

PROGRAMME ACTION – It's what we 'do'

Soroptimist Clubs and Associate Members work on 'projects' which support Soroptimist International's Vision and Mission. The overarching theme for Soroptimism is 'Educate to Lead' and projects must Educate, Enable and Empower women and girls to help them to improve their lives.

Soroptimist Clubs work, nationally and internationally on individual projects or in co-operation with other organisations and NGOs, to deliver best outcomes for the development of women and girls.

Programme action is 'the lifeblood of our organisation and the reason why we have a voice at the United Nations' (Margaret Emsley, Malta, 2016)

Some of our recent projects include:

National Activity:

Acting against violence against women and girls:

Throughout the country members of Clubs separately and collectively work to help women in danger, particularly of domestic violence, through supporting local Women's Refuges and Rape Crisis Centres, by providing much needed funding and goods to the women they serve. In particular over the past few years several Soroptimist Clubs have been involved with the White Ribbon movement, organising public meetings, workshops in schools and in 3rd Level Institutions. Soroptimists provided support to St. Oliver's Community College, Drogheda in their success in becoming the first White Ribbon School on this island.

Supporting Education:

Each Club interprets the aim of supporting education for girls in an individual way. Some Clubs provide bursaries or other financial benefits for students at second and third level, some respond in a practical way by providing subsidised meals for students. To respond to the call for more involvement by young women in STEM subjects, some clubs have an award for 2nd level students.

Our current National Project calls us to become learners ourselves, in improving our ability to utilise IT effectively.

Working with Partners in our Communities:

Clubs through the years have 'adopted' local causes and regularly support them. Thus, Soroptimists on the ground in Ireland give practical help and financial support to organisations, for example disability services - like disabled riding facilities, Special Olympics, Alzheimer's support, Meals on Wheels, 'Mary's Meals', the Croi association (to support victims of stroke) and the Open Door Centre in Bray, Co. Wicklow. Soroptimist International ROI were founders of the Carer's Association and we continue to have a very close connection with the organisation; some clubs also support 'senior help lines.

Our membership demographic makes us particularly sensitive to the need to support research into women's illnesses, so locally we support Cancer research charities, for example we have worked to raise awareness of, and research into ovarian cancer.

We are very involved in alleviating homelessness – in a very practical way one of our clubs raised funds to repair the house of a woman in their community which had been badly damaged by fire, another club funded modifications to a house in their community so that a child with disability could continue to live at home. We fundraise for the Ark Housing Association, for the Daisyhouse Organisation, so if you look at a community where there is a Soroptimist Club you will find our members hard at work.

We are very aware of the incidence of suicide in our communities, so locally we support Suicide prevention initiatives – the Darkness into Light March, local drop in and counselling services and Marine Watch in Wexford.

National Advocacy:

As a National Organisation, Soroptimist International ROI, has been proud to be a partner in the Turn Off the Red-Light Campaign, which successfully lobbied for the criminalisation of the purchase of sex. We are delighted that this Bill passed into law in 2017.

Soroptimists in ROI and in NI were invited by their respective Departments of Justice to be part of an island-wide initiative to ascertain the level of understanding of human trafficking in our communities. In ROI we polled over 1400 questionnaires and provided important evidence which will be used to form future Government action in this area. Further awareness raising on the prevalence of human trafficking saw us involved in the 'Gift Box' campaign in four centres in Ireland.

International Action:

The remit for Soroptimists is to work locally, nationally and internationally.

Soroptimist International has many projects throughout the world and the task for those of us who do not work abroad is to raise funds so that those who do are able to continue. At the moment we are specifically committed as an organisation to work for the Meru Garden Scheme in Kenya. Funds raised here in Ireland are used in Kenya to help a community to become self-sufficient in growing food, to generate income for themselves in order to educate their children.

Many of our Clubs have connections with the Irish Diaspora who work abroad as teachers, doctors and nurses, to raise fund for work with women and girls throughout Africa and South America.