

Improving the lives of women and girls, in local communities and throughout the world.



SOROPTIMIST
Best for Women

2008-2009 Program Impact Report

Soroptimist International of the Americas 2008-2009 Program Impact Report

In 19 countries and territories, Soroptimist International of the Americas (SIA) club members work to improve the lives of women and girls. Through their participation in SIA programs, as well as through myriad unique projects, clubs are able to address issues that affect women and girls. Some of these include education, employment status, healthcare, disaster recovery, domestic violence, sexual assault, and sex trafficking. The resulting collective impact is extraordinary. In 2008-2009, more than \$2 million was distributed through federation programs, helping nearly 20,000 women and girls live their dreams of a better life.

When clubs participate in SIA programs, and/or give money to ensure the programs remain strong, they become part of an international effort to improve the lives of women and girls. This report details the impact of those efforts and illustrates the power of women helping women.

Soroptimist Women's Opportunity Awards

Soroptimist Club Grants for Women and Girls enable clubs to make a real difference. Established in 1972, the Women's Opportunity Awards is SIA's signature program. It helps women who have suffered hardships, such as poverty and abuse, to reclaim and live their dreams. Award recipients are able to obtain the skills training and education they need to improve their employment status and standard of living—for themselves and their families.

In 2008-2009, the financial and personal impact of the program was impressive. For the fifth year in a row, almost \$1.5 million was disbursed in club, region and federation funds. In 2008-2009, 1,047 clubs gave awards to a combined total of 1,173 women. This marked an 8 percent increase over last year, boosting club participation in the program to 74 percent.

This increase was due, in large part, to a new club participation incentive program: each region with 100 percent participation received a laptop computer for their region winner. The incentive was a success—15 regions achieved 100 percent participation—up from 11 last year: América del Sur, Camino Real, Desert Coast, Eastern Canada, Founder, Golden West, Korea, Mexico/Centroamérica, Midwestern, Northeastern, Philippines, Rocky Mountain, Sierra Nevada, Sierra Pacific, and Southern.

As a separate incentive, Japan regions achieving 50 percent participation received an additional \$1,000 in award monies. Two Japan regions reached 50 percent participation: Japan Kita and Japan Minami.

Also, as a result of increased participation, nine regions will receive additional \$3,000 awards in the 2009-2010 club year: Eastern Canada, Japan Kita, Japan Minami, Japan Nishi, Korea, Philippines, North Atlantic, Northwestern and South Central. One region, Japan Chuo, will receive an additional \$6,000. The region awards for 2009-2010 will total \$407,000—a \$30,000 increase in funding over last year.

In total, 96 percent of clubs in the United States participated, a 4 percent increase over last year; while 40 percent of clubs in Japan participated, a 9 percent increase.

Women's Opportunity Awards Impact:

- 1,047 clubs participated
- 1,173 women's lives were improved
- \$1,453,198 was disbursed

Cost per changed life: \$1,238.87

SIA's federation-level recipients for the 2008-2009 Soroptimist Women's Opportunity Awards are: Lisa Wuthrich Curless of Bountiful, Utah, USA; Xiu Man Huang of Tai Chung County, Taiwan; and Miki Kitamura of Otsu City, Shiga, Japan.

Last year, at age 35, Lisa Wuthrich Curless became a widow after her husband committed suicide on his 45th birthday. During the course of their 15-year marriage, Lisa was a stay-at-home mom tending to the needs of their four children, currently ranging in age from 5 to 14. Her husband worked outside the home and managed the household finances. Upon her husband's death, Lisa discovered they were bankrupt, owing hundreds of thousands of dollars to lenders and the government. Her house was foreclosed and her car was repossessed. Lisa found herself lacking the financial management skills and formal education she now needed as a single mother. However, she was determined to survive and knew that getting an education was "absolutely necessary" in order to take proper care of her children. With the help of the Women's Opportunity Awards, Lisa is now working toward her degree in dental hygiene at Salt Lake Community College and is determined to give her children the life they deserve.



Lisa Curless

Because of her caregiving responsibilities, Xiu Man Huang was unable to work outside her home and was struggling financially. She cares for her two adult children who are severely disabled, as well as visiting her chronically ill husband at a long-term care facility. To support herself, Xiu Man learned to make handicrafts at home. She wasn't having much success and decided to try Internet marketing strategies to sell her products, even though she had never used a computer. With the help of the Women's Opportunity Awards, Xiu Man was able to receive computer training. Today, she is making her products at home and selling them online, while caring for her family.



Xiu Man Huang

As a child, Miki Kitamura had been hospitalized several times. The doctors treated her so kindly, she dreamed of becoming a doctor herself some day. While studying for a career in medicine at Shiga University of



Miki Kitamura

Laptop Giveaway a Success

For 2008-2009, each region that reached 100 participation in the Women's Opportunity Awards program received a laptop computer for their region winner. As a result of this incentive, overall club participation increased by 8 percent and 15 regions achieved 100 percent participation. And, most important, 15 women received laptop computers. The value of owning a laptop while



Northeastern Region award recipient Morgan Hepple and daughter.

in school cannot be overstated. Morgan Hepple, the Northeastern Region award recipient, commented: "In this day and age it is essential for a successful woman to own a computer. Having this laptop made my life so much easier, more convenient and really has made me feel like I belong in school ... the positives are endless ... and I truly appreciate this gift." Another award recipient, Lisa Wuthrich Curless, Rocky Mountain Region award recipient (also one of three federation finalists), believes that "awarding the computers to women who are in need is just as important as giving them money." For as Lisa notes: "Having information and technology readily available has aided my education greatly ... I am so grateful that I was awarded the computer."

Medical Science, however, she learned that as a result of her father's sudden death, she and her family were in serious debt. As the oldest, Miki became the head of the household, struggling to pay for school and support her family. Miki calls the Women's Opportunity Awards an "inspiration and blessing" and has been using her awards to finish school.

Thanks to the Soroptimist Women's Opportunity Awards, women like Lisa, Xiu Man and Miki have reclaimed their dreams, and look forward to a better future.

Soroptimists STOP Trafficking

The anti-trafficking project, Soroptimists STOP Trafficking, continued into a second successful year. About 190 clubs reported conducting some type of anti-trafficking awareness project such as sponsoring speakers, workshops and symposiums—with some clubs hosting events on the web in real time. Many events garnered media attention, and across the federation clubs continued to distribute trafficking awareness flyers, cards and other information.

The diversity and creativity of club projects is illustrated in the range of projects completed. For example, SI/Gallup, New Mexico, USA, developed a campaign and website called Pennies

for Protection. The campaign's goal is for 1,000 women to donate 1,000 pennies to help fund a trafficking victims' shelter in southern New Mexico. In order to promote the campaign, each member put a link to the website, 1000pennies.com, in their email signature. In another example, SI/Chiba, Japan, partnered with city councilors in a signature collection campaign to remove from the Chiba city library adult movies that had been purchased with taxpayers' money. The club also worked to get pornographic magazines removed from convenience and book stores in their community, and developed trafficking awareness projects for elementary and middle school students.



SI/Manila Tourist Belt, Philippines, members partnered with local government agencies to enact a sex trafficking education and prevention campaign.

Soroptimist Violet Richardson Award

Each year, Soroptimist is proud to honor the volunteer efforts of young women between the ages of 14-17 through the Soroptimist Violet Richardson Award program. During the 2008-2009 club year, 741 clubs (53 percent) participated, recognizing 866 girls whose volunteer actions have made their community and the world a better place. Across the federation, clubs and regions awarded \$240,182 to girls and \$90,145 to their volunteer organizations. SIA awarded an additional \$58,500, for a grand total of \$388,827, to girls and their volunteer organizations.

Stephanie Davis of Trumbull, Connecticut, is the 2008-2009 federation Violet Richardson Award recipient. The 15-year-old started volunteering as a child, going with her mother to a shelter for homeless women. When she was 11, she wanted to do more, and connected with the Lighthouse Program in Bridgeport, an after-school enrichment program. Volunteering in two of the schools, she helps students with homework, has been involved in clothing drives, and in 2008 helped raise \$5,495 resulting in scholarships for more than 60 children. Stephanie also volunteers to raise awareness about autism. As the federation finalist, the Lighthouse Program received \$2,500 in Stephanie's name.



Stephanie Davis

Soroptimist Club Grants for Women and Girls

Soroptimist Club Grants for Women and Girls enable clubs to make a real difference in the lives of women and girls in their communities by addressing specific local needs. In March 2008, SIA received 97 proposals requesting more than \$674,000 in funding. A task force made up of members of the SIA Program Council reviewed the proposals and recommended funding to the SIA president for approval.

For the 2008-2009 club year, a total of \$175,000 was granted to 37 Soroptimist clubs for new or ongoing projects. Grants

ranged from \$1,000 to \$10,000 and were given to clubs in eight different countries: Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador, Japan, Panama, the Philippines, Taiwan and the United States. To date, 34 grant projects have been completed, and have helped improve the lives of almost 12,000 women and girls. The grants not only helped women and girls, they also helped the clubs. Of the clubs that have submitted a final report, 74 percent gained new members and 80 percent received media coverage as a result of the funded projects. Regardless of whether a club has applied for or received a grant, all Soroptimist clubs can celebrate in the success of the grant-funded projects to positively impact local women and girls.



SI/Curitiba-Batel, Brazil, received a \$3,500 Soroptimist Club Grant for Women and Girls for its Building the Future project, which will provide three sewing shops enabling women and girls to produce and sell fabric shopping bags. In addition, the club will also provide educational training on customer service and entrepreneurship.

Soroptimist Club Grants for Women and Girls Impact

- 4,858 women and girls attended public awareness events on the topic of sex trafficking
- 3,909 women received education and/or support services geared toward their needs as mothers
- 1,203 girls attended after-school or weekend personal development and/or violence prevention workshops
- 1,003 women received educational support, job training and/or help securing employment
- 633 domestic violence and/or rape victims and their families received shelter, support, employment training and/or counseling
- 117 women received dental care
- 295 women received free reproductive health care services

Total number of women and girls helped: 11,901
Cost per changed life: \$14.70

Soroptimist Club Grants Recipients 2008-2009

- SI/Antipolo, Philippines: \$8,000, Providing Health Alternatives
- SI/Big Bear Valley, Big Bear Lake, California, USA: \$6,500, Camp Girl Power
- SI/Burlingame-San Mateo, California, USA: \$1,500, Soroptimist Hillside Mentoring Project
- SI/Canton/Stark County, North Canton, Ohio, USA: \$10,000, Furnishing a Fresh Start
- SI/Catanduva, Brazil: \$3,000, Women of Alpino
- SI/Central Yavapai Sunrise, Prescott Valley, Arizona, USA: \$1,500, Heart for Art
- SI/Chicago, Illinois, USA: \$1,500, Body and Sold
- SI/Coronado, California, USA: \$2,000, Live Your Dream: Helping Women Stay in School
- SI/Crescent City, California, USA: \$2,000, Rape Crisis Comfort Kits
- SI/Curitiba, Brazil: \$2,500, Stitch to Stitch
- SI/Curitiba-Batel, Brazil: \$3,500, Building the Future
- SI/Five Points Magneta, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA: \$3,500, The Journey of Hope
- SI/Fukuoka-Kita, Fukuoka, Japan: \$5,000, Japanese Language Classes
- SI/Fukuoka-Minami, Fukuoka, Japan: \$7,500, Stop Trafficking and Exploitive International Marriages
- SI/Garden City, Idaho, USA: \$5,000, FACES Play Area
- SI/Hiroshima, Japan: \$5,000, Parent Effectiveness Training
- SI/Hofu, Japan: \$5,000, Raising Awareness of Teen Dating Violence
- SI/Hope Baguio, Baguio City, Philippines: \$10,000, Hub of Hope
- SI/Ibarra, Ecuador: \$8,500, Promising Future
- SI/Imabari, Japan: \$1,000, Are You Aware of Teen Dating Violence?
- SI/Indianapolis, Indiana, USA: \$1,500, Making a House a Home
- SI/Makati, Philippines: \$7,000, Women's Empowerment Through Health
- SI/Manassas, Virginia, USA: \$4,000, Transitional Housing
- SI/Muskogee, Oklahoma, USA: \$5,000, Mother's Touch
- SI/Panama-Pacifico, Panama City, Panama: \$8,000, Formando Estrellas
- SI/Pasos de los Libres, Corrientes, Argentina: \$7,000, Child Care Training
- SI/Riverside, California, USA: \$5,000, Live Your Dream Conference
- SI/Roseville, California, USA: \$2,000, From SI/Roseville with Love
- SI/Saguaro Foothills, Carefree, Arizona, USA: \$2,500, Star Power Workshop
- SI/Salem, Oregon, USA: \$2,000, Coffee Creek Release Kits
- SI/Salt Lake City, Utah, USA: \$7,000, Possibilities
- SI/San Juan, Philippines: \$6,000, Bags for Life
- SI/Santos, San Paulo, Brazil: \$4,000, Sewing to Grow
- SI/Stilwell, Oklahoma, USA: \$1,000, Bumble Bee Clothes Closet
- SI/Taichung Hsien, Taiwan: \$10,000, Anti-Trafficking Film Festival
- SI/Valenzuela, Philippines: \$5,000, Soroptimist Skills Scholars
- SI/Winslow, Arizona, USA: \$5,500, Alice's Place

Soroptimist Disaster Recovery Fund for Women and Girls

Soroptimist continues to focus on the special needs of women and girls after disaster strikes. During the 2008-2009 club year, four disaster recovery grants were given for a total of \$70,000. The Philippines Region; SI/Kalibo, Aklan, Philippines; SI/Cedar Rapids/Marion, Iowa, USA; and SI/Blumenau Leste, Blumenau, Brazil, all received grants to help women and girls recover from



Disaster relief fund recipient, SI/Kalibo, Philippines, works to provide women and girls with the assistance and resources needed to rebuild their lives after a typhoon devastated the community.

devastating typhoons and floods. Disaster recovery projects included: building a multipurpose hall where women can learn skills to preserve food, grow vegetables and sew dresses; reconstruction of livelihood centers where women can learn income-generating skills; renovation and restoration

of part of a shelter for homeless women and their children; and providing food, medical supplies and other immediate necessities to affected girls and their families.

SIA also aided disaster recovery efforts in the wake of political violence that erupted throughout Kenya in December 2007 as a result of disputed general elections. Political clashes resulted in nearly 500 deaths and a displacement of 255,000 people from their homes. SIA members donated \$52,000; and in June 2008, SIA sent the donations to Soroptimist International of Europe for distribution to Soroptimist clubs in Kenya. Seven clubs received funds to support women and/or girl-focused disaster recovery

projects. Funds ranged from \$2,700 to \$11,800 and were used to provide women and girls with basic necessities, financial support to start or restart businesses, and/or to attend school. As a result, 418 women and 688 girls were helped. In addition, several of the projects are ongoing and will continue

to provide women and girls with the support they need to fully re-establish their lives.

Soroptimist Ruby Award: For Women Helping Women

The Soroptimist Ruby Award (formerly the Making a Difference for Women Award) honors women who have worked through their professional or volunteer efforts to improve the lives of other women and girls. In 2008-2009, club participation rose from 35 to 36 percent with a total of 511 awards given through-

out the federation. Clubs gave a combined total of \$123,700 to the recipients' charitable organizations. In addition, 154 new club members were gained, with 238 clubs receiving media attention as a result of the program.

In September and October last year, Soroptimists were asked to contribute ideas for new names for the award. Nearly 200 suggestions were received. The choices were narrowed down to two: The Soroptimist Ruby Award: For Women Helping Women and The Soroptimist Best for Women Award: For Women Helping Women. After online judging in all federation languages with 2,399 votes received, the winner was The Soroptimist Ruby Award: For Women Helping Women with 57 percent of the vote.

Edelvira Goes Ramos of Curitiba, Brazil, is the recipient of Soroptimist's 2008-2009 newly renamed Ruby Award. Since 1985, Edelvira, has been devoting her life to helping women in the Curitiba municipal district of Brazil. After seeing the needs of working mothers, she founded the "Solidary Mother Support Home," a day care center whose mission is to give community mothers a safe place to leave their children while the mothers are at work. Each day, she continues to transform the lives of women in her community, helping them with self-esteem, creating jobs and income, supporting domestic violence victims, and helping young, pregnant girls. "I thank God and Soroptimist for this award, which will allow our work to continue growing, helping women and girls to achieve their best," she said.



Edelvira Ramos

Soroptimist Ruby Award: For Women Helping Women

- 528 outstanding women were honored with the award
- \$95,840 was given by clubs to the recipients' charitable organizations
- 242 clubs received media attention for the award

The Soroptimist Workplace Campaign to End Domestic Violence

Women deserve to feel safe wherever they are—including the workplace. The Soroptimist Workplace Campaign to End Domestic Violence is an ongoing effort to raise awareness about this issue. In its 12th year, the program focuses on the fact that women do not leave abuse behind when they go to work. Abusers often harass women at work, by phone, e-mail, or—in worst-case scenarios—by coming to the workplace.

During November 2008, 382 clubs in five countries—Brazil, Canada, Japan, Taiwan and the United States—participated in the campaign. These clubs pledged to help victims of domestic violence and raise community awareness, particularly within the business community. As a result of the campaign, members dis-

tributed tens of thousands of domestic violence hotline cards; organized public forums; collaborated with local advocacy groups; and supported domestic violence shelters. Clubs also encouraged employers to adopt and implement policies that protect women in the workplace.

New Program Resources Created in 2008-2009

Each year, the staff at SIA headquarters works to provide clubs and members with additional information and resources to assist them in achieving the Soroptimist mission. Clubs are not asked to use all the resources available to them from headquarters. Rather, the materials are there to support clubs in areas important to women and girls in their communities. The following new resources were provided in the 2008-2009 club year:

- Participation incentive contest for the Soroptimist Women’s Opportunity Awards.
- Soroptimist Women’s Opportunity Awards and Violet Richardson Award applications made writeable in English, Spanish, Portuguese and Japanese.
- Model program kit addressing teen dating violence.
- Teen Dating Violence Bookmark translated into all federation languages.
- Tip sheet in Japanese for applying for Soroptimist Club Grants for Women and Girls.
- Soroptimists STOP Trafficking report created to document club projects.
- Soroptimist Club Matching Project, which links two clubs—a club that needs help with a project and a club interested in providing help.
- Effective Partnerships for Soroptimist Clubs, a resource for clubs wishing to form partnerships with other community organizations.
- White papers on the pay gap, work/family balance, trafficking laws in the United States, and women and HIV/AIDS.
- 86 program documents made writeable.

All of these materials, and additional resources to support federation programs, are available on the Soroptimist website at Soroptimist.org.

The Renaissance Campaign: Program Update

Goal: 100% participation in the Soroptimist Women’s Opportunity Awards.

2008-2009: 74% of clubs participated.

Goal: 90% of clubs will conduct another women or girl-focused project.

2008-2009: 99% of clubs conducted another women or girl-focused project. **Goal met!**



Goal: 90% of clubs will support an SI project.

2008-2009: 70% of clubs supported an SI project.

Goal: SIA will have an involved and influential Program Council.

2008-2009: Program Council members continue to express satisfaction and serve as a resource on program at the region and federation levels.

2008-2009 Soroptimist Program Council Members

Luisa Haydee S. DeVischi

América del Sur

Maria Lucia Noremborg

Brazil Region

Michele M. Memmott

Camino Real

Susan Haddock

Desert Coast

Jean Skillman

Eastern Canada

Linda S. Hansen

Founder

Pam Field

Golden West

Kazuko Morita

Japan Chuo

Mieko Seki

Japan Higashi

Chizuko Kamihara

Japan Kita

Asami Kinoshita

Japan Minami

Hiroko Tamura

Japan Nishi

Kisoon Son

Korea

Sonia de Gutiérrez

Mexico/Centroamérica

Cheryl M. Fouts

Midwestern

Zarita F. Mattox

North Atlantic

Shirley Smith

North Central

Heidi K. McNamar

Northeastern

Marie E. Howard

Northwestern

Leticia C. Yap

Philippines

Janice J. Fitts

Rocky Mountain

Kay Whitaker

Sierra Nevada

Roberta Bean

Sierra Pacific

Deborah K. Mackes

South Atlantic

Lou Kirby

South Central

Caroline Feagley

Southern

Hui-Ying Hsiao

Taiwan

Karima Hudda

Western Canada

For more information about the programs in this report, please contact the program department at program@soroptimist.org or visit Soroptimist.org.