

Soroptimist



International of Europe



BEST PRACTICE AWARDS 2025

WHO ARE SOROPTIMISTS?

Soroptimists are professional women who are actively engaged in their communities, who have a global vision of the world and of women's issues, and who are in touch with local challenges for women, their conditions and their rights.

What are the key focus areas Soroptimists work in?

Education
Women's Empowerment
Elimination of Violence Against Women
Health and Food Security
Sustainability

What are Soroptimist Clubs?

Soroptimists are organized into Clubs in their cities/towns/villages. All projects you will read about here are the work of one or several Clubs. Soroptimist Clubs have been around since 1921.

What are Soroptimist Unions?

When a country has more than 5 Clubs and at least 100 members it forms what's called a Union. There are 21 Soroptimist Unions across Europe, the Middle East & the Caribbean.

How many members and Clubs are there in Europe, the Middle East and the Caribbean?

Currently, 29,568 women are members of the 1,134 Soroptimist Clubs in this Federation!

How do Soroptimists advocate for women's rights?

Soroptimist International of Europe holds a consultative status at the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), a participatory status at the Council of Europe and the European Women's Lobby and contributes to the work of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

We are 'a global voice for women'!





“

These inspiring projects embody Soroptimist values: vision, partnership, and impact.

Dear friends,

It is with great pride and deep appreciation that I introduce this brochure, showcasing nine outstanding projects that reflect the passion, creativity, and commitment of our members. Every year, Soroptimists carry out thousands of impactful projects—**educating, empowering, and enabling** opportunities for women and girls, locally and globally, through awareness, advocacy, and action.

We do this because we believe that when women and girls are empowered, they transform communities and inspire a lasting change.

Among the many outstanding initiatives carried out in 2024, **134 were submitted** for this year's Best Practice Awards (BPA). The diversity and quality of these entries made selecting just a few especially difficult. I extend sincere thanks to the BPA jury for their careful evaluation and warmly congratulate every project team. Your work is deeply deserving of recognition and admiration.

The 2025 Best Practice Awards recognise excellence across our five core programme areas, alongside special distinctions: **Biennium Award, Union Best Project, New Members & Visibility**, and, for the first time, **an Advocacy Prize**. These awards shine a light on projects that empower women and girls through education, health, environmental sustainability, and the pursuit of equality and justice.

From **Belgium's theatre-based family violence education to Armenia's economic empowerment programmes**, these projects demonstrate the power of community-driven action. **Lisbon's E-WINGS toolkit** combats violence through education and advocacy, **Italy's gardening project** brings joy to elderly women, **Switzerland's campaign tackles fast fashion** through responsible consumer habits, and **Germany links climate justice and gender equality** through reforestation, education, and advocacy.

Türkiye's **“Educate the Children of the Future, Empower the Mothers!”** project strengthens families through dual learning. Meanwhile, **Italian Soroptimists led Women and Sport**, a nationwide campaign advancing gender equality in sports, and **CurarSI**, advocating for gender-sensitive healthcare through education and screenings.

These inspiring projects embody Soroptimist values: vision, partnership, and impact. They remind us of the remarkable change possible when we unite with passion and purpose. May they inspire us all to continue striving for a world that is more just, inclusive, and empowering for every woman and girl.

With gratitude and in Soroptimist friendship,

Hafdis Karlsdottir
SIE President 2024-2025

CELEBRATING INNOVATION AND IMPACT

This year's Best Practice Awards (BPA) mark a moment of celebration and reflection – we are thrilled to share a record-breaking milestone with 134 project submissions! This incredible response is a testament to the commitment of our Soroptimist sisters across the Federation.

We are inspired by the vibrant mix of ongoing initiatives, club projects that have been successfully adopted by others, and the strong partnerships forged with external organisations. These collaborations have elevated our advocacy efforts, increased our visibility, and amplified our voice on key issues. Especially noteworthy is how clubs are embracing new technologies and innovative methods – from using artificial intelligence (AI) in project design to leveraging digital tools for promotion and impact.

We also see an encouraging rise in the number of Programme Focus Reports (PFRs), showing our collective drive to document and share our work. We are especially proud of the projects rooted in communities –grass-roots initiatives that form the foundation of our advocacy and reflect the Soroptimist values.

Our five areas of focus – Education, Women's Empowerment, Elimination of Violence Against Women, Health and Food Security, and Sustainability – are well represented this year. Clubs have gone beyond traditional fundraising, finding inventive ways to create change, build awareness, and support those in need. The creativity and passion shown in promoting our focus areas have been nothing short of amazing.

We proudly present four special prizes. These include the Best Union Project and the Biennium Award for contributions to [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals \(UN SDGs\) 4 and 5](#). We continue the tradition of recognising a project that has significantly increased the public visibility of our organisation. New this year, is a Special Advocacy Prize, awarded to the project demonstrating the most significant impact in advancing our advocacy goals.

We're pleased by growing interest in webinars and workshops on innovative tools and AI – themes that align with the upcoming [SIE Congress in Krakow](#), where AI and Sustainability will be key topics.

Looking ahead, our largest campaign of the year – Orange the World – will focus on the theme [“Read the Signs of Cyberviolence”](#). We invite all clubs to stand with us in creating a digital world where women and girls are safe, respected, and free from violence and abuse.

Concluding this biennium, we extend heartfelt thanks for your support. To our BPA jurors and Bintou at SIE HQ – thank you. Together, in true team spirit, we continue to move forward with guidance, strength, and shared purpose.

Inge SCHOLTE
Programme Director

Jitka KRATOCHVÍLOVÁ
Assistant Programme Director



Inge Scholte (on the left) and
Jitka Kratochvílová (on the right)

Jury 2025

Inge SCHOLTE
SIE Programme Director, Chair of the Jury

Jitka KRATOCHVÍLOVÁ
SIE Assistant Programme Director

Sabine REIMANN
SIE President Elect

Rita NOGUEIRA RAMOS
SIE Vice President

Claudia DEISS
SIE Representative to the Organization for Security
and Co-operation in Europe

SIE BIENNIUM AWARD 2025

MEERBUSCH GOES FUTURE

Club of Meerbusch, Germany

The German Soroptimists of Meerbusch launched “Meerbusch Goes Future” (MgF) in 2024 as an ambitious response to the intertwined global challenges of gender equality, environmental sustainability, and international cooperation. Rooted in the principles of the UN Agenda 2030, this visionary project integrates advocacy, education, and action with a dual focus on [climate protection \(SDG 13\)](#) and [gender equality \(SDG 5\)](#).

The initiative emerged from the understanding that many industrialised countries focus only on local environmental actions, while the global dimension (especially the Global South) is often overlooked. To address this, the Soroptimists of Meerbusch partnered with climate-neutral companies like [Sparkasse Neuss](#) and [Kycocera](#), as well as NGOs in Nicaragua. Together, they supported the [CommuniTree](#) reforestation project, which empowers Nicaraguan smallholder families to restore degraded lands, create jobs, and improve education and health through climate-positive development.

The project operates on two levels:

- **Leading by example:** The Club measured and offset its own CO₂ footprint, with members voluntarily compensating for over 100 tons of emissions.
- **Advocating for systemic change:** The Club promoted climate justice and gender equity through educational outreach to local schools, businesses, and citizens, mobilising broad-based support for global sustainability efforts.

To overcome organisational complexity, the German Soroptimists established the non-profit association *Meerbusch Goes Future*, ensuring the project’s structure could scale and welcome external partners. The educational challenge, raising awareness of global interdependence, was addressed through a “teach the teacher” approach, led by Prof. Estelle Herlyn, Club member and academic expert on sustainable development.

The impact has been substantial. With **over 5,000 people reached**, the project has received recognition from Soroptimist International of Europe (SIE) and was **one of only two SIE projects featured in the 2024 High-Level Political Forum Report at the United Nations**.

Meerbusch Goes Future proves that grassroots projects, when well-coordinated, inclusive, and visionary, can inspire action, shift mindsets, and advance the SDGs globally. The German Soroptimists have created a model that is ready to be replicated by Soroptimist Clubs worldwide.

PROJECT ACHIEVED BY:

- Offsetting CO₂ via reforestation in Nicaragua.
- Raising awareness locally on climate and SDGs.
- Creating a structure to engage long-term partners.

WOMEN & GIRLS REACHED:

5,000 (416 new farmer families in 2024)

FUNDS RAISED BY THE CLUB:

€11,000

USEFUL LINKS:

- <https://www.meerbuschgoesfuture.de/>
- https://www.instagram.com/meerbusch_goes_future/



PARTNERS:

- Sparkasse Neuss
- Kycocera
- *myclimate*, an NGO developing international climate protection projects
- Plan Vivo
- Taking Root – a local NGO in Nicaragua working with the farmers



SIE – CommuniTree Reforestation, Nicaragua



Meerbusch Goes Future is one example of how Soroptimist International of Europe (SIE) are working to combat climate change and support women and girls negatively impacted by it.

The project is an initiative established by the SI Meerbusch Club in Germany, working in partnership with the local landings bank Sparkease Finance and a local company called Xytora.

The project works to raise awareness and advocate for climate mitigation and environmental protection among local stakeholders in the town of Meerbusch, including companies, schools, and its citizens. Engaging the local community has subsequently triggered private and entrepreneur-led action in the Great South – in particular, in Nicaragua. Smallholder farmer families are working on different parts of their land that have become barren. Smallholders probably produce 22 per cent of the world's food but are among the poorest people in the world. Therefore, increasing the forest area leads to new job and employment opportunities for local people and an increased understanding about the importance of maintaining forested land.

SI Meerbusch partnered with three other non-governmental organizations. They created a Green project developer for international climate protection projects, Green Club, an organization certifying the impact of projects that provide environmental and social benefits.

to communities, including CO₂ accountability, and SI Taking Roots – a local NGO in Nicaragua working with local farmers. Since the project began in 2020, 29 other SI European Clubs have become involved in the initiative.

In 2023, SIE collected EUR 12,000 for the CommuniTree project, which equals approximately 3,000 trees planted and approximately 20 tonnes of CO₂ absorbed by those trees. Over the year, CommuniTree restored 3,720 hectares of land and saved 866,888 certified avian carbon credits. In addition to removing carbon from the atmosphere, the programme has supported 173 local people, including farmers, to grow and sell their own produce. Going beyond supporting those local people, the project has also improved the quality and biodiversity of the land through improved soil quality and biodiversity restoration.

TESTIMONIAL

Lena is a farmer working on the CommuniTree Reforestation project and said: "I have children and grandchildren, and I will leave my best inheritance to my trees."



SI-Club jetzt klimaneutral

Der Soroptimist International-Club Meerbusch ist der erste klimaneutrale SI-Club Deutschlands und fördert die umweltschonende



Praxis der CO₂-Emissionen der Clubs Prof. Dr. Birgit Herberich, die als Mitglied im Vorstand der Initiative für die Entwicklung und Förderung von Klimaschutzprojekten in der Region, werden sie bestreben, die CO₂-Emissionen der Clubs zu reduzieren und die CO₂-Emissionen der Clubs zu kompensieren.

Meerbusch, „Der Zeit für dieses Projekt war endlich gekommen“, erklärt Club-Präsidentin Britta Scholz. „Laut dem SI-Mitglied Dr. Birgit Herberich, die als Mitglied im Vorstand der Initiative für die Entwicklung und Förderung von Klimaschutzprojekten in der Region, werden sie bestreben, die CO₂-Emissionen der Clubs zu reduzieren und die CO₂-Emissionen der Clubs zu kompensieren.“

CO₂ Werte werden ermittelt. Hierzu werden die CO₂-Emissionen der Clubs ermittelt, wie viel CO₂ sie im Rahmen ihrer Clubaktivitäten ausstoßen. Dieses wird dann durch die CO₂-Emissionen der Clubs abgezogen und der Rest ist die CO₂-Emission der Clubs. Dieser Rest wird durch die CO₂-Emissionen der Clubs abgezogen und der Rest ist die CO₂-Emission der Clubs.

Der Ausgleich der eigenen CO₂-Emissionen für die SI-Club Meerbusch übernimmt die Initiative für die Entwicklung und Förderung von Klimaschutzprojekten in der Region, werden sie bestreben, die CO₂-Emissionen der Clubs zu reduzieren und die CO₂-Emissionen der Clubs zu kompensieren.



SPECIAL AWARD “NEW MEMBERS & VISIBILITY”

WOMEN AND SPORT: THE LONG ROAD TO EQUALITY Union of Italy

To mark the centennial of [Alfonsina Strada](#)’s historic participation in the 1924 Giro d’Italia (the only woman to ever compete in Italy’s most prestigious cycling race and one of the world’s toughest endurance competitions), the Italian Soroptimists launched “Women and Sport: The Long Road to Equality”, a national campaign blending advocacy, education, and cultural celebration. This ambitious project placed gender equality in sport at the heart of public conversation and became a catalyst for new partnerships, expanded outreach, and increased membership engagement across Italy.

The project raised visibility on an unprecedented scale: over **502,000 people** were reached via national and local media, while **13,400 women** took part directly in project activities. It mobilised **54 Soroptimist Clubs**, engaged **103 municipalities** to adopt the Ethical Charter for Women’s Sport, and influenced policymakers at regional and national levels.

Launched in Cortina—host city of the upcoming 2026 Winter Olympics—the initiative strategically positioned Soroptimists as champions of gender equity in elite and grassroots sport. Italian Clubs hosted public debates, school workshops, inclusive tournaments, and cultural events highlighting the barriers faced by female athletes. A standout action was the successful petitioning of the Italian government to issue a national stamp in honour of Alfonsina Strada, giving nationwide visibility to the project’s message.

The campaign also led to the creation of a powerful fundraising and reintegration programme.

In partnership with the fashion house [ASPESI](#) and women’s prisons, the Soroptimists produced and sold designer pochettes, raising **€20,000** for job training and scholarships. Art exhibitions and cycling events featuring inspirational women athletes further enriched the initiative.

At its core, this project is a model of how strategic advocacy, storytelling, and grassroots mobilisation can increase visibility for Soroptimist values while attracting new audiences and members. With **4,916 hours** of volunteer time invested and innovative activities spanning all generations, the Italian Union has demonstrated how sport can be a powerful vehicle for inclusion, empowerment, and institutional change.

Through *Women and Sport*, the Italian Soroptimists brought their mission to centre stage: **expanding networks, inspiring new memberships, and reshaping narratives of what women can achieve.**

PROJECT ACHIEVED BY:

- Promoting and securing the adoption of the Ethical Charter nationwide.
- Raising visibility through media and major sporting events.
- Engaging communities with inclusive sports and education programmes.

WOMEN & GIRLS REACHED: 515,400

FUNDS RAISED BY THE UNION: €227,130



PARTNERS:

Led by the Union of Italy **with no financial support from partners.** Main partners:

- ASSIST: Provided the Ethical Charter for Women’s Sport
- 103 municipalities, ANCI Campania & Lazio, Tuscany Region: Adopted the Charter
- CONI, FIDAL, FIAB, UISP, Panathlon: Supported its promotion
- RCS Sport & Giro d’Italia Women: Gave visibility at race stages
- Toponomastica femminile, G.I.U.L.I.A., Osservatorio di Pavia, 100 Donne Contro gli Stereotipi: Collaborated in the Cortina conference



Alfonsa Rosa Maria Morini, in Strada, la prima ciclista donna a competere in gare maschili come il Giro di Lombardia e il Giro d'Italia. E' ritenuta tra le pioniere della partecipazione tra sport maschile e femminile. Il Blockhaus, la salita più alta del Giro d'Italia, è denominata anche "Cima Alfonsina Strada", alla memoria della ciclista che prese parte al Giro d'Italia maschile del 1924.

Comune di Pistoia, località Montemarzino, 6/11/2024



DONNE SPORT

GenerAzioni di Sport



DONNE SPORT

GenerAzioni di Sport
unione nell'impegno



SPECIAL AWARD “ADVOCACY PRIZE”

CURARSI – SI CARES: A SOROPTIMIST APPROACH TO HEALTH Union of Italy

Medical research and healthcare systems have historically been built around the male body, leaving women underrepresented and underdiagnosed. Globally, women account for only around 41.2 % of participants in clinical trials, particularly in areas like cardiology and cancer¹. In response, the Italian Soroptimists launched *CurarSI*, an advocacy-led project throughout 2024 to confront gender inequities in healthcare.

This initiative addressed the fact that women often prioritise caregiving over their own health and that diagnostic tools and treatments are still largely based on male data. *CurarSI* began with a national conference in Milan in May, co-organised with Lombardy Region and Fondazione Onda. Spearheaded by regional officials and healthcare experts, this event became a pivotal moment, making gender medicine a national priority.

Advocacy lay at the heart of *CurarSI*. Italian Soroptimists forged strong alliances with medical institutions, scientific associations, and volunteer organisations. They promoted a new model of healthcare tailored to women’s needs by:

- Mobilising **70 Soroptimist Clubs** across Italy to organise health screenings, conferences, and campaigns focused on women’s diseases, such as breast cancer, cardiovascular conditions, and osteoporosis.
- Conducting **free screenings**, including innovative radiation-free bone density tests (R.E.M.S.), to directly address prevention gaps.

- Hosting “**pink walks**” and educational events that empowered communities with knowledge about women-specific health risks and healthy lifestyles.

In total, *CurarSI* reached **over 1,000 women** through screening and over **20,000 individuals** via outreach activities. It also fostered a new **regional alliance against cardiomyopathies** and deepened collaboration with Local Health Authorities.

The project combined practical interventions with cultural transformation, shifting public discourse and policy. With its high media profile, grassroots energy, and institutional partnerships, *CurarSI* reinforced Soroptimist’s standing in both local and national health policy arenas.

In very measurable ways, *CurarSI* empowered women to take control of their health, improved early disease detection, and helped embed gender-sensitive practices within Italian healthcare. Through advocacy, education, and action, the Soroptimists of Italy have shown how community-led initiatives can catalyse systemic change.

1- <https://www.medidata.com/en/life-science-resources/medidata-blog/women-in-clinical-trials-history/>

PROJECT ACHIEVED BY:

- Organizing awareness events, conferences, and screenings.
- Building advocacy partnerships with institutions.
- Engaging 70 Soroptimist Clubs in coordinated local actions.

WOMEN & GIRLS REACHED: 20,516

FUNDS RAISED BY THE UNION: €47,652



PARTNERS:

Led by the Union of Italy **with no financial support from partners**. Main partners:

- Regione Lombardia and Fondazione Onda
- Local Health Authorities
- Local branches of LILT, FEDIOS, and AICARM, along with scientific associations and pharmacies



SII Club Prato 18/6/24



SII Club Pavia 10/10/24



UNION BEST PROJECT AWARD

EDUCATE THE CHILDREN OF THE FUTURE, EMPOWER THE MOTHERS! Union of Türkiye

In the heart of Istanbul's Gültepe district, where socioeconomic barriers often limit opportunity, the Turkish Soroptimists launched a transformative initiative: *"Educate the Children of the Future, Empower the Mothers!"* This Soroptimist-led project is a holistic response to the community's needs—offering both education for children and empowerment for their mothers.

Spearheaded by Hatice Mutlu, head of Soroptimist Türkiye at the **Gültepe Community Education Center**, the project was built on trust, dedication, and the belief that lasting change begins with education. English lessons are held weekly for local children, taught by Ferhan Düzgören—a committed Soroptimist and experienced English teacher. Simultaneously, mothers attend tailored empowerment sessions, creating a dual-impact programme that uplifts entire families.

Each week, a different Soroptimist Club from Istanbul leads sessions for the mothers, covering topics such as financial literacy, consumer rights, health and hygiene, leadership, and protection against gender-based and cyber violence. **These interactive trainings raise awareness, promote independence, and encourage women to become more active in their communities.**

The project also embraces social cohesion: national holidays are celebrated with the children, while food aid and shared meals during Ramadan strengthen

bonds among families. In doing so, the initiative has reached over 250 beneficiaries in just one year.

A key feature of the project is its **strong advocacy dimension**. It not only educates but also fosters a culture of rights, resilience, and agency—especially among women who have traditionally been excluded from such conversations. This has positioned the Gültepe Community Education Center as a vital hub of local transformation.

Entirely initiated and implemented by Turkish Soroptimists, the project is a shining example of collaborative action, community engagement, and the Soroptimist mission in practice. It has enhanced the visibility and reputation of Soroptimist Clubs both locally and internationally and serves as a replicable model for meaningful, grassroots-driven change.

When you educate a child and empower a mother, you light the way for future generations. This is exactly what the Soroptimists in Türkiye are doing—one lesson, one life at a time.

PROJECT ACHIEVED BY:

- Providing weekly English lessons to children building language skills and confidence.
- Organising empowerment sessions for mothers.
- Fostering community engagement to build trust and participation.

WOMEN & GIRLS REACHED: 250

PARTNERS:

- This project was entirely initiated, developed, and carried out by Soroptimist members from beginning to end.





EDUCATION

TOP PROJECT

OTW 2024 – SETTING BOUNDARIES TOGETHER IN A CARING MANNER

Club of Hamont Achel Noord Limburg, Belgium

Intra-family violence remains a deeply rooted issue in Belgium, with 42% of women having experienced some form of intimate partner violence during their lifetime¹. Children, too, are not spared: over 50,000 cases of child abuse are reported annually². In response, the Soroptimists of Hamont-Achel Noord Limburg launched OTW 2024 – Set Boundaries Together in a Caring Manner, a powerful and multifaceted project that aims to break the silence around domestic violence.

This innovative initiative brought together educators, local authorities, healthcare providers, and the police to support both **awareness and prevention**. With 17 performances of the impactful **Magic Theatre play “Why?”**, the project reached over **1,200 children** aged 5–12 across local schools. These emotionally resonant performances helped young audiences recognise signs of abuse and encouraged them to seek help, with several children courageously sharing their own stories afterward.

The educational component was equally robust: **135 teachers and school directors** participated in a pedagogical study day featuring expert-led workshops and presentations. Another **32 professionals** from before- and after-school care joined a dedicated follow-up session. The initiative also included an **open statutory meeting** that

further spread awareness to over **100 community members**.

Backed by a strong partnership with local organizations—including child protection agencies, schools, the police, and the municipality—the project was built on meticulous planning and a collaborative spirit. Over **1,640 volunteer hours** were invested to ensure its success.

The Belgian Soroptimists demonstrated that **prevention begins with education, empathy, and visibility**. By fostering a safe space for dialogue and action, they not only empowered professionals and families but also gave vulnerable children the confidence to speak up. The project stands as a blueprint for how local engagement, creative expression, and sustained collaboration can protect lives and promote dignity for all.

1- Institute for the Equality of Women and Men, 2021
2- Kind en Gezin, 2023



PROJECT ACHIEVED BY:

- Engaging strong multi-sector partnerships: with schools, police, and child protection services.
- Raising awareness in an accessible, sensitive way via creative and age-appropriate outreach.
- Proposing comprehensive training and community involvement.

WOMEN & GIRLS REACHED:

2,000

FUNDS RAISED BY PARTNERS:

€4,915

PARTNERS:

- Managing board school community of Hamont-Achel (4 primary schools, children 5-12 years and their teachers)
- CLB: Centrum Leerlingen begeleiding (Center student guidance)
- VK: Vertrouwenscentrum Kindermishandeling (Child Abuse Trust Center)
- Veilig huis Limburg (Safe House Limburg)
- Police HANO district
- Theatre Jahon
- City Government Hamont-Achel
- Own Open statutory Sorop meeting

USEFUL LINK:

- <https://myalbum.com/album/2eBz4jjhc6Y89v/?invite=e37e9d27-a00b-44f9-a672-0306658c813d>



WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Increase economic empowerment

Soroptimists empower women to find employment

TOP
PROJECT

EMPOWERING DISPLACED WOMEN: THE SOROPTIMISTS OF YEREVAN TRANSFORM LIVES

Club of Yerevan, Armenia

RUNNERS-UP:



Women Farmers! When Today's Women Commit... for the Women of Tomorrow!

Soroptimists from Toulouse Fil d'Ariane, France
A project highlighting women's roles in agriculture by hosting keynote speeches and round-table discussions where 12 women shared their experiences and challenges, attracting over 150 participants.

PFR: 28413



Ukrainian Women in Poland – Empowerment Through Psychological and Economic Support

Soroptimists from Wrocław, Poland
Providing psychological support and empowerment workshops to help Ukrainian women refugees in Poland rebuild confidence, adapt, and develop their professional skills for greater independence.

PFR: 26942



Women welders

Soroptimists from Ataköy / İstanbul, Türkiye
Free, structured training programmes were successfully created to increase women's employment in industry, overcoming funding and organisational challenges through collaboration.

PFR: 27538

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT TOP PROJECT

EMPOWERING DISPLACED WOMEN: THE SOROPTIMISTS OF YEREVAN Club of Yerevan, Armenia

In response to the severe challenges faced by displaced women from Karabakh and rural regions of Armenia, the Soroptimists of Yerevan launched a transformative project focused on women's empowerment at the "Bari Mama" centre. This impactful initiative provided vulnerable women—many of whom were war-affected, single, or socially isolated—with the tools, knowledge, and confidence to rebuild their lives through professional and personal growth.

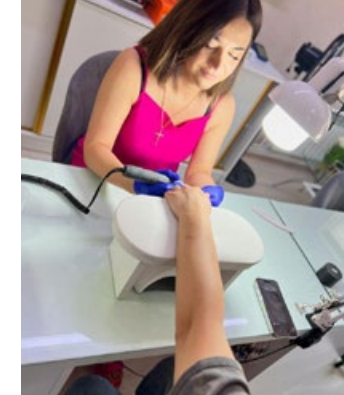
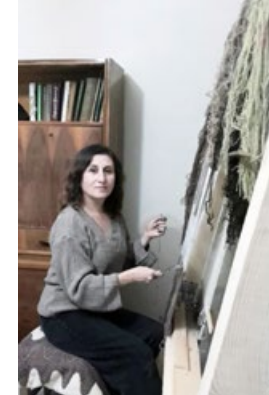
Between September 2024 and February 2025, **23 women** participated in the empowerment camp. The programme was designed to tackle root challenges such as low self-esteem, social stereotypes, and limited access to vocational education—barriers that often prevent women from achieving independence. Through a mix of psychological support, tailored training, and mentoring, the women received practical instruction in business planning, proposal writing, and social media marketing.

By the end of the programme, **eight women had launched their own small businesses**, ranging from carpet weaving and confectionery to honey production and cosmetology. Four of these received start-up grants, while others secured sponsorships or received vital tools from the Yerevan Club itself. A highlight of the initiative was the entrepreneurial journey of **Siroun Balayan**, who started a home-based bakery after receiving professional baking equipment, and **Milena Sargsyan**, a skilled weaver who restarted her practice with new materials and a loom.

The Armenian Soroptimists identified not only material needs, but also the **emotional resilience and ambition** of these women. Despite the trauma of displacement and instability, the participants found renewed purpose through community, creativity, and empowerment. The Club's slogan: **"Education and skills are the only things that can't be stolen"**, captured the spirit of the project.

While the number of direct beneficiaries may seem modest, the **impact was profound**. Each woman now serves as a beacon of possibility within her family and community. Building on this success, the Soroptimists of Yerevan are committed to expanding the initiative in 2025, welcoming a new group of women determined to transform hardship into opportunity.

This award-winning project stands as a model of **women-led resilience, solidarity, and empowerment**.



PROJECT ACHIEVED BY:

- Initiating the training of 23 displaced rural women.
- Providing grants and mentorship.
- Providing continuous guidance, helping women turn ideas into sustainable livelihoods.



WOMEN & GIRLS REACHED:

23

PARTNER:

- "Bari Mama" NGO

FUNDS RAISED BY THE CLUB:

€9,850



VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Eliminate violence against women and girls

Soroptimists fight violence against women and girls

TOP
PROJECT

ADVOCACY “E-WINGS”: INTERACTIVE TOOLKIT FOR THE ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Club of Lisboa Caravela, Portugal

RUNNERS-UP:



Courage box (“MutMach-Box”)

Soroptimists from Kufstein, Austria

The “MutMach-Box” equips kindergartens with age-appropriate books, games, and tools to strengthen children’s resilience against violence, supporting educators in fostering emotional strength and child protection.

PFR: 28389



Orange The World, “Read the Signs”!

Soroptimists from Austurland, Iceland

Raising awareness of violence against women—especially cyber violence and its prevention—through community events, educational outreach, and public displays.

PFR: 26730



Rural Women’s Education, Information & Empowerment: Presentations and Workshops on Women’s Rights, Life in Society, and Civil Law

Soroptimists from Içel / Mersin, Türkiye

Provide rural women in Mersin with vital education on their legal rights and civil law, overcoming access challenges through local collaboration to empower them against oppression and domestic violence.

PFR: 27333

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN TOP PROJECT

ADVOCACY “E-WINGS”: INTERACTIVE TOOLKIT FOR THE ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Club of Lisboa Caravela, Portugal

The Portuguese Soroptimists of SI Lisboa Caravela launched E-WINGS, a transformative advocacy tool designed to combat violence against women (VAW) through education, awareness, and empowerment. Officially launched on 25 November 2024, International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, this interactive digital resource was developed to foster a culture of equality and prevention, especially among youth and educators.

Violence against women remains a serious issue in Portugal. According to the Portuguese Observatory of Murdered Women, 28 women were killed in domestic violence contexts in 2023 alone¹. Recognising this urgent need for systemic change, the Portuguese Soroptimists developed E-WINGS to educate, guide, and mobilise communities toward a violence-free future.

E-WINGS serves as a comprehensive and multilingual platform accessible to all, providing:

- Educational materials and videos (including a dedicated video on the Istanbul Convention),
- 13 expert-led webinars,
- A checklist for victims and educators,
- Access to helplines and local organisations,
- Advocacy tools and resources for raising awareness.

The project promotes open dialogue, challenges harmful gender norms, and empowers individuals to recognise and act against all forms of abuse. It fosters partnerships with NGOs, government institutions, and youth

organisations. The launch included strategic actions, such as direct outreach to key Portuguese political leaders and the dissemination of QR code access cards to ministers, the Ombudsman, and the National Police Chief.

Since its launch, E-WINGS has reached over **150,000 people**, with ongoing dissemination through national media (e.g., Rádio Renascença) and presentations at Soroptimist events, including the dinner for the February 2025 **SIE Officers Training**. The English version of E-WINGS ensures it can be adapted globally, enabling Soroptimists around the world to replicate the model.

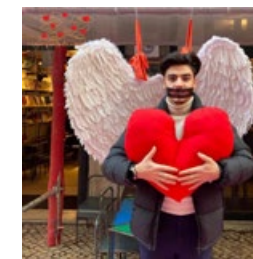
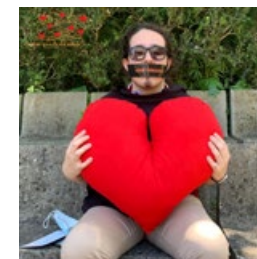
At its core, E-WINGS stands for **freedom, resilience, and hope**—inspired by the symbolism of the “Bonfim ribbons”—calling for a collective transformation toward a safe and respectful society. Through this innovative initiative, the Soroptimists of Lisboa Caravela reaffirm their commitment to SDG 5 and SDG 4, proving that meaningful change begins with knowledge, solidarity, and unwavering advocacy.

1- UMAR, 2023



PROJECT ACHIEVED BY:

- Developing an interactive digital toolkit featuring educational content, webinars, and resources.
- Collaborating with experts, NGOs, and government officials.
- Reaching over 150,000 people through national media, events, and direct outreach.



WOMEN & GIRLS REACHED:

150,000

(including boys and men)

FUNDS RAISED BY THE CLUB:

€3,000

PARTNERS:

- Sola Creative (Catarina Alves Costa), Maria João Faustino (scientific contribution)
- Ana Leite (translation, SI Lisboa Fundador)
- And all others who contributed with webinars and information



HEALTH & FOOD SECURITY

Ensure women & girls have access to the highest attainable standard of health care

Soroptimists help provide access to better health and living conditions for women and girls

TOP PROJECT

BLOOM AGAIN: THERAPEUTIC HORTICULTURE

Club of Miranese-Riviera del Brenta, Italy

RUNNERS-UP:



Gender Medicine Lectures with Movie Series Soroptimists from Wien Vivata, Austria

SI Wien Vivata launched a successful lecture series combining expert talks and films to raise awareness of gender medicine, highlighting the importance of women-specific healthcare through topics like Alzheimer's disease.
PFR: 25793 & 28177



Looking above & beyond food waste

Soroptimists from Costa del Sol, Spain
Since 2012, SI Costa del Sol has sustained vulnerable families in Mijas, Spain, and regularly supplying food banks with essential donations through community fundraisers, partnerships, and widespread media engagement.
PFR: 05011, 07198, 09671, 18566.



Living with PCOS

Soroptimists from Seyhan - Adana, Türkiye
Educate young women about Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS), promote early diagnosis, provide psychological and medical support, and reduce long-term health risks through seminars, screenings, social media campaigns, and an informational website.
PFR: 26377, 26390, 26396, 26397, 26659, 26660.

HEALTH & FOOD SECURITY TOP PROJECT

BLOOM AGAIN: THERAPEUTIC HORTICULTURE

Club of Miranese-Riviera del Brenta, Italy

The Soroptimists of Miranese–Riviera del Brenta launched BLOOM AGAIN to enhance the physical and emotional well-being of elderly women through therapeutic horticulture across 15 nursing homes in a Venetian district. With 75.9% of the district’s 1,334 elderly residents being women, this project was designed to restore a sense of purpose, dignity, and connection to nature—often lost in institutional settings.

The Italian Soroptimists partnered with **AULSS 3 SERENISSIMA**, the Local Health Unit, to develop a sustainable, science-based programme that harnesses the proven benefits of gardening in elderly care. Studies show that plant-based activities can boost memory, social engagement, and motor function, while also reducing reliance on medication for conditions like dementia.

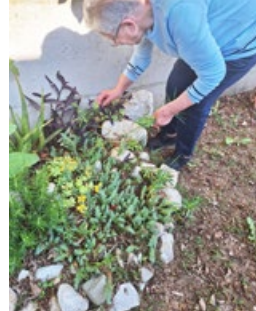
To implement the project, the Soroptimists formed a multidisciplinary team including agronomists and healthcare professionals. They engaged each facility through surveys, site visits, and a launch event involving staff, families, volunteers, and local businesses. A crowdfunding campaign supported infrastructure needs such as raised beds and indoor gardening tools, while an accredited training course equipped staff to deliver therapeutic sessions year-round.

Despite facing logistical and cultural challenges across facilities, the project succeeded by adopting a flexible, localised approach and fostering strong collaboration with care home staff and family members. Regular feedback ensures the activities remain relevant, enjoyable, and regenerative—not just for residents, but for caregivers too.

The project has already delivered measurable improvements in mood, sleep quality, social interaction, and self-esteem. A participant’s daughter shared:

“When I visit my mum, sometimes I feel sad—but if we work together with plants, that sadness disappears.”

BLOOM AGAIN is a model of holistic elderly care rooted in community, compassion, and nature—offering elderly women the chance to blossom again, one plant at a time.



PROJECT ACHIEVED BY:

- Partnering with health authorities.
- Securing funding, training staff, and involving local businesses.
- Adapting activities to each facility.

WOMEN & GIRLS REACHED:

1,334

FUNDS RAISED BY THE CLUB:

€4,500



PARTNERS:

- AULSS 3 SERENISSIMA
- Azienda Unità Sanitarie Locali - Local Health Unit



SUSTAINABILITY

Improve environmental sustainability for the specific needs of women and girls

Soroptimists help improve the environment and promote sustainability

TOP
PROJECT

RICICLIAMO LA MODA – RECYCLING FASHION FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Club of Moesano, Switzerland

RUNNERS-UP:



Water Project, Marsh area

Soroptimists from Ahaus, Germany – in collaboration with the Soroptimist Club of Bocholt (Germany)

The project engaged young women in learning about and restoring marshlands through hands-on conservation work, promoting sustainability, education, and empowerment.

PFR: 26234



Casertavecchia in bloom: Tradition and Innovation for female entrepreneurship

Soroptimists from Caserta, Italy

Through video interviews with women entrepreneurs in food, wine, and hospitality, the project promoted sustainable local development and female empowerment in the Caserta region.

PFR: 26473



Crumb hunters

Soroptimists from Merania, Italy

The Club partnered with Cacciatori di Briciole to reduce food waste and support vulnerable people by funding supplies and raising awareness, enabling volunteers to collect and distribute food each year to those in need.

PFR: 28233

SUSTAINABILITY

TOP PROJECT

RICICLIAMO LA MODA – RECYCLING FASHION FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Club of Moesano, Switzerland

The Soroptimists of Moesano launched Ricicliamo la Moda (“Let’s Recycle Fashion”) to raise awareness about sustainability in the fashion industry and promote responsible consumer habits. In a world where fast fashion dominates, this project highlights the environmental and ethical costs of clothing consumption and offers practical, community-driven alternatives.

Fashion is a powerful global industry, but also one of the most polluting and exploitative. **The industry produces 92 million tonnes of textile waste per year, with most of it ending up in landfills or being incinerated¹.** With this in mind, the Swiss Soroptimists chose to act locally, aiming to inspire change and offer concrete solutions for more conscious living.

The project takes a **holistic and educational approach**. It includes public talks and workshops in schools and the wider community, offering information and practical skills around ethical fashion, textile reuse, and sustainable consumption. Sewing and knitting groups were created to encourage hands-on creativity, sharing techniques to transform discarded clothing into something new. Additionally, five local libraries received curated collections of books on fashion, textiles, and sustainability to deepen community knowledge.

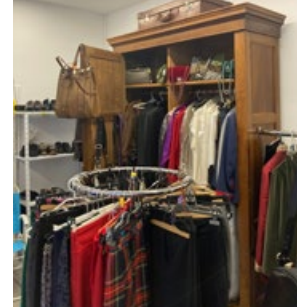
A standout feature is the creation of a monthly pop-up second-hand shop under the project’s name. These

welcoming spaces provide high-quality clothes at low prices, demonstrating that fashion can be stylish, affordable, and sustainable. **The initiative has so far benefited around 400 people.**

While sourcing suitable venues and garments of good quality has posed challenges—particularly given the rise of fast fashion—the Club overcame these through persistence, community connections, and local goodwill. Their motto: never give up!

The project’s success is reflected in strong member engagement, growing customer loyalty, and positive feedback from students. As one remarked, “I have started reading clothing labels and buying less, using what I already have.” This shift in mindset represents the heart of the project.

By fostering dialogue, skills, and action, *Ricicliamo la Moda* is building a more sustainable future—one garment at a time. The project **will continue to grow in 2025–2026.**



PROJECT ACHIEVED BY:

- Organising educational talks and workshops to raise awareness.
- Creating sewing and knitting groups to teach practical skills.
- Running monthly pop-up shops with quality, affordable second-hand clothing.

WOMEN & GIRLS REACHED:

Around **400**

FUNDS RAISED BY THE CLUB:

€14,000



PARTNERS:

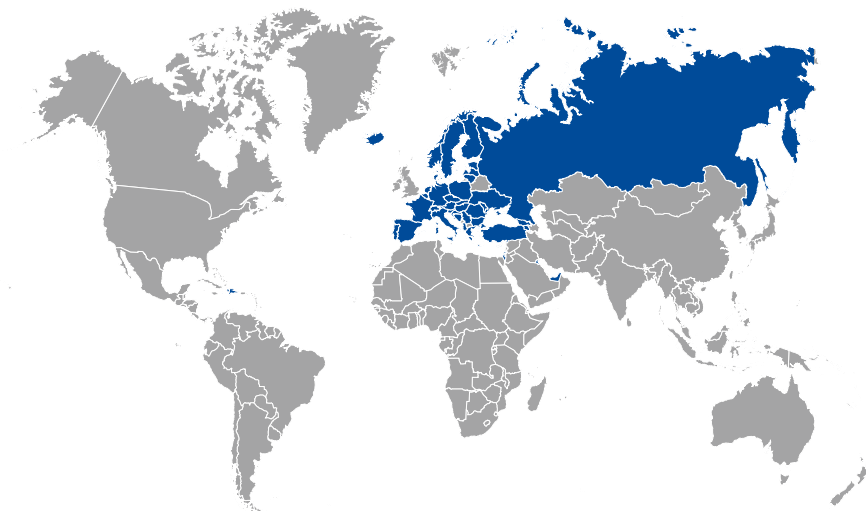
- Fashion Revolution Switzerland and Italian-speaking Switzerland
- ACSI – Consumers’ Association of Italian-speaking Switzerland

1- Source: Earth.org, Ellen MacArthur Foundation






SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL OF EUROPE

We are a worldwide network of professionally and socially diverse women.
We are a platform to serve communities, share knowledge and experience.
We educate and empower women and girls to lead.
We fight violence against women and girls.
We give women a voice by lobbying at all levels of society.



www.soroptimisteurope.org

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