

SI Where We Stand Statement Aging

Soroptimist International calls immediate attention to the growing population of older women and denounces the tendency for women beyond reproductive age to be invisible not just from policies and programmes, but from society as a whole. Women have often experienced a lifetime of discrimination which culminates in a multitude of challenges faced in the post-reproductive years, including a lack of security, protection, access to resources, access to education, and access to health care. Soroptimist International champions a life-course approach of educating, empowering, and enabling opportunities for women at all ages, including the specific needs of older women.

Soroptimist International urges governments to:

- Ratify, implement without reservations, and monitor all international treaties and agreements relating to older women, particularly the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, and take into consideration CEDAW's General Recommendation 27 on Women and Ageing;
- Adopt the WHO's recommended three pillar approach of ensuring older women have non-discriminatory access to participation, health, and security;
- Address with immediate effect any laws or practices which render women financially insecure in older age, including differential retirement ages, lack of policies which allow women to fulfil dual roles as caregivers and employees, and approaches to pensions which favour men;
- Enact and enforce legislation which eliminates all forms of violence against older women, including physical, psychological, emotional, verbal, financial abuse and exploitation, and neglect;
- Roll out and adequately fund services aimed at reducing isolation and lack of social support specifically for older women;
- Remove all barriers to older women's access to credit, financial and other productive resources, property, and inheritance, particularly for widows and unmarried older women;
- Sensitise and train authorities on age and gender related issues that affect older women;
- Collect data and evidence-based research disaggregated by age and sex to better understand the unique needs of older women.

Soroptimist International will continue to:

- Support programmes and agencies which provide services for older women, including health care, social care, independence, and recovering from abuse;
- Ensure that older women are supported to actively participate in society;
- Champion a life course approach to access to education, training, and technology;
- Lobby governments to ensure that social protection measures are in place for older women;
- Work towards changing gender stereotypes of older women, particularly the negative portrayal of older women in the media;
- Encourage health care professionals to screen for elder abuse of older women;
- Recognise and support the unique role many older women play as primary caregivers for AIDS orphans and grandchildren.

Soroptimist International:

- Provides **educational opportunities** for older women, including literacy and maths, vocational skills, technological skills, and knowledge about their rights;
- **Empowers** older women to actively participate in society and to take control over their own lives;
- **Enables opportunities** for older women to continue to live their lives to their fullest potential throughout their entire lives, not just in their societal-defined productive and reproductive years.