

Hilary Ratcliffe OBE

Hilary Ratcliffe was awarded her OBE in the UK Honours List 2014, for services to 'Promoting Gender Equality Overseas' through her voluntary work at a senior level of Soroptimist International, the global women's organisation.

A member of SI from 1980, Hilary Ratcliffe has given more than 40 years of service including nine senior-level elected positions. Hilary has inspired Soroptimists around the world to get involved in local, national and international projects to improve the lives of women and girls.

Programme Director for Soroptimist International of Great Britain and Ireland (SIGBI) 2007-2011. In this role Hilary led the SIGBI Programme Team to develop partnerships with these organisations and more: Save the Children, Plan International, WaterAid, Book Aid, Maternal and Child Health Advocacy International, Women for Women International, and Fairtrade. Hilary and the SIGBI Programme Team also partnered agencies working against trafficking of women and girls, ran workshops, study days and conferences, and worked tirelessly to promote the work of SI at every level.

Soroptimist International (SI) Programme Director 2011 – 2015. In this role Hilary led SI's advocacy and policy work at the UN and other international forums, speaking up for women and girls and representing the voices of around 80,000 Soroptimists in 130 countries and territories worldwide. She provided guidance and inspiration for thousands of on-the-ground Soroptimist projects to educate, empower and enable opportunities for women and girls, helping to share good practice across the world, while developing global policies and position statements based on the experience of Soroptimists worldwide. Her position and her skill enabled her to be instrumental in forging partnerships across different women's organisations, fundraising for projects across the world and focusing the strategy of SI on global change for women and girls.

Hilary represented Soroptimists on the international stage, at the UN Commission on the Status of Women, the Department of Public Information, the British Commonwealth, WAGGGS (World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts), YWCA, Women for Women International and AWID (Association of Women in Development). Hilary was a strong advocate and driver of change in Soroptimist Clubs, moving them to a shared agenda of delivering awareness, advocacy and action which increased the impact of the organisation on a national and international scale. One of the benefits of this was enabling SI to maintain its consultative status with the UN and advocate for change at a global level. Consultative status allows representatives of SI to attend UN meetings, commissions and conferences, submit written and verbal statements under agenda items of relevance, and join in partnership with other NGOs to develop and submit collective statements. Soroptimists have an ongoing challenge to make their voices heard in the UN and other relevant assemblies to fulfil their mission to improve the lives of women and girls worldwide through education and leadership. Soroptimists are known at the UN and the work of the UN has become more visible and tangible to the Soroptimist membership through Hilary Ratcliffe's inspiration, commitment and skill.

