

SI Where We Stand Statement Sexual and Reproductive Health

Soroptimist International is committed to ending discrimination against women based on their role in reproduction. Soroptimist International adopts the definition of sexual and reproductive health set out in the Beijing Platform for Action: “reproductive health care is defined as the constellation of methods, techniques, and services that contribute to reproductive health and well-being by preventing and solving reproductive health problems. It also includes sexual health, the purpose of which is the enhancement of life and personal relations, and not merely counselling and care related to reproduction and sexually transmitted diseases.” Sexual and reproductive health is essential to women’s abilities to access educational, social, and economic opportunities.

Soroptimist International urges governments to:

- Ensure universal access to reproductive health care as defined above, including safe, effective, affordable, and acceptable methods of family planning;
- Uphold their positive human rights obligations to deliver accessible, acceptable, available, and quality sexual and reproductive health care, particularly in poor and/or rural areas;
- Recognise and address the socio-economic and demographic factors which render women more vulnerable to poor sexual and reproductive health outcomes;
- Reduce the number of unnecessary deaths related to reproductive health issues, primarily pregnancy and childbearing, by strengthening health systems through adequate numbers of primary, secondary, and tertiary health care facilities with appropriate levels of staff and supplies and necessary transportation infrastructure(s);
- Recognise and respond to the different sexual and reproductive health needs of girls and women throughout their lives, including adolescent girls and older women;
- Adopt and enforce policies to eliminate early marriage, harmful traditional practices, and acts of sexual violence which adversely impact the sexual and reproductive health of women and girls.

Soroptimist International supports:

- A human rights based approach to sexual and reproductive health;
- The rights set out in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women relating to sexual and reproductive health, in particular that women are afforded the “rights to decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children and to have access to the information, education and means to enable them to exercise these rights”;
- The rights of women to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters relating to their sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health, free of coercion, discrimination, and violence;
- Culturally appropriate programmes providing information about sexual and reproductive health;
- Using proven, effective interventions for improving reproductive health outcomes around pregnancy and childbirth, such as family planning, access to skilled birth attendants, emergency obstetric care, and free or subsidised maternity services;
- Sexual and reproductive health programmes which are tailored to the needs of specific groups of women, such as women suffering from prenatal and postpartum depression, homeless; women, refugees and asylum seekers, teenage mothers, women living with HIV, women who have experienced female genital cutting, and others.

Soroptimist International will:

- **Educate** women and girls about their rights and provide the information needed to access appropriate sexual and reproductive health care, whilst also educating men and boys about the shared responsibility of child-bearing and other matters relating to sexuality and reproduction;
- **Empower** women and girls with the skills and confidence needed to take control over their sexual and reproductive health;
- **Enable** women and girls to make decisions relating to their sexual and reproductive health free from discrimination by working within the wider community to raise awareness and increase understanding about these issues.