

Advocacy is any activity that publicly promotes a Soroptimist cause consistent with the Soroptimist mission and position statements outside of SI. Soroptimist advocacy can take many forms, from participation in local events to national lobbying to international statements submitted to the UN. As a Club, Region, Union, or Federation, it's important to know what *kind* of advocacy you are planning, as each will have a different set of steps. All Soroptimists are encouraged to engage in advocacy actions as individuals; the following guidelines only apply if you wish to undertake an activity as an SI member, Club, Region, Union, or Federation. *(Please see sections 1.600 and 1.700 in the SI Policy Procedures and Programme, available on SI's website, for more information.)*

Ideas for local Soroptimist advocacy:

- Send postcards to politicians or potential politicians to advocate for an issue affecting women or girls in your area
- Work with your local politician to raise awareness about a specific issue affecting women or girls in your community (such as ovarian cancer, domestic violence, human trafficking, homelessness, etc.)
- Organise a public event with media coverage to raise awareness in the general community on an issue, such as a sporting event, planting trees, a candlelight vigil, a concert or festival, a march, or other similar activities (on issue such as a peace, HIV/AIDS, local environmental issues, etc.)
- Host a film screening or festival to highlight issues affecting women and girls.
- Encourage Soroptimists to sit on local government committees and boards – any chance to have women's voices heard is a step towards positive change!
- Hold a training workshop with local officials, service providers, or politicians whereby they can learn about an issue and understand how they can help (i.e. domestic violence)

National, international, or controversial issues which require involvement from your Federation, SI, and/or the SI President:

- Releasing a statement on an event of international concern, such as natural disasters, conflict or war, or new international laws or policies
- Making international policy recommendations on issues of international concern, such as human trafficking, maternal mortality, HIV/AIDS, etc.
- Taking a public stand on an issue or event of international concern, such as the global economic crisis, the MDG Summit, the G8 Summit, international events, etc.
- Any activity involving the UN
- Any advocacy of national concern which could affect women and girls outside your local area
- Advocacy on an issue which could be controversial or an issue which tends to lead to vocal national debate
- Clubs are encouraged to recognise international days of action; your Federation or SI may also provide ideas and inspiration for coordinated advocacy

With the above examples in mind, before undertaking your advocacy, **FIRST CONSIDER:**

- Are we promoting a cause that is consistent with the Soroptimist Mission and *Where We Stand*?
- Are our objectives in line with Soroptimist objectives?
- Have we verified all of the relevant facts and figures, through our group's actions, our Federation, the International Programme Director, and/or SI HQ?
- Is this action a non-political stand? Are we certain that we are not supporting a religious or political group or cause?
- Some issues are of national or international concern or may be controversial. In these cases, you should involve SI and the SI President. If you are unsure as to whether the issue at hand falls under one of these categories, have you consulted your Federation to make sure?

If you can answer **YES**

to all of the above questions, then you are ready to go! Just remember to report all your programme activities on your Federation's Programme Database. Collecting and sharing photos, quotes, press clippings, and narratives are encouraged.

If you answered **NO** or **I DON'T KNOW** to any of the above questions, you must consult with your Federation on how best to proceed.

- If the cause is determined to be outside the Soroptimist Mission and/or *Where We Stand*, or if it falls within religious or political areas, then you can proceed as an independent individual but may not use the Soroptimist name.
- If you need further information or verification of facts or figures, you can submit a research request to your Federation President, Federation Programme Director, the International Programme Director, and/or SIHQ who will find out more on the issue and respond as quickly as possible.
- If the cause is a matter of national or international concern or on a controversial topic, then you can submit a request to your Federation for SI to take action. Members, Regions, National Associations, and Unions may request, through their Federation, that the SI President take action through written or oral statements made in response to world events affecting the lives of women and girls. If this is the case, follow the steps below:

How to request that the SI President take action:

1. Submit your request in writing, preferably via email, to your Federation Programme Director, your Federation President, and SI HQ, providing as much information as possible.
2. SI will evaluate your request. If the issue is within an SI country, the International Programme team may consult with members of the affected area to determine if the advocacy may have a negative impact.
3. The team will make a recommendation to the SI President as quickly as possible **and no later than 1 week from your request.**
4. The SI President will respond **within one week.**
5. The SI President's proposed action will be reviewed by the board **within three days.**
6. Media releases, statements, and any other materials will be issued forthwith and circulated to all Federations.