

SI Where We Stand Statement Gender Based Violence

Soroptimist International is committed to end all forms of violence which affect women and girls disproportionately. Gender-based violence occurs in the family, in the general community, and through actions perpetrated or condoned by the State. Whatever form it takes, gender-based violence is deeply rooted in historical inequalities, power imbalances, and gender based discrimination. Gender based violence is a violation of human rights and affects the ability of women and girls to reach their full potential and participate in society.

Soroptimist International urges governments to:

- ratify and implement without reservation all international conventions and treaties which directly and indirectly address gender-based violence, and actively engage in accountability mechanisms contained therein;
- without delay enact or reform legislation to criminalise all forms of gender-based violence and enforce legislation with appropriate prosecutions of perpetrators;
- reject any differentiation between the public and private sphere as a justification for gender-based violence;
- ensure that front line responders have adequate resources and training to respond quickly to all incidents of gender-based violence with gender specific compassion, understanding and respect;
- recognise that gender based violence poses significant financial costs to society and that prevention of violence has real economic benefits;
- invest in initiatives to make public spaces safe, particularly for women and girls;
- adequately fund effective resources and appropriate support services to victim/survivors of violence, including safe shelter, access to legal services, and medical and psychological treatment at no cost to the victim/survivor;
- recognise that some groups are at particular risk, including migrants, refugees, indigenous women and girls, rural women and girls, women and girls living with disabilities, HIV positive women and girls, women and girls living with mental health challenges, and women and girls facing multiple discriminations (such as sexual orientation and gender identity, race, and ethnicity);
- take all necessary steps to ensure that gender-based violence is never used as a tool of war, and that women and girls living in conflict affected areas are fully protected;
- address any increased risks of gender-based violence in areas affected by natural disasters;
- ensure robust systems are in place and utilised to collect reliable data and statistics disaggregated by sex relating to violence, and ensure that the collection of this data does not endanger women or girls in any way.

Soroptimist International will continue to:

- support a human-rights based approach to eliminating gender-based violence;
- engage in behaviour change work focussing on the message that eliminating gender-based violence benefits everyone;
- support programmes which educate girls and boys, at an appropriate age, about healthy and respectful relationships;
- work to ensure that schools and other educational settings are not sites of gender-based violence and that girls, young women, and women can access to education without the threat of violence;
- raise awareness in the community on the harmful effects that gender-based violence has on all members of society, and work to break the cycle of violence, provide support to services which offer needed services to victim/survivors as they rebuild their lives.

Soroptimist International:

- **educates** at individual, community, and societal levels about acceptable and unacceptable practices, gender equality, and rights as the single best primary prevention intervention to reduce incidents of gender-based violence;
- **empowers** women and girls to create meaningful, lasting change whereby women are given control and choice, the freedom to exercise agency, and to be decision-makers over their own lives;
- **enables** opportunities by creating societies which support victim/survivors through access to services and resources, to justice, and to economic independence.