

Why Women and Girls?

Consider This:



- 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.

Gender discrimination often begins at a young age—in some cases even before birth—and girl children are devalued and discriminated against throughout the world. In many cultures, girls are considered to have little or no value, and therefore poor families often opt not to educate their female children. Without an education, women are less likely to find sustaining work at a living wage, and are more likely to remain poor throughout their lifetimes.

Because of the prevalence of gender discrimination, harmful practices such as female genital mutilation, female infanticide and pre-natal sex selection are still widespread. Additionally, the devaluation of women leads to girls and women being sold into human bondage and sexual slavery. Women also experience discrimination in food allocation and lack of access to health care, which results in lower survival rates. And women around the world experience sexual abuse and domestic violence on a daily basis.

By initiating club projects that benefit women and girls, and by honoring women who help women and girls, Soroptimist clubs and members improve the status of women and girls. Soroptimist projects and programs aid women economically, and empower them to make positive changes in their lives and their communities.