

SI Where We Stand Statement Leadership

Soroptimist International is committed to the empowerment of women as leaders and decision makers, yet recognises that women are consistently under-represented in positions of leadership. Structural barriers as well as differences in access to resources and capacities render women less likely to achieve leadership positions than their male counterparts. Women's participation in decision-making, at local, national, and international levels is a fundamental prerequisite for the realisation of equality, sustainable development, and peace. Not only does the inclusion of women's voices and a gendered perspective improve their status, but works to improve society as a whole. All women and girls, regardless of their educational attainment, are entitled to have their voices heard and to take on leadership roles in their families, communities, and beyond.

Soroptimist International urges governments to:

- Endorse the "Women's Empowerment Principles: Equality Means Business" and encourage the private sector to sign up and report on the principles;
- Uphold and implement areas of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Beijing Platform for Action which address the importance of women's representation in leadership and decision making and take notice of CEDAW's General Recommendation Number 23 on women in political and public life;
- Support the work of international partnerships such as the Inter-Parliamentarian Union to increase the percentage of women in government;
- Implement efficient methods to augment gender equality in leadership positions;
- Eliminate all forms of violence directed towards women in positions of power or those participating in elections;
- Monitor and report on women's participation in politics and decision making at all levels;
- Adopt UN Women's recommendation to "encourage greater involvement of women who may be marginalized, including indigenous women, women with disabilities, women from rural areas and women of any ethnic, cultural or religious minority, in decision-making at all levels, and address and counter the barriers faced by marginalized women in accessing and participating in politics and decision-making at all levels".

Soroptimist International will continue to:

- Encourage girls from an early age to participate in decision-making and to learn the skills necessary to become leaders, championing the SI theme "educate to lead";
- Harness the power of the media and new technologies to promote women's participation in leadership and decision-making;
- Adopt a life course approach to women's participation, working towards a world where women's voices are equally represented throughout their lifetimes;
- Support initiatives which ensure that decision making processes are participatory, responsive, equitable, and inclusive;
- Provide educational and leadership opportunities to women and girls to ensure that there is equal access to the capabilities necessary to successfully and confidently take on positions of power and influence;
- Recognise that achieving gender balances in leadership is about all sectors – government, civil service, private sector, political parties, trade unions, the judiciary, employers' organisations, academic institutions, and any other collective which can influence lives.

Soroptimist International:

- **Educates** society as a whole on the benefits of equal representation of women and men in decision making;
- **Empowers** women and girls with the skills, confidence, and capabilities necessary for taking on leadership and decision-making positions in the family, in their communities, in the private sector, in the public sector, and in local, national, and international government bodies;
- **Enables opportunities** for women and girls through lobbying and advocacy for increased representation.

For more information see www.soroptimistinternational.org