

Why Women and Girls?

Soroptimist means "best for women" and that's what we strive to be—an organization of women at their best helping other women to be their best. As a volunteer organization of business and professional women we feel uniquely qualified to help women and girls live their dreams.

It's true that both men and women live in poverty, face discrimination and must overcome obstacles. But throughout history—in every country in the world—women and girls face additional obstacles and discrimination solely because of their gender.

Why do women and girls need our help? Consider the following:

- One in three women have been beaten, coerced into sex or otherwise abused in their lifetime.
- According to a recent report, of the 600,000-800,000 people trafficked across international borders annually, 80 percent are female.
- Women work two-thirds of the world's working hours but earn only 10 percent of the world's income, and own less than 1 percent of the world's property.
- Of a total 550 million working poor, 330 million (60 percent) are women.
- The United Nations estimates that globally women's unpaid care is worth up to \$11 trillion annually.
- Two-thirds of the 880 million illiterate adults are women.
- Of the more than 110 million children not in school, approximately 60 percent are girls.
- By age 18, girls have received an average of 4.4 years less education than boys.
- In some countries in sub-Saharan Africa, adolescent girls have HIV rates up to five times higher than adolescent boys.
- Pregnancies and childbirth-related health problems take the lives of nearly 146,000 teenage girls each year.
- An estimated 450 million adult women in developing countries are stunted, a direct result of malnutrition in early life.
- Two million girls and women are subjected to female genital mutilation every year, and thousands suffer needlessly from obstetric fistula.