

A Description of Soroptimist International by Millie Brierley

This report was written for a women's discussion/creativity group I belong to – not Soroptimists. The theme we were considering was 'The Seven Deadly Sins and Virtue' – very difficult to define in our mainly secular society. Here is my response to the question 'Give an example of virtue in modern society, and is virtue considered to have a gender bias?'.

While I do not wish to evangelise, I thought I would take this opportunity to talk about the global women's organisation, Soroptimist International. I am not sure if I would describe the organisation as virtuous, but I believe that all the members hold strong beliefs and values which include: compassion, generosity, effectiveness, kindness and good, moral ethics. The organisation has over 80,000, mainly women members, worldwide who wish to work to transform the lives of women and girls. The organisation has consultative status at the Economic and Social Council and at the United Nations. The central goals of Soroptimist International are Education, Empowerment and Enablement for women and girls through many programme actions at local, national and international levels. The organisation's vision and mission statement is based on Economic Empowerment, Education, Violence Against Women, Food Security and Health, Environmental Sustainability and Advocacy.

Our Canterbury Club are currently involved locally with the Women's Refuge, Rising Sun Domestic Violence Service, Canterbury Food Bank, literacy support in local schools and we have recently partnered with Amnesty Canterbury. Nationally our club campaigns to eliminate Human Trafficking, FGM, Forced Marriage and Reducing Women's Imprisonment. Internationally we support Save the Children, Water Aid, Educate to Lead in Nepal and The Meru Women's Garden project in Kenya. This project operates in one of the poorest parts of Kenya and aims to support women to establish a sustainable food garden which will enable them to feed their families, earn a small income and give women and girls a greater chance of survival, safety, empowerment and status in their community.