violence against women, and gender equality, all of which align with many of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

These projects have had a significant impact across different regions, empowering marginalised women and girls and fostering sustainable development within their communities.

Soroptimist International Foundation continued

Opening Doors to a Bright Future Appeal

'Opening Doors to a Bright Future' Appeal built on the learnings and success of many previous SI Appeals; uniting Soroptimists, Clubs, Regions, Unions and the five Federations, with the aim of delivering tangible benefits to some of the world's most marginalised women, girls, and their communities.

Projects have been undertaken in each of the five Soroptimist Federations. This Appeal sought to increase gender equality, women's empowerment and participation through education and training.

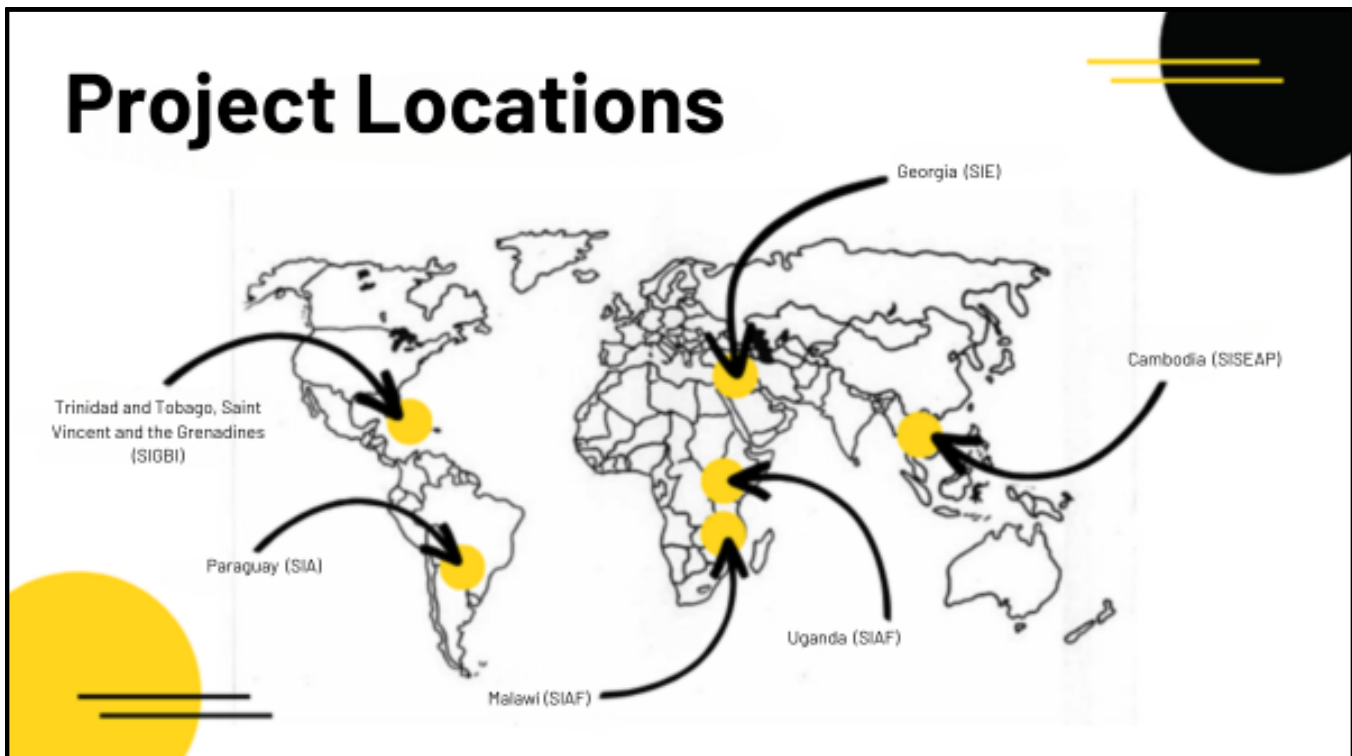


Photo: Map illustrating the locations of projects in the 'Opening Doors to a Bright Future' Appeal

Soroptimist International Foundation continued

Cambodia Community Dream Organisation

This project, titled 'Education and Learning in Cambodia throughout the life course', has been a beacon of empowerment for women and girls in rural communities. Partnering with the Cambodian Community Dream Organisation (CCDO), this project provided education and support to marginalised women and girls in three districts: Prasat Bakong, Angkor Thom, and Banteay Srei. During 2022-2023, the project exceeded expectations, engaging 2,814 women and girls in activities aimed at fostering education, empowerment and sustainable development.

This project has seen numerous achievements, providing training in healthcare, gender equity, personal development, and business skills. These sessions equipped women and girls with essential skills, boosted their confidence and enabled active community participation. Many of the women started small businesses, enabling them to maintain their households and send their children to school.

A key outcome of the project was the establishment of Smart Women groups, with members of each community serving as mentors and counsellors. These groups provided support and facilitated discussions on gender equality and women's rights. By December 2023, 46 Smart Women were trained, offering counselling under the supervision of the Commune Council for Women and Children; one of the Smart Women even became a Village Chief, while another joined the Commune Council.



Soroptimist International Foundation continued

Rose Academies - Uganda

The partnership with Rose Academies Uganda made huge strides toward educating, empowering, and enabling marginalised women, girls, and their communities through education, mentorship programmes, and access to information.

This project has provided the opportunity for 30 out-of-school girls and young women, aged between 11 and 22 years, to learn and feel safe while at school. The girls attended boarding school and worked hard so that they could take their leaving examinations at the end of November 2023. Many of the girls found the coursework extremely challenging because they had not been at school since Primary (Grade) 1.

Having completed their National Primary Leaving Examinations, the project continued to educate and empower the girls during December 2023. They were trained on social skills and health education, equipping them with the tools necessary to navigate life's challenges and make informed decisions. This training served as a transformative experience for the attendees and the sessions were designed to foster positive self-concept, self-control and high order thinking skills.

During the training, the girls candidly shared their experiences of attending boarding school for the first time. While some struggled with health challenges and homesickness, others revelled in the opportunity to pursue education despite obstacles. The support received during their Primary Leaving Exams bolstered their confidence, paving the way for hopeful aspirations.



Soroptimist International Foundation continued



Restore a Sense of I Can – Caribbean

The partnership with 'Restore a Sense of I Can' (RSC) was aimed at educating, empowering, and enabling women and girls in the Caribbean by addressing the gender digital divide.

Through training and resources provided to women and girls in Trinidad and Tobago, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Venezuelan migrant women, participants learned basic digital technology skills, including online safety and how to become creators in digital spaces. By bridging the digital divide, the project empowered participants to make better decisions, gain self-confidence, and develop critical thinking skills, breaking down socio-economic barriers to digital opportunities.

Throughout 2023, the journey of empowering participants was marked by dedication, collaboration, and growth, despite several challenges. Participating women from diverse backgrounds embraced their roles and the opportunities presented. One strategic objective involved 'training the trainers', where five participants were recruited to vital roles as assistant instructors, peer mentors, motivational speakers, project facilitators and ambassadors. This comprehensive approach has ensured long-term project sustainability, enabling participants to gain new digital skills and invaluable teaching and support experience.

The success of this initiative extended beyond technical skills, fostering a supportive community where each participant's unique strengths contributed to the program's success. These women will continue to grow, translating their skills into income-generating opportunities and creating a ripple effect of positive change in their communities.

Soroptimist International Foundation continued

Life Skills to Empower Women and Girls – Georgia

The Opening Doors Appeal project in Georgia, Eastern Europe, worked in collaboration with World Vision Georgia, to empower women and girls by improving their life skills and employability, in a country where 74 per cent of women experience intimate partner violence.

This project supported 60 women and girls through interventions and workshops addressing four key focus areas:

- Skye Tech Clubs - Vulnerable girls and young women gained valuable IT skills and complex life skills. Participants emerged with essential skills in communication, leadership, and self-awareness, which are invaluable in any life endeavour.
- Ultra-Poor Graduation Programme - This programme helped young women access social and financial services and participate in community networks; they received training on areas such as sales management, business administration, digital marketing and more. Additionally, direct support and capacity building enabled the participants to discover their potential, improve their financial situation, enhance self-esteem, and make future plans.
- Advanced English Language Courses - The students learned to read, translate, and communicate fluently in English, engaging in spoken and written dialogues on topics like healthcare, education, work, and leisure. Beyond language skills, the program boosted their self-confidence, motivation, and workplace effectiveness, enriching their personal and professional development.



Soroptimist International Foundation continued

Sport Empowering Marginalised Girls – Paraguay

The partnership with Fundación Moises Bertoni (FMB) has given wings to a vision aimed at creating positive change for indigenous girls living in the shadows of poverty within the Mbaracayú Education Centre, Paraguay, based in the Mbaracayú natural forest reserve. This boarding school offers technical degrees in Environmental Science and uses a 'learning by doing' methodology to educate, empower and enable young minds to become powerful entrepreneurs capable of driving sustainable change in their communities.

By constructing a fully equipped sports centre, we sought to enhance physical activity, develop sports skills, and provide training for 120 girls under the guidance of a Sports and Exercise Science Teacher. Additionally, workshops covered topics such as gender violence prevention, self-esteem, collaboration, and nutrition.

A Youth Environmental Camp was also organised within the reserve for 40 participants aged 18 to 21, promoting gender equality, violence prevention, and environmental leadership. With objectives to bridge the opportunity gap, prevent gender-based violence, develop environmental youth leaders, and promote healthy living, this project harnessed the power of sport to empower marginalised girls.



Soroptimist International Foundation continued

Amitofo Care Centre – Malawi

In Malawi, SI collaborated with the Amitofo Care Centre (ACC) to address child marriage and promote gender equality through education.

Funded by Soroptimist International Taiwan, the project focused on educating 150 former child brides, with 10 of them receiving a two-year bursary covering all educational expenses.

The project provided comprehensive support to improve the women's numeracy, literacy, and problem-solving skills, enhancing their employment prospects and quality of life.

Despite initial challenges, there were positive impacts on the participants' education and behaviour, showing improved attitudes and renewed focus on education.

The initiative emphasised the importance of seizing educational opportunities to create lasting change and called for continued support to expand the program, aiming to equalise educational opportunities for women in Malawi.



Soroptimist International Foundation continued



Women for War Torn Countries Appeal

Soroptimist International Foundation was very pleased to receive a donation of USD 100,000 from the SI Taiwan Region (SI Americas) to support women who have been affected by war and conflict within or outside of their countries.

During December 2023, the SI Board approved the first project which was in partnership with SI Lumière, Bamako in Mali who have been awarded GBP 41,000 to educate and support 100 displaced women and girls who have survived the war, and who fled from the locality of Menaka in Northern Mali to the Bamako District in the south of Mali because of war and the ongoing threat of terror. These women are likely to encounter some difficulties in education since their education and training opportunities were disrupted; so, a critical first task will be helping them become literate, before training in the processing of agri-food production.

The project's literacy element will take place in the first two months, focusing on developing reading and writing abilities. In the second part of the project, covering a further four months the women and girls will learn the techniques of processing local products such as wheat, millet, corn, ginger and garlic. During this training they will learn about food processing techniques such as conservation, storage, calculation of production cost and the application of hygiene measures.

In the final stage all the women and girls will be gathered to form a cooperative to implement their collective knowledge. Each of them will be provided with a kit to support them in putting quality finished products into packaging for selling on the market.

Displaced women and girls are particularly vulnerable to violence and harmful practices such as trafficking, sexual violence, early child marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM). By offering this support the project will give these women and girls economic empowerment and help them to realise their potential so they can become equal leaders in the community in which they now live. In providing productive training and employment we can reduce their exposure to danger and help them achieve food security.

Soroptimist International Foundation continued

Visible and Vocal Appeal

In December 2023 the Visible and Vocal Competition was held in partnership with the Commonwealth Business Women's Network and was aimed at empowering girls aged between 10 and 11 years.

It had several key objectives such as:

- Encouraging girls to play a more prominent part in public life;
- Promoting an awareness of global issues;
- Improving the art of communication, encouraging girls to develop the skill to speak effectively and to articulate with clarity;
- Developing self-confidence and personality; and
- Encouraging higher order thinking skills such as research, critical and analytical thinking, evaluation, and synthesis of knowledge.

The competition took place on 10 December to commemorate Soroptimist International Foundation Day and the UN Human Rights Day, and it brought forth remarkable insights and thought-provoking speeches from seven talented young orators across the globe speaking on a range of topics. These outstanding young voices presented their perspectives on pressing global issues, showcasing their passion, intellect, and determination.

The first prize was won by Stefanie from the Philippines, who represented Soroptimist International of the Americas, and delivered a compelling speech on 'As girls, what can we do to address climate change?'. The second prize winner was Gaelle from Rwanda, who represented the Soroptimist International Africa Federation, and she addressed the barriers faced by girls in achieving their career aspirations. The third prize winner was Olivia from Australia, representing Soroptimist International South East Asia Pacific, and she also explored the challenges hindering girls in achieving their career goals.



Photo: Stefanie, from the Philippines (pictured at her Grade 6 school graduation) was the Winner of the 2023 Visible and Vocal public speaking competition

Soroptimist International Foundation continued

The Lugari Youth Leadership Project

The Lugari Youth Leadership Project is a Leadership Training Programme established by Willing Hearts Society of Canada in Kenya 12 years ago.

This project continued to be supported by the SI Foundation in 2023 where it funded 200 girls aged 14 to 18 to attend the Youth Leadership and Mentoring Training at the Lugari Community Resource Centre in Western Kenya. The funding provided accommodation, meals, transportation, training materials and Days for Girls kits for the 200 girls who came from all areas of Kenya to participate in the Project that focused on leadership training, building engagement in peace building, good governance, human rights, finances, health, media, entrepreneurship and increasing community connection.

On completion of their training, the girls returned home, and it is hoped that they will utilise their skills to implement and innovate projects that directly serve the needs of their own communities, thus becoming catalysts of positive change. With this increased confidence, and a stronger more definite voice, the girls are empowered to become leaders and peace builders and act to bring about change, to end harmful gender discriminatory practices such as FGM, child marriage and domestic violence.



Ongoing Commitment

Soroptimist International Foundation has made significant strides in promoting education, empowerment, and gender equality through the projects during 2023 projects. Thanks to the generosity of Soroptimists from around the globe we will be able to deliver many of the projects again in 2024 to benefit more women and girls.

Soroptimist International Foundation remains committed to creating lasting, positive change in communities worldwide, reinforcing our dedication to improving the status and opportunities for women and girls everywhere.



a global voice for women

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