

SIGBI Programme Director's Blog June 2019



Naina Shah, APD Environmental Sustainability

“Being “thirsty for change” is significant, and a “gender-responsive approach to achieve water security” is a necessity. Stereotypes persist, sex-disaggregated data is lacking and finance for women is seemingly unavailable. Nevertheless, what we need to do is clear and it is worthwhile to continue our mission”.

Soroptimist International [President Mariet Verhoef-Cohen](#) concluded her speech at the panel at the UNESCO International Water Conference in Paris the ‘[Thirsty for Change: Promoting a Gender-Responsive Approach to Achieve Water Security](#)’.

Such intense words become especially meaningful on 5th June, World Environment Day. President Mariet has travelled through all the four Soroptimist Federations and addressed numerous conferences reiterating the theme of her Appeal – Water Women and Leadership (WWL). That in 2017 she chose an environment related Appeal for her tenure as President underlines the concern and the action that Soroptimists are taking and will take for environmental issues.

The thrust of the Appeal is to educate, empower and enable women and girls, ensuring they have the capacity, experience and education needed to manage water resources and gain careers in water-related professions.

Annually, four billion people experience severe water scarcity. Women and girls are disproportionately affected. Instead of earning an income or attending school, they are forced to be the primary water carriers for their families.

WWL hopes to enable and empower women to play an important role in water management and consolidate their position in achieving equitable access to water for all, and for all uses.

As a Soroptimist Project, WWL embraces the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the targets set out in SDG 6: Water and sanitation, SDG 4: Education, and SDG 5: Gender Equality. The [President's Appeal](#) is committed to promoting the inclusion of women in water resource governance as experts and leaders during all phases of the projects. Women will be equally involved in decision-making throughout the entire project cycle – from education and capacity building, through to design, implementation and monitoring.



The projects highlight the message of empowering women to be leaders of water resources:

- **Project 1: Africa – Kenya** – SI Union Kenya “MwihokoWomen Group” – Focused on improving access to agricultural information, clean energy and water to achieve better food security.
- **Project 2: Europe – Bulgaria** – Earth Forever together with SI club Plovdiv “WeWash (Women empowerment through water, sanitation and health)”.
- **Project 3: Asia – SI region of Malaysia** (SIROM) project “Clean Water for Rural Communities”. This community is living with no clean water for drinking or cooking, no electricity, no sanitation and no medical clinic.

- **Project 4: Asia; Indonesia – Sulawesi and Lombok.** Post the earthquake in Indonesia the President thought it fit to direct the efforts of her appeal to the affected island for rebuilding and meeting the water emergency needs there.
- **Project 5: North America.** – Women, Water and Leadership provided a \$1,000 grant for Victoria Hinojosa, from Mexico City, to participate in H2O Global Leaders and Water Innovation Lab training.

There is still time to donate to this Appeal which ends on 30th September. Please ensure that cheques are made payable to SIGBI Ltd, and write International President's Appeal on the back of the cheque.

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