Soroptimist International Annual Report 2025

a global voice for women

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About Us

Founded in 1921, Soroptimist International (SI) is a global membership organisation working to advance gender equality and human rights for all women and girls. With almost 63,000 members in 118 countries and territories, SI is a worldwide volunteer movement delivering projects, advocacy and action at local, national and international levels.

In 2022 Soroptimist International Foundation was formed as a charitable trust to strengthen opportunities for SI's international project work. SI (Soroptimist International) Limited is the sole Trustee of the Foundation, which also encompasses former President Appeals and related activities. Every four years, SI holds an international convention, bringing together Soroptimists from around the world to engage with global advocacy work and strengthen international connections.

SI represents Soroptimists globally through advocacy at the United Nations and The Commonwealth, where it works to influence policies and decision-making affecting women and girls. Since 1984, SI has held General Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the highest status granted to non-governmental organisations. Our team of Representatives to the United Nations and The Commonwealth contribute to high-level international discussions and policy development on issues affecting women and girls, working tirelessly to ensure that the voices, needs and rights of all women and girls are meaningfully represented.

SI operates under a company registered in England and Wales with Companies House: SI (Soroptimist International) Limited, company number 08670477. The Company has five members: Soroptimist International of Africa; Soroptimist International of the Americas; Soroptimist International of Europe; Soroptimist International of Great Britain and Ireland; and Soroptimist International South-East Asia Pacific – comprising the five Soroptimist Federations.

The international headquarters is based in Ely, Cambridgeshire, United Kingdom, with the five Federations operating from Philadelphia, USA; Lagos, Nigeria; Geneva, Switzerland; Stockport, United Kingdom; and Sydney, Australia. During 2025, the SI Board comprised two directors from each Federation together with the International President, International Treasurer and International Director of Advocacy, each appointed as a Director of the Company. SI also operated through five working Committees covering Finance, Governance, Global Policy, Global Impact and Communications. Soroptimist International Foundation has a dedicated Committee overseeing its work.

VISION

Women and girls will achieve their individual and collective potential, realise aspirations and have an equal voice in creating strong, peaceful communities worldwide.

MISSION

Soroptimists transform the lives and status of women and girls through education, empowerment and enabling opportunities.

PRINCIPLES

To strive for the advancement of the status of women, high ethical standards, human rights for all, equality, development and peace and the advancement of international understanding, goodwill and peace.

Foreword

By SI President 2024-2025
Siew Yong Gnanalingam

The year 2025 was a busy and meaningful year for me as President of Soroptimist International (SI). I chaired SI Board meetings, participated in committee meetings, and represented SI at conferences, Club and Union celebrations, and important international events. I also attended United Nations meetings in New York, Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi, focusing on key issues such as women's rights, ending violence against women, health, peace, climate change and new technology.

The year began with the 69th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, where SI actively participated in more than 20 events. I delivered opening and closing speeches, joined panel discussions, and supported presentations addressing ending violence against women, access to healthcare, mental health, climate change, and progress since Beijing+30. Our participation strengthened SI's voice on the international stage.

In April, the SI Board Meeting was held in Kuala Lumpur, with Federation Presidents also in attendance. Discussions focused on the future direction of Soroptimist International, led by incoming SI President Renata Trottmann and Governance Committee Chair Anthea Penny. A podcast was also released on World Earth Day, enabling me to speak on action to improve our environment in line with my biennium theme, "Save Mother Earth, Save the Future."

In May, I attended the 3rd Biennial Conference of SIAF in Agadir, Morocco, speaking on the "Fight Against Cervical Cancer" in Africa, and the 34th Session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in Vienna, where I spoke on online dangers faced by women and girls, including AI and emotional abuse. I also attended and spoke at the opening of the photo exhibition, "Siolence: Breaking Silence on Violence Against Women." Following that, I had the honour of participating in the 75th Anniversary Celebration of the Union of Switzerland Assembly in Zurich.

In June, I visited the Soroptimist International Penang Club's Seaweed Farming Project, supporting women's livelihoods and nature-based solutions. SI also collaborated with the Women for Water Partnership on a World Environment Day webinar, and I delivered an opening speech at a Human Rights Council side event in Geneva on ensuring AI is fair and safe for women and girls. Later, I had the pleasure of attending the 100th Anniversary of SI Paris Fondateur, the first Soroptimist Club in Europe.

I chaired the 2025 SI AGM online in July, and in August visited Mongolia for the anniversaries of SI Ulaanbaatar and SI Darkhan, recognising their outstanding service to women and girls.

In September and October, I attended SI Italy's Council of Delegates in Monza, the SI Europe Governors' Meeting and Congress in Krakow,

SI Italy Council of Delegates in Monza.

and the SIGBI Conference in Birmingham. I also attended the SI Europe Governors' Meeting and Congress in Krakow, Poland. During the Congress, projects from various Clubs and Unions were showcased in a special film titled "Soroptimist Action: Improving Our Environment" collated by SIHQ and shown on Climate Action Day on 24th October.

The film highlighted inspiring initiatives led by Soroptimist Clubs across Federations to address environmental challenges, promote sustainability, and encourage community-based climate action. It was a powerful reminder of how collective efforts at the grassroots level can contribute meaningfully to global environmental goals.

SI Board Meeting in Kuala Lumpur.

Later in October, Soroptimist International also worked with The Commonwealth to hold a roundtable discussion in London on how AI can help create a fairer future for everyone.

In November, I attended the Soroptimist International Deutschland Forum in Chemnitz, where SI synerSHE e-Club was officially chartered, and SI joined The Commonwealth for a roundtable in London on AI and a fairer future.

My biennium ended in December at UNEA 7 in Nairobi, where I spoke at "Greening Our Horizon: Soroptimists Leading the Way." The "Greening Our Horizons" project, adopted as an SI Foundation project, aims to plant 500,000 trees across Africa by 2027.

I would like to thank the Board of Directors, advisors, SIHQ staff, Federation leaders, Club members and partners, for their support and hard work throughout 2025. Their teamwork helped Soroptimist International continue its important work around the world. I hope that through our participation in international events, SI was able to show the strength of our service, friendship, and teamwork. Together, we continue to support women and girls and work for a better, safer, and greener future.

Finance

By Wendy Logan, SI Treasurer

and Barbara Kohl, Chair of SI Finance Committee

The 2025 financial year for Soroptimist International Limited resulted in a surplus of GBP 13,183. This was primarily due to growth in the investment portfolio and the face-to-face Board meeting in Kuala Lumpur coming in within budget. The Finance Committee meets monthly to review financial performance and matters of policy. During the year, this included oversight of the annual budget, travel and fundraising policies, the budget for the Prague Convention, and the SI and Soroptimist International Foundation annual financial statements for 2025.

Support to the Soroptimist International Foundation Committee included reporting on restricted and unrestricted funds, managing payments in line with the Memorandum of Understanding for each project, administering the Elynor Falk Legacy and meeting the reporting requirements of the Annual UK Charities Return.

Financial Statements

The SI (Soroptimist International) Limited Financial Statements for the year ending 31 December 2025 show a surplus of GBP 13,183. The cost of the face-to-face Board meeting in Kuala Lumpur was met within existing expenditure, and the reserve set aside for this purpose was not required. Unrealised investment gains contributed GBP 31,671 more income than the previous year, though a tax liability of GBP 8,095 arose from this investment income. Total dues income for the year was GBP 350,689 (2024: GBP 342,890), reflecting an agreed CPI increase of 4 per cent, partially offset by a 3 per cent reduction in membership.

Soroptimist International Foundation Financial Statements

The Soroptimist International Foundation reported total charity funds of GBP 220,137 at 31 December 2025, comprising Endowment Funds of GBP 98,203 (Elynor Falk Legacy), Restricted Funds of GBP 8,853 and Unrestricted Funds of GBP 113,081. Donations received totalled GBP 66,606, with GBP 58,018 spent on charitable activities.

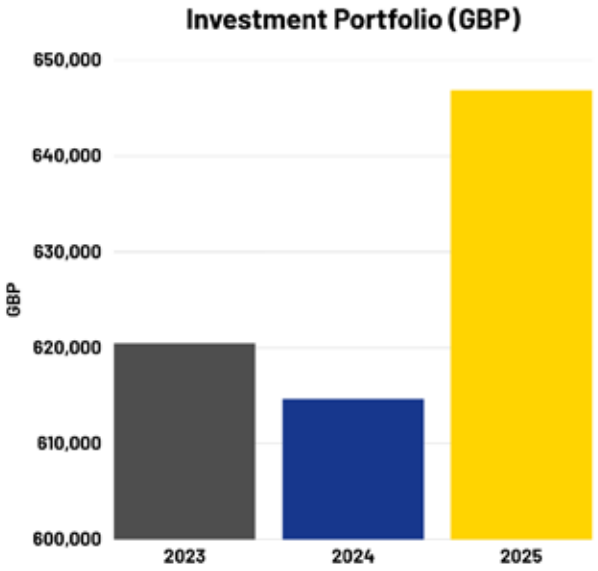
2025 AT A GLANCE

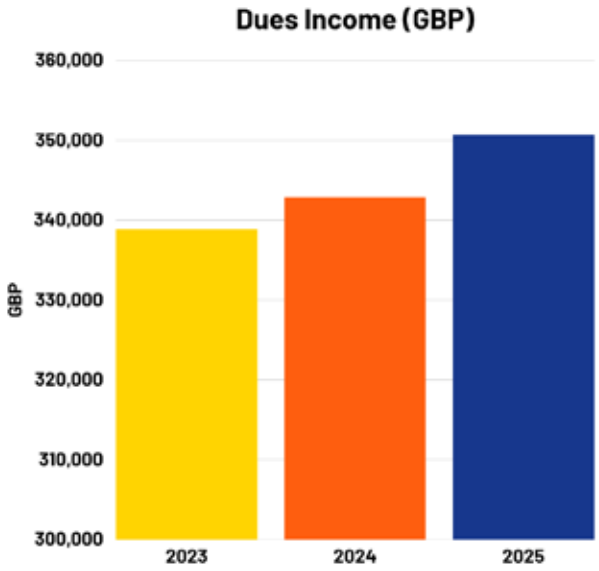
SURPLUS	GBP 13,183
DUES INCOME	GBP 350,689
FOUNDATION DONATIONS	GBP 66,606
CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES	GBP 58,018

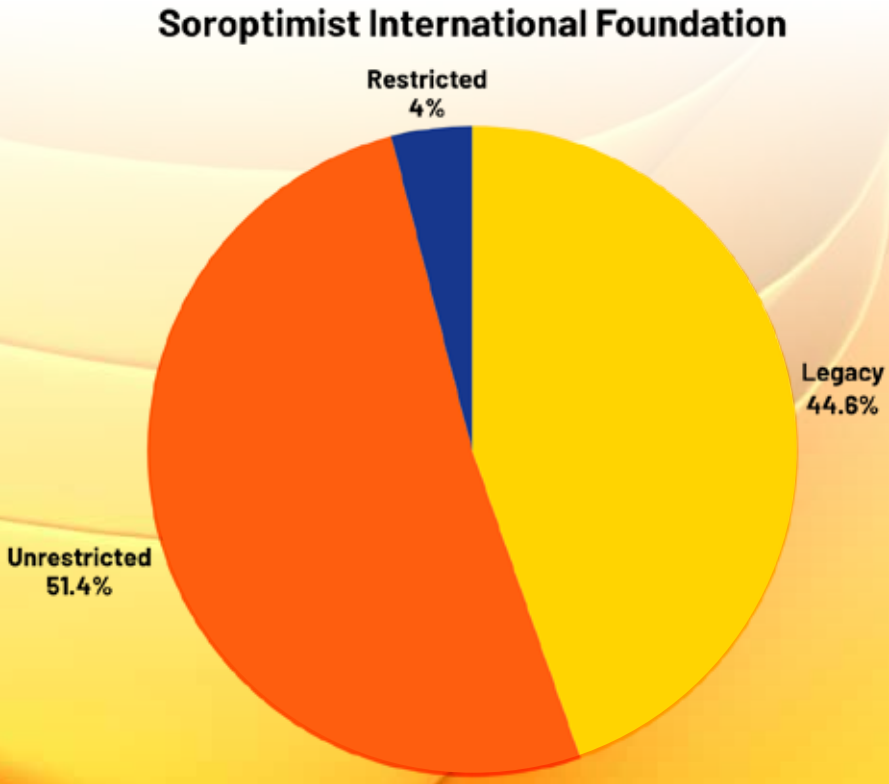
Investment Portfolio

The net value of the managed investment portfolio at 31 December 2025 was GBP 646,897, an increase of GBP 32,223 from GBP 614,674 in 2024. While this represents a positive movement, the balance remains below the level of the initial investment.

The Finance Committee members during the year were Barbara Kohl (Chair), Wendy Logan, Siew Yong Gnanalingam, Renata Trottmann Probst, Deborah Thomas and Fatimata Tambadou. The considerable hours contributed by the committee throughout the year are gratefully acknowledged.







Global Advocacy

By Leigh Ellwood-Brown, SI Director of Advocacy and Hana Smith, SI Global Policy Advisor

Introduction

The commitment of Soroptimist International (SI) to advancing and upholding the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to help all women and girls realise their full potential is evidenced by projects at local and national levels.

SI enables evidence from locally led initiatives to inform advocacy at the international level, including at the UN.

Here, SI is one of the few non-governmental organisations focused on advancing gender equality to hold General Consultative Status at the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). This status allows SI to extend its sphere of influence through its permanent representation at UN centres and actively participate in key UN meetings.

In 2025, SI's Policy and Advocacy team was led by Soroptimist International Director of Advocacy, Leigh Ellwood-Brown from SISEAP. The team comprised: SI Representatives to the UN, The Commonwealth, SI Advocacy Advisors and Global Policy Advisor, Hana Smith.

UN Commission on the Status of Women

SI had a strong delegation in attendance at the 69th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW69), held at the UN Headquarters in New York. In place of a priority theme, the session focused on the 30th anniversary review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA), an important framework for advancing gender equality. The review highlighted priorities including women's economic empowerment, ending violence against women and girls, increasing women's participation in decision-making, bridging the gender digital divide, strengthening national mechanisms, investing in care systems and securing the financial support needed to implement recommendations.

SI Delegates at CSW69.

Negotiations on the Political Declaration took place during the two weeks preceding CSW69. Ahead of the Commission, a small group of SI Advisors reviewed the draft text and provided comments and proposed amendments, which were shared with government representatives during the negotiation process. The **Political Declaration** on the BPfA was ultimately adopted by consensus at CSW69. While this reaffirmed global commitment to gender equality, progress remains slow. SI stressed the need for renewed political will, full implementation of the BPfA and stronger accountability to accelerate progress for women and girls.

With more than 130 Soroptimist members in attendance at CSW69, SI coordinated, organised and participated in 34 side and parallel events aligned with the review of the BPfA. These events reflected SI's values and showcased grassroots projects led by Soroptimists around the world.

SI President Siew Yong Gnanalingam at CSW69.

Soroptimist members continue to develop a stronger understanding of international fora such as CSW, including their importance and long-term impact. National Advocacy Teams are also being implemented across SI Federations, strengthening advocacy knowledge and contributing to a more effective collective delegation.

SI's engagement at CSW69 reinforced its commitment to advancing gender equality through international advocacy and grassroots action. Discussions throughout the session addressed issues including digital rights, violence against women and girls, and women's leadership and participation in society. The insights and momentum gained through CSW69 will continue to inform SI advocacy and strengthen efforts to advance justice, dignity and opportunity for women and girls worldwide.

Lindsay Green, SIGBI Programme Director; Donnell Davis, SISEAP Programme Director.

United Nations

New York

The UN in New York serves as its main headquarters, where Member States meet to shape global policy, advance human rights, coordinate development efforts, and address international peace and security.

María Fornella-Oehninger played a key role in organising a high-level side event held alongside the 63rd Session of the UN Commission for Social Development. The event was organised by SI together with the International Presentation Association, Sikh Human Rights Group and Bahá'í International Community. Co-sponsors included the Permanent Mission of Ireland to the UN, the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the NGO Committee for Social Development. Held in February, the event explored community-led approaches to building social resilience and solidarity. SI also submitted a **written statement** to the Commission, calling on Member States to prioritise the eradication of poverty, promote full and productive employment strengthen social inclusion.

The Commission preceded the Second World Summit for Social Development, held in Doha, Qatar, which María also attended. Preparations for the Summit spanned more than two years and led to the adoption of the Doha Political Declaration, focused on advancing the 2030 Agenda and renewing global commitment to inclusive and sustainable development. The Summit highlighted the importance of social development, lifelong learning, leadership development and community empowerment. The First World Summit for Social Development was held in Copenhagen, Denmark, in 1995 and attended by Soroptimist Marie Jeanne Bosia.

The **UN80 initiative** was launched in March by UN Secretary-General António Guterres to bring reform across the UN system. SI Advocacy Advisors alongside SI Representatives in New York, have been monitoring the process closely as it develops, stressing the importance of keeping women and girls central to the UN agenda.

The 58th Session of the UN Commission on Population and Development took place in April. SI submitted a **written statement**, highlighting that investing in girls' and women's education is essential for sustainable population outcomes and long-term development. The statement also called for population policies grounded in gender equality and women's empowerment.

In April, the Human Rights Council decided to establish an intergovernmental working group to draft a legally binding instrument to protect the rights of older persons. The decision recognised gaps within the international human rights framework and reflected years of dedicated effort from civil society organisations and Soroptimists including Frances Zainoeddin, who has spent more than 14 years gathering evidence and campaigning for stronger protections for older persons.

SI Representatives to the UN in New York attended the annual High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), the UN's main platform reviewing progress towards the 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). SI also published its **report to the HLPF** presenting evidence-based solutions to the commitment to leave no one behind. This report highlighted Soroptimist projects from all five Federations and Soroptimist International Foundation, covering issues including health, economic growth, and women's leadership.

Other key meetings in which SI was represented included meetings with the President of the UN General Assembly, a multi-stakeholder dialogue for the 2026 UN Water Conference, the 2025 ECOSOC Partnership Forum and the 2025 ECOSOC Youth Forum. SI also concluded its role as Global Organising Partner of the Women's Major Group in 2025, represented by Bette Levy. Marline McLean continues her term on the NGO CSW New York Executive Committee, representing SI.

Berthe De Vos-Neven and Stacy Ciulik, SI Representatives to the UN in Geneva, with the Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights.

Geneva

Geneva remained a central advocacy hub for SI, enabling engagement with global human rights, health, technology and environmental governance through proximity to key UN bodies like the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the World Health Organisation (WHO), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), and other treaty monitoring mechanisms.

Members of the team were active at the 59th Session of the UN Human Rights Council, contributing to debates on climate change, poverty and inequality, and gender-based violence in conflict situations. Representatives to the UN also engaged in interactive dialogues with UN Special Rapporteurs, strengthening civil society input into international human rights discussions.

SI hosted a high-level side event entitled "Encoding Values, Securing Rights: A Gender Responsive Framework". The event explored the gendered risks of AI, cybersecurity and digital violence, bringing together speakers from the ITU, the European Parliament, the University of Cambridge and ISACA. This work reinforced SI's advocacy for inclusive, ethical and gender-responsive AI governance.

The team also contributed to work on economic empowerment. Given SI's longstanding commitment to advocacy and strong civil society networks, SI was invited to join the **Equal Pay International Coalition (EPIC)**. EPIC is a multi-stakeholder initiative led by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), UN Women and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). EPIC brings together government ministries, UN entities, civil society organisations and academic institutions to address pay inequality.

Beyond this work, SI Representatives to the UN in Geneva participated in a landmark CEDAW review reaffirming the obligation to protect women's rights in Afghanistan. Representatives also contributed to WHO-led discussions on breastfeeding support, maternal health and suicide prevention. Pascale Muylaert attended the Third UN Ocean Conference in Nice, France, which highlighted the importance of women's leadership in environmental and ocean governance.

SI Representatives in Geneva also maintained active involvement in the NGO Committee on the Status of Women (NGO CSW Geneva), serving at executive level within this strategic platform for ECOSOC-accredited NGOs. Continued engagement with NGO CSW Geneva has helped broaden SI's advocacy efforts for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls across the UN system.

Vienna

The 34th session of the UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ), held in May, focused on emerging and evolving threats posed by cybercrime to national and international peace and security. Discussions highlighted the increasing sophistication of cybercrime, including the role of organised criminal groups and the misuse of technology to facilitate crimes such as online fraud, trafficking in persons for forced labour in scam centres, terrorism, and child sexual abuse and exploitation. In 2025, SI welcomed a high-level delegation of Soroptimists to Vienna for a working visit to the CCPCJ, participating in an intensive programme alongside more than 150 side events and 25 exhibitions held during the session.

SI organised a high-level side event entitled "Emerging Threats Against Women and Girls in the Digital Era: Artificial Intelligence and Gaslighting".

Linda Witong, Marion Prechtl, Marlene Capra and Siew Yong Gnanalingam at the UN in Vienna.

SI President Siew Yong Gnanalingam, SI Advocacy Advisor Linda Witong and Soroptimist Marlene Capra travelled to Vienna to participate in the panel as three of six experts. The event was attended by around 100 participants, including representatives from the Permanent Missions of Malta and Slovakia to the UN, the Permanent Representative of Brunei, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO).

SI Representative to the UN Marion Prechtl, together with the Permanent Mission of Austria to the UN, also organised an exhibition entitled *Siolence*, originally created by Soroptimist Petra Werkovits. Through this powerful exhibition, survivors shared their lived experiences, feelings and fears, encouraging greater awareness of violence against women and girls

Linda Witong was elected Vice Chair of the Alliance of NGOs on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in May, while Marion Prechtl continued her role as First Vice President of the Committee on Sustainable Development and Martina Gredler completed her term as Second Vice President of CoNGO (The Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations), all representing SI.

Nairobi

SI's team of Representatives in Nairobi actively contributed to discussions on environmental issues impacting women, girls and equality. The UN Environment Assembly (UNEA), the leading global forum for environmental governance, brought together delegates to address pressing environmental challenges and promote sustainable action. SI Representatives advocated for meaningful youth participation in climate decision-making and highlighted the importance of water security in building climate resilience.

SI President Siew Yong Gnanalingam joined the Nairobi team of Representatives at the Seventh Session of UNEA (UNEA-7) in December, marking the final official UN visit of her biennium as International President. The visit was especially significant as Nairobi was also the location of her first UN centre visit after assuming the SI presidency, reflecting a biennium shaped by a strong focus on environmental issues and their impact on women and girls.

The Soroptimist International Club of Nairobi Central (SINC), in collaboration with Women for Water Partnership and the State Department for Children Services, organised a side event in December 2025 entitled "Greening Our Horizons: Soroptimists Leading the Way". The event brought together local women, children, young people and policymakers to share community-led solutions, innovations and environmental action.

SI President Siew Yong Gnanalingam with members of SI Nairobi Club.

"Greening Our Horizons" is a flagship initiative led by SINC as a pilot project for Soroptimist International Africa Federation Clubs, with plans for expansion across SIAF's five geographical Regions. Developed under the Soroptimist International Foundation umbrella, the initiative promotes environmental protection and climate justice through tree planting, waste management, environmental literacy and clean energy advocacy, driven by women, young people and local communities.

Soroptimist International and its partners, including Women for Water Partnership, continue to demonstrate that environmental sustainability, women's empowerment and child protection are interconnected pillars of development and equality.

SI Representative Evelyne Para speaking at UNESCO.

Paris

Paris is home to the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), which promotes peace and international cooperation through education, science and culture. SI's team in Paris marked International Education Day on 24 January 2025, which explored the relationship between artificial intelligence (AI), education and preserving human agency in an increasingly automated world. Several working meetings also explored the impact of emerging technologies such as AI. Member States presented strategies to address these challenges, including the principles contained in **the Global Recommendation on the Ethics of AI**, which promotes the safe and beneficial use of AI for everyone.

In March, the team attended a ministerial dialogue on science diplomacy, bringing together 60 world leaders and international experts. Amid heightened geopolitical tensions, discussions highlighted science as an area where international cooperation remains strong. Other key UNESCO meetings included an international conference on financing education, echoing discussions held at the International Conference on Financing for Development in Spain earlier in July. UNESCO also welcomed the Joint Declaration recognising education and culture as drivers of development and calling for stronger scientific cooperation to address global challenges.

Rome

Despite fewer opportunities for civil society engagement with the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), SI continues to engage strategically where access allows, advancing gender equality, combating hunger, promoting food security and addressing related challenges including climate change, environmental sustainability and water scarcity.

Despite these constraints, SI Representative to the UN in Rome, Liliana Mosca, participated in key meetings throughout the year. For the first time, SI was invited to attend the FAO Conference in June, the Organisation's governing body responsible for setting policy and approving the budget. Liliana also represented SI on World Food Day in October, which coincided with the FAO's 80th anniversary and the 53rd Session of the Committee on World Food Security. Under the theme "Making a Difference in Food Security and Nutrition", the events highlighted global efforts to strengthen food systems and improve nutrition.

Bangkok

In the first half of 2025, SI maintained its presence at the UN in Bangkok, where Representative Theresa Devasahayam attended the Asia-Pacific Forum for Social Development (APFSD), a preparatory meeting for the World Summit for Social Development held in December 2025. Discussions at the APFSD focused on the care economy, including investment in quality childcare and the role of governments in ensuring equal access to care services.

Recognising Bangkok's role as a regional UN centre focused on issues affecting the Asia-Pacific region, representation is now being coordinated through Soroptimist International South-East Asia Pacific.

The Commonwealth

SI is an accredited organisation of The Commonwealth, recognising its contribution to advancing gender equality, democracy, inclusion and sustainable development across 36 of The Commonwealth's 56 Member States. In 2025, SI strengthened this relationship further through deeper engagement with The Commonwealth Secretariat and fellow accredited organisations.

Commonwealth AI High-Level Roundtable Participants.

A key milestone was SI's leadership in convening a high-level roundtable event with The Commonwealth on "Shaping an Equitable Future with AI", hosted by the Commonwealth Secretariat in London. Organised by SI Representative to The Commonwealth Pat Dale, SI AI Advisor Tania Gómez Herazo and SI Headquarters colleagues, the event was held at Marlborough House and brought together policymakers, technical experts and civil society leaders to explore how artificial intelligence can support inclusive, human-centred development while addressing risks to gender equality.

The event also supported priorities within The Commonwealth Secretariat's Strategic Plan 2025–2030, including gender equality, youth empowerment and economic resilience.

Group discussion during High-Level Roundtable at Commonwealth Secretariat

Throughout the year, SI continued to strengthen relationships with Commonwealth leadership and accredited organisations through structured dialogue and collaboration. SI also contributed to discussions on the evolving role of accredited organisations and welcomed the introduction of a new Commonwealth accreditation standard aimed at strengthening transparency, credibility and accountability across the network.

Through advocacy, high-level convening and strategic partnerships, SI ensured that the voices and priorities of women and girls remained represented within Commonwealth policy discussions throughout 2025.

Advocacy Advisors

Soroptimist International's advocacy work is guided by an expert team of Advisors, who are appointed by the International President. In 2025, Advisors Pat Black, Beverly Bucur and Linda Witong supported SI's advocacy and policy initiatives, continuing engagement in G7/W7 processes while also providing extensive research and policy analysis. They assisted with submissions to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), including a Call for Input on the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and a report on Safety as an Element of the Right to Education. Both submissions were accepted into reports by the UN Special Rapporteur on Education.

Additional submissions on technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) and on renewable energy and mining. These were accepted by the UN Special Rapporteurs on Violence Against Women and Girls, and Human Rights and the Environment, respectively. These Calls for Input are opportunities for SI to submit well-evidenced arguments, perspectives and recommendations on issues affecting the rights of all women and girls, and subsequently inform UN reports, studies, and recommendations to the Human Rights Council, the UN General Assembly, or treaty bodies.

Tania Gómez Herazo was appointed as SI Advocacy AI Advisor in early 2025 to advise on artificial intelligence and the opportunities and challenges it poses to all women and girls.

SI Advisors also contributed to advocacy efforts to safeguard the independence and strengthen the mandate of UN Women amid discussions on a proposed strategic merger with the UN Population Fund (UNFPA). This included a letter circulated widely to UN leadership and like-minded civil society organisations opposing the merger.

Collaboration

With only five years remaining to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the SI Advocacy team remains committed to advancing the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 (Education) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality), through global advocacy, policy work and collaboration with partner organisations and governments.

In 2025, SI co-signed 22 statements, strengthening collective advocacy efforts and demonstrating solidarity with partner organisations. These included an open letter to UN Member States calling for a female UN Secretary-General, statements advocating for equal access to justice for women, and a global call for women's leadership in peace processes.

SI also authored statements in addition to its UN statements. For example, together with CoNGO, SI **published a statement** for International Women's Day 2025, focused on new forms of violence against women and girls, particularly the misuse of technology and artificial intelligence. This statement was signed by over 100 organisations.

SI Advocacy Strategy

In May 2025, the SI Board reviewed its internal structure, including SI Advocacy work, and agreed a revised strategic plan aligning all SI activities with five key areas of concern:

EDUCATION

EMPOWERMENT

ENVIRONMENT

HEALTH

ELIMINATING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

THESE ARE NOW REFERRED TO AS THE FIVE PILLARS OF SI'S WORK.

Soroptimist International continues to review and publish **position papers** on issues relating to all women and girls whilst ensuring alignment to the five pillars. Starting in 2025, each position paper includes a one-page summary document to support wider accessibility and use.

Soroptimist International Director of Advocacy Leigh Ellwood-Brown wishes to convey her sincere thanks and appreciation to the entire SI Advocacy team for their relentless efforts in the pursuit of gender equality during 2025: Habiba Alambo, Donatella Benjamin, Pat Black, Beverly Bucur, Sofia Calicchio, Victoria Chepkemoi Kutto, Stacy Ciulik, Pat Dale, Oya Dane, Berthe De Vos-Neven, Theresa Devasahayam, Rina Dupriet, María Fornella-Oehninger, Tania Gómez Herazo, Martina Gredler, Marie-Christine Gries, Bette Levy, Joseph Mason, Marline McLean, Mary Muia, Pascale Muylaert, Liliana Mosca, Beatrice Oluoch, Evelyne Para, Christine Peer-Valenta, Marion Prechtl, Jackie Shapiro, Marcella Sigmund, Hana Smith, Olga Tzortzatou Nanopoulou, Shaleen Wanjiru Njoki, Linda Witong and Frances Zainoeddin.

Reflections from SI Director of Advocacy

"As my term comes to a close as the Soroptimist International Director of Advocacy, I would like to say how proud I am to have worked with the full Advocacy Team of Policy, Advocacy Advisors and Impact.

Over the last four years, I have led and participated in the evolving improvement of SI Advocacy to achieve greater cohesion and stronger outcomes to address the continuing challenges and erosion of the rights of women and girls. Our statements have improved, our actions are impactful, and our advocacy is transformational, wide-reaching and systemic, extending influence across borders, cultures and regions.

Our purpose in reviewing and implementing our new SI Advocacy method of operation is to increase and advance our influence so that we are better able to meet the challenges posed by the major backlash against the rights of women and girls.

To work through the biennium under President Siew Yong's theme of "Save Mother Earth - Save the Future" highlighted the importance of our environment and the disproportionate effect that the degradation of our planet has on women and girls.

I encourage Federations to continue the growth of their National Advocacy Teams to strengthen our overall global Soroptimist advocacy. More of our members are becoming aware of CSW and the advantages of participating in and understanding the process to influence policy within each Soroptimist nation. We do have a long way to go; however, I can see much improvement. Thank you!

I thank my SI Advocacy Team, SI HQ Team and the SI Board from the bottom of my heart and wish the new team much success with stronger outcomes going forward.

Thank you and *au revoir*!"

Leigh Ellwood-Brown

Growing our Reach, Extending our Global Voice

By Joseph Mason, SI Communications Manager

Throughout the year, Soroptimist International (SI) strengthened its global voice through a wide range of communications activities, raising awareness of key issues affecting women and girls, supporting advocacy priorities, and showcasing the work of members across all five Federations. Campaigns, digital content, webinars, and podcasts provided opportunities to highlight impact, share knowledge and engage a global audience.

Public speaking training by SI Joondalup, SISEAP (International Day of Education).

UN International Observance Days

24 January - International Day of Education

Food security training, SI Region of Malaysia, SISEAP.

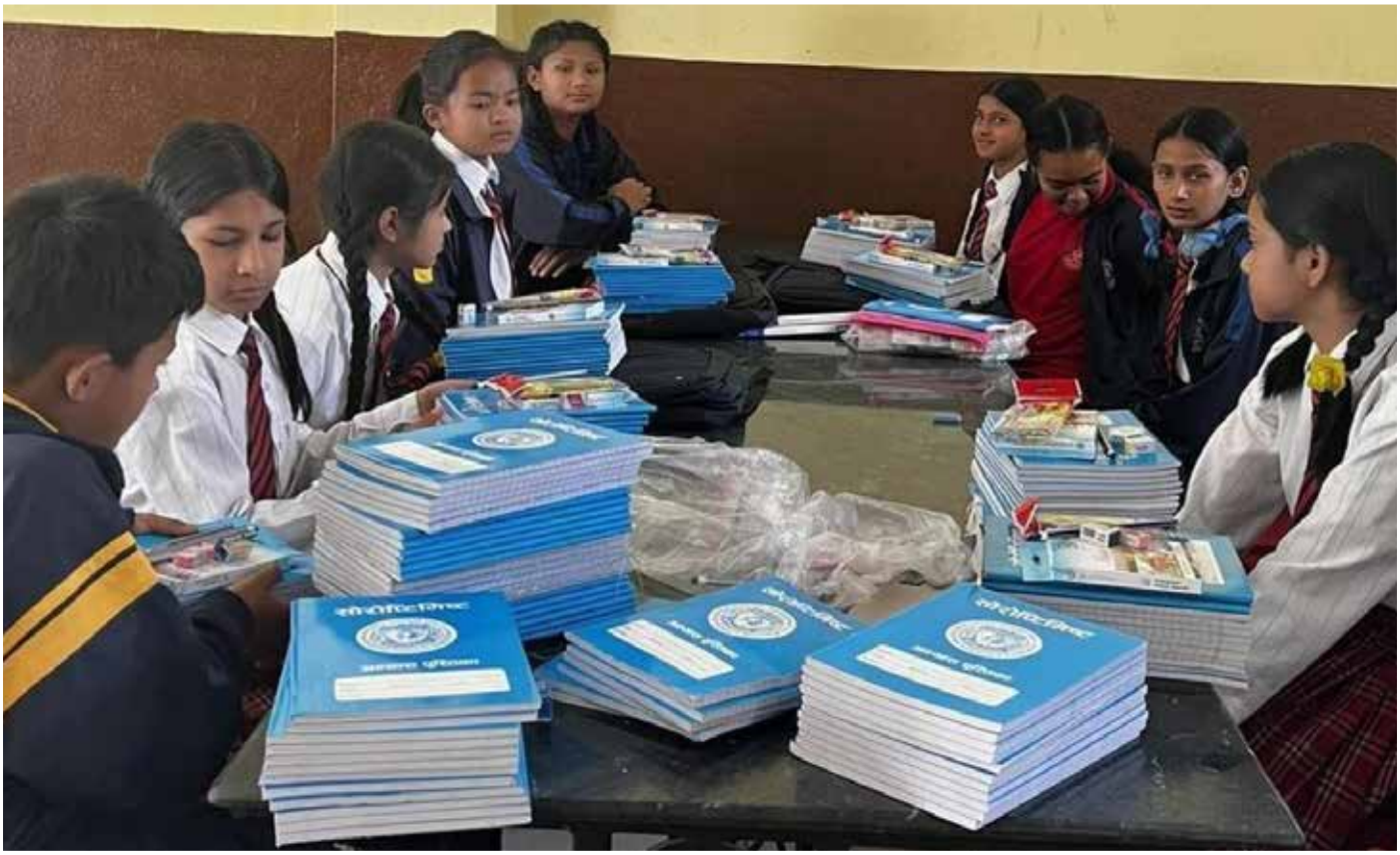
SI highlighted the importance of lifelong learning for women, showcasing projects across all five member Federations that support education, skills development and leadership, and demonstrating the role of education in creating opportunity and equality. Explore our Federation's **International Day of Education 2025 projects**.

08 March - International Women's Day

A **video message from Siew Yong Gnanalingam**, SI President 2024 -2025 highlighted the impact of climate change on all women and girls, emphasising the importance of inclusive, gender-responsive approaches to building a sustainable future.

22 March - World Water Day

A **featured project video** from SI Club Jakarta illustrated how access to clean water can transform communities, demonstrating the long-term impact of Soroptimist-led initiatives in advancing health, resilience, and sustainable development.



Educational resources provided to school children by SI Kathmandu, SIGBI (International Day of the Girl Child).

21 September - International Day of Peace

SI encouraged members to take action for peace through a **video message from Siew Yong Gnanalingam, SI President 2024 -2025**, alongside the promotion of a petition and the Women, Peace and Security position paper to support member-led advocacy.

11 October International Day of the Girl Child

Under the theme "Educate Her, Empower Her," SI gathered contributions from its member Federations and showcased Club projects through a main website feature and supporting social media, highlighting initiatives in education, health, safety, and empowerment for girls. Explore our Federation's **International Day of the Girl Child projects**.

Webinars

21 January - Connecting the Dots: Beijing +30, CEDAW, and the SDGs

This webinar brought together expert Soroptimist speakers to explore key global frameworks for gender equality, examining the connections between the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Sustainable Development Goals, and the Beijing Platform for Action, thirty years on from its implementation.

13 February - On the Road to CSW69

Ahead of the Commission on the Status of Women, participants and prospective delegates were supported to engage effectively in advocacy and global discussions. This session gave an overview of the CSW69 priority themes, structure, and significance, as well as practical guidance on preparing contributions, engaging in discussions, and navigating the Commission.

5 June - Save Mother Earth – Save the Future: Women and Water

On World Environment Day, in collaboration with Women for Water Partnership, this webinar explored environmental challenges, including water access, plastic pollution, and climate change – highlighting the role of women in driving sustainable solutions.

10 December - Human Rights Day: Break the Silence, End the Violence

Marking Human Rights Day, this webinar explored the issue of online violence against women and girls, examining its impact, the role of harmful gender norms, and the importance of collective action to create safer and more respectful digital spaces.

Recordings of SI webinars and video content are available on the **SI YouTube channel**.

Soroptimist Action – Improving Our Environment

Following an invitation from SI President 2024-2025, Siew Yong Gnanalingam, Soroptimist Clubs around the world shared videos of their environmental projects.

This footage was used to produce the movie ***Soroptimist Action: Improving Our Environment***.

With over 50 submissions from Clubs worldwide, the movie showcases a wide range of initiatives, including biodiversity protection, renewable energy, food security, and action against plastic pollution. These contributions highlight the collective commitment of Soroptimists to environmental sustainability and reflect the strength of collaboration across the organisation.

Launch of "Soroptimist Action: Improving Our Environment" at the SIE Congress in Krakow.

16 Days of Activism

SI's campaign for **16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence** focused on preventing online violence against women and girls - raising awareness of the issue and encouraging action across digital spaces. From 25 November to 15 December, SI delivered a powerful social media campaign, posting and sharing practical steps to promote safety, challenge harmful behaviours, and support all women and girls online.

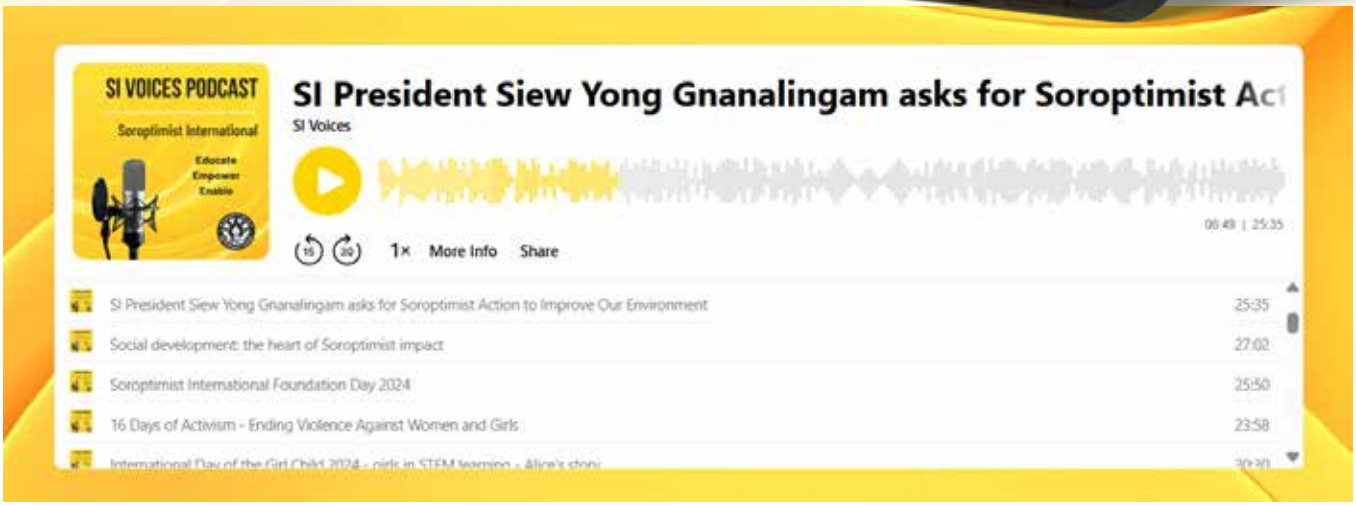
Members, Clubs, and Federations contributed to amplifying the campaign, strengthening our reach and reinforcing a shared commitment to ending violence against women and girls.

SI Voices Podcast

The SI Voices podcast series continued to provide an engaging platform to explore key themes across Soroptimist International's work, with six episodes released in 2025.

Episodes led by our hosts, Soroptimist members Dawn Marie Lemonds and Hilary Ratcliffe, covered a wide range of topics, including social development, education, environmental action, and health, reflecting the organisation's advocacy priorities and the diversity of its global work.

Notable discussions included efforts to eliminate cervical cancer, the importance of education as a driver of equality, and the role of Soroptimists in obtaining justice through their involvement in the UK Horizon Post Office scandal.



Our full Podcast Library is available on the SI Website.

EXPLORE PODCASTS >

Soroptimist International Foundation 2025

By Cathy Cottridge, SI Director of SI Foundation 2026-2027, and Joseph Mason, SI Communications Manager

Soroptimist International Foundation funds and supports grassroots projects that Educate, Empower, and Enable women and girls in communities around the world. Managed by the Soroptimist International Foundation Committee and supported by Soroptimist donations and legacies, all projects are selected to align with the Foundation's charitable objectives spanning education, health, poverty relief, human rights, and community development.

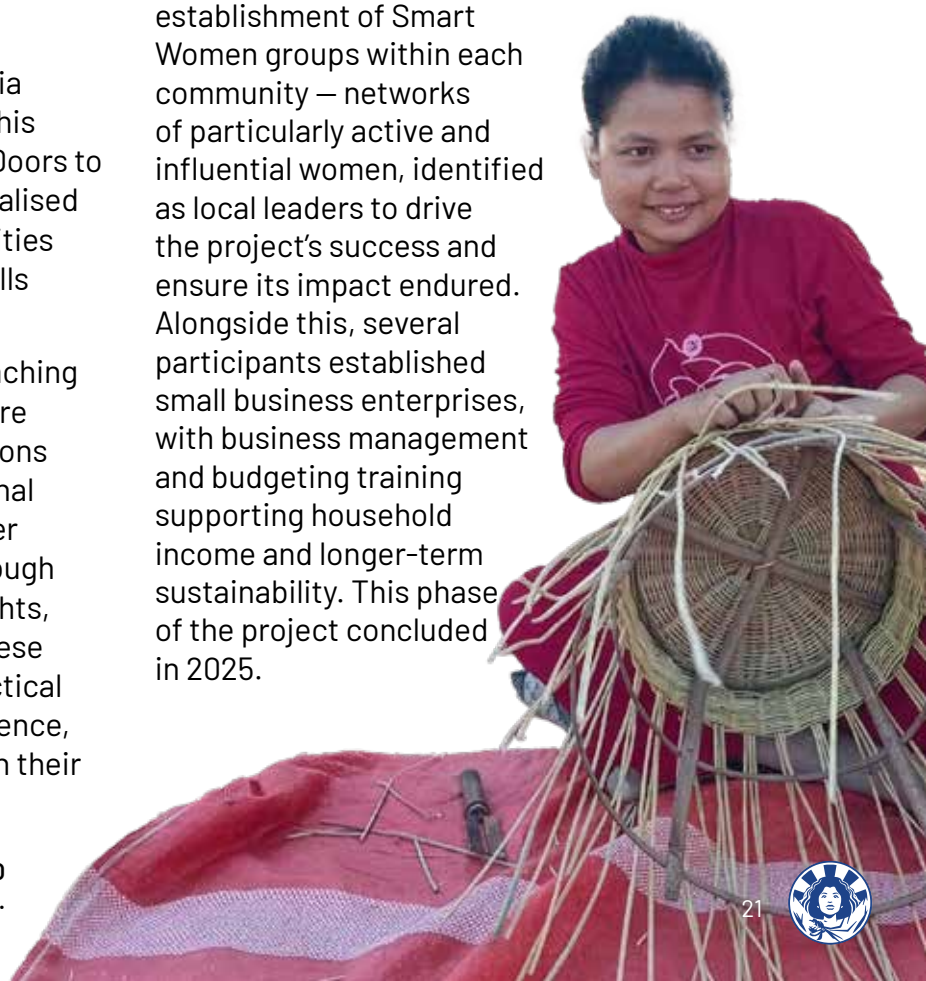
In 2025, Soroptimist International Foundation supported projects around the world, tackling issues including education, economic empowerment, environmental sustainability, gender-based violence, and reproductive health. Many projects combined practical skills training with community engagement, enabling participants to improve their own and their families' wellbeing — each one contributing to lasting change for women and girls in some of the world's most underserved communities.

Cambodia Community Dream Organisation

Delivered in partnership with the Cambodia Community Dream Organisation (CCDO), this two-year project, funded by the Opening Doors to a Bright Future Appeal, supported marginalised women and girls across six rural communities in Siem Reap, providing education and skills development throughout the life course.

The project exceeded its initial target, reaching 2,503 women and girls— 1,215 of whom were recruited in 2025 — through training sessions focused on health, gender equality, personal development, and business skills. A further 31,045 women and girls were reached through a media campaign promoting women's rights, gender equity, and access to services. These activities equipped participants with practical knowledge and strengthened their confidence, enabling them to take a more active role in their communities.

A key outcome was the establishment of Smart Women groups within each community — networks of particularly active and influential women, identified as local leaders to drive the project's success and ensure its impact endured. Alongside this, several participants established small business enterprises, with business management and budgeting training supporting household income and longer-term sustainability. This phase of the project concluded in 2025.



Basket weaving as part of the CCDO small enterprise training.

CCDO community public seminar.

Cambodia Community Dream Organisation – HERA Project

Building on this partnership, Soroptimist International Foundation has continued its support of the CCDO through the Her Enterprise for Reinvestment (HERA) Project, extending into 2026. This next phase continues the focus on economic empowerment for women and girls in rural Cambodia, delivering community-based training in financial literacy and small business development alongside wellbeing and peer support.

Enterprise training delivered by the CCDO.

Rose Academies Uganda

The Uganda Vocational Skills Programme, delivered through Rose Academies, supported 23 girls from the Soroti region to develop practical skills in tailoring, baking, and computer literacy, providing pathways to economic independence.

The project concluded in summer 2025 with the cohort's graduation — a milestone in their journey towards independence and self-sufficiency. As participants begin applying their skills, they are well placed to generate income and contribute to their families and local economies.

Focused on vocational training as a sustainable route to opportunity, the programme provided a year of learning and essential equipment for the training institute. Participants gained hands-on experience across all three disciplines, building confidence and skills required within their communities.

Elizabeth, a 16-year-old participant, reflected on her experience: "Before this programme, I had never touched a computer... Now I can do simple computer work and even help some people type and print documents."

Rose Academies scholarship recipients celebrate their graduation.

Restore a Sense of I Can – Caribbean

Since 2021, Soroptimist International (SI) and Restore a Sense of I Can (RSC) have supported women and girls across the Caribbean to build digital skills. This project was funded by donations to the Opening Doors to a Bright Future Appeal and was extended through 2024.

Over 100 participants engaged in digital literacy and content creation training, with targeted support for those without device

access and participants from the Venezuelan migrant community. A nine-month mentorship programme enabled several participants to develop online businesses. This project concluded with the publication of RSC's closing report in early 2025.

Educating Women from War-Torn Countries

Soroptimist International Region of Taiwan donated $100,000 USD to Soroptimist International Foundation to provide funding for projects that educate women who are in or from war-torn countries. In 2025, projects were delivered through the support of the fund in Kenya and Haiti.

Willing Hearts Society – Kenya

SI Past President Sharon Fisher visits the Lugari Girls Leadership Camp.

Part-funded through the Soroptimist International Foundation's Women in War-Torn Countries Fund, the 2025 Lugari Girls Leadership and Mentoring Camp empowered 250 girls aged 14–18 from across Kenya through a 10-day residential training programme.

Participants built practical skills, confidence and community awareness during the camp.

Delivered in partnership with Willing Hearts Society of Canada and building on earlier support through the Road to Equality' Appeal, the programme focused on leadership development, gender-based violence awareness, financial literacy, and personal resilience. Participants were selected from schools across the country, including regions affected by conflict, insecurity, and economic hardship.

The programme exceeded its objectives, equipping participants with the skills, confidence, and knowledge to take on leadership roles within their schools and communities. Following the training, each participant is expected to share their learning with peers, creating a cascading impact that extends far beyond the initial cohort – with potential to reach over 7,500 beneficiaries.

Steve Sinnott Foundation – Haiti and Nepal

Soroptimist International Foundation continued its partnership with the Steve Sinnott Foundation through the 'Ensuring Girls Equitable Access to Education' initiative, supporting projects in Haiti and Nepal. These programmes address two key barriers to girls' education—period poverty and gender-based violence - through practical training, awareness, and community engagement.

Raising awareness of gender-based violence in Haiti.

Haiti

Funded through the Women in War-Torn Countries Fund, the Haiti project delivered a month-long campaign combining gender-based violence awareness with the Positive Periods programme. Working with local partners, the initiative reached over 500 people directly and thousands more through schools, churches, and community networks.

Training sessions supported participants to recognise and challenge violence, while practical workshops enabled girls to access reusable sanitary products and remain in education. Sewing initiatives also created income-generating opportunities, with participants producing uniforms and reusable pads for their communities. The project contributed to improved awareness, increased school attendance, and strengthened community engagement around equality and non-violence.

Nepal

Funded through the Soroptimist International Foundation General Fund, the Nepal project combined reproductive health education with skills training to support women and girls in marginalised communities. Across three locations, over 400 participants attended awareness sessions on gender-based violence and human rights, while workshops trained women and girls to produce reusable sanitary pads using local materials.

The programme contributed to a reported 92 per cent increase in girls' school attendance, alongside reduced stigma around menstruation and increased confidence among participants. By combining practical skills with education and community dialogue, the project supported safer, more inclusive environments for women and girls.

Other Projects in Action

Greening Our Horizons – Kenya

Launched on 24 May 2025 at Kabete Rehabilitation School, the Greening Our Horizons: Soroptimists Leading the Way project brought together Soroptimist Clubs across Kenya to advance environmental action and community resilience.

Funded by Soroptimist International Foundation, the initiative aims to plant 100,000 indigenous trees in institutional forests at Kabete and Kirigiti Rehabilitation Schools, contributing to a wider project and goal of 500,000 trees across Africa by 2027.

The launch of Greening Our Horizons by Soroptimists in Kenya.

The project also supports climate education and trains women and young people in sustainable practices, linking environmental stewardship with livelihoods and food security.

During 2025, 9,000 indigenous trees, 130 fruit trees, and 3,500 vegetable seedlings were planted at Kabete and Dagoretti Girls Schools, and Getathuru National Assessment Centre. Placing women and girls at the centre of the initiative, the project strengthens local leadership and supports long-term environmental sustainability.

Improving girl's school attendance, literacy and future opportunities.

Kori Development Project – Sierra Leone

In partnership with the Kori Development Project Limited, this initiative supported girls' education in Kori Chiefdom, Moyamba District, through the construction of three classrooms and a dedicated girls' toilet block at Bob Simson Technical Secondary School.

Improved sanitation reduces barriers linked to menstrual health, helping girls remain in school and participate more consistently in school life. The additional classrooms eased overcrowding and supported increased enrolment, while the use of local materials and workforce benefited the wider community.

Aligned with Sustainable Development Goals 4 (Education) and 6 (Water and Sanitation), the project reflects a continued commitment to education, gender equality, and supporting girls to reach their full potential. Soroptimist International Foundation contributed £4,000 (UK pounds) to the project to improve outcomes for girls.

Fundación Moisés Bertoni – Paraguay

Soroptimist International Foundation supported Fundación Moisés Bertoni in Paraguay to empower indigenous girls at the Mbaracayú Education Centre through environmental education, wellbeing, and personal development.

The project included the construction of a sports centre and the delivery of a sports development programme, alongside initiatives such as the Annual Youth Environmental Camp. These activities supported over 120 girls, promoting confidence, teamwork, and awareness of gender equality and sustainability.

The project was completed at the end of 2024, with a final payment made in 2025, marking the successful conclusion of this phase of work.

Fundación Moisés Bertoni annual sports and environment camp.

Soroptimist International Foundation 2025

During 2025, Soroptimist International Foundation supported projects that reflected SI's five pillars: Education, Empowerment, Environment, Health and Eliminating Violence against Women and Girls.

Made possible through the generosity of Soroptimists, including donations and legacies, this work supported or continued projects across 11 countries.

10 PROJECTS SUPPORTED

GBP 58,018 SPENT ON CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

11 COUNTRIES REACHED

43,000+ PEOPLE DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY REACHED THROUGH PROJECT ACTIVITIES

4,000+ WOMEN AND GIRLS DIRECTLY SUPPORTED

GBP 66,606 DONATIONS RECEIVED

Several projects aligned with multiple pillars, recognising that the challenges facing women and girls are often interconnected.

EDUCATION
7 PROJECTS

EMPOWERMENT
4 PROJECTS

ENVIRONMENT
3 PROJECTS

HEALTH
5 PROJECTS

ELIMINATING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS
4 PROJECTS

Closing Remarks

SI Global Executive Director, Deborah Thomas

The final year of President Siew Yong Gnanalingam's biennium marked a period of significant progress, with Soroptimist International (SI) taking important steps to ensure it is well positioned for the future. Members of the SI Board, together with Federation Presidents and Incoming Officers for the next biennium, met in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, to undertake a comprehensive review of SI's leadership structure and governance, including the rotational procedure for selecting SI Presidents.

Following these discussions, a number of key decisions were unanimously agreed. From 2026 onwards, the SI Board will once again include Federation Presidents, alongside the SI President and expert directors, bringing the total number of directors to eleven. In addition, SI Committees will include Federation Representatives to ensure that all voices are fully represented in decision-making processes.

A landmark decision was also reached to discontinue the rotational principle for selecting the SI President. From 2028 onwards, a formal recruitment and selection process will be introduced, reflecting a more modern and inclusive approach to leadership.

In support of these structural changes, the SI Board and Federation Presidents agreed to align all SI work under five core pillars: Education, Empowerment, Environment, Health and Violence Against Women and Girls. This shared framework will strengthen focus, coherence, and impact across the organisation.

Preparations for the SI 2027 Convention in Prague progressed steadily during the year under the leadership of Chair, Mariet Verhoef Cohen. The Convention will take place at the Prague Congress Centre from 29 September to 1 October 2027.

In October, the SI Board endorsed a proposal to return the SI Emblem to its original blue colour— a colour widely recognised and used across all Federations. This decision was subsequently approved by a vote of Federation Authorised Representatives and implemented immediately. The Board was delighted to receive unanimous support for this important step, which strengthens the organisation's brand recognition and global identity.

Together, these decisions mark a pivotal moment in the evolution of Soroptimist International. By strengthening governance, broadening representation, and aligning our work under clear strategic priorities, SI is well positioned to respond effectively to the challenges and opportunities ahead for all women and girls.

With renewed focus, inclusive leadership, and a shared commitment across all Federations, we look to the future with confidence—ready to amplify our impact and continue advancing our mission to improve the lives of all women and girls worldwide.

List of Members

of the Company, Directors, Staff, Position Holders who served during 2025

Members of the Company

Soroptimist International of the Americas Federation

Authorised Representative: Ginger Cole

Soroptimist International Africa Federation

Authorised Representative: Mary Muia

Soroptimist International of Europe Federation

Authorised Representative: Hafdís Karlsdóttir

Soroptimist International Great Britain and Ireland Federation

Authorised Representative: Ruth Healey

Soroptimist International South East Asia Pacific Federation

Authorised Representative: Joanne Yeoh

Serving Directors 2025

Siew Yong Gnanalingam, President, Chair of Global Policy

Leigh Ellwood-Brown, Director of Advocacy, Chair of Global Impact

Wendy Logan, Treasurer

Barbara Kohl, Chair of Finance

Anthea Penny, Chair of Governance

Gillie O'Rourke, Chair of Soroptimist International Foundation

Cathy Cottridge

Bobbi Enderlin

Dolgormaa Jamiyan

Jalila Moufqia

Sabine Reimann

Fatimata Tambadou

Kazuko Morita

Serving Officers 2025

Renata Trottmann Probst, President Elect

Presidential Appointments 2025

Anne Gover, Procedural Consultant

Beverly Bucur, Advocacy Advisor

Pat Black, Advocacy Advisor

Tania Gómez Herazo, Advocacy AI Advisor

Linda Witong, Advocacy Advisor

Isobel Smith, HR Liaison

Gerda Huisman, Archivist

Mariet Verhoef- Cohen, SI Convention Chair 2027

Susanna Raccis, SI Convention Treasurer 2027

Soroptimist International Headquarters 2025

Deborah Thomas, Global Executive Director

Hana Smith, Global Policy Advisor

Margaret Daly, Communications Manager

Joseph Mason, Advocacy and Communications Coordinator

Caroline Badcock, Executive Assistant

SI Representatives to the United Nations - January – September 2025

New York

Bette Levy (Centre Contact)

Sofia Calicchio

Oya Dane

María Fornella-Oehninger

Marline McLean

Jackie Shapiro

Frances Zainoeddin

Geneva

Berthe De Vos-Neven (Centre Contact)

Donatella Benjamin

Stacy Ciulik

Pascale Muylaert

Olga Tzortzatou Nanopoulou

Vienna

Marion Prechtl (Centre Contact)

Martina Gredler

Christine Peer-Valenta

Marcella Sigmund

Nairobi

Mary Muia (Centre Contact)

Habiba Alambo

Victoria Kutto

Beatrice Oluoch

Shaleen Wanjiru Njoki

Paris

Evelyne Para (Centre Contact)

Rina Dupriet

Marie-Christine Gries

Rome

Liliana Mosca

Bangkok

Theresa Devasahayam

SI Representatives to the United Nations – October - December 2025

New York

Oya Dane

Marline McLean

Geneva

Berthe De Vos-Neven

Donatella Benjamin

Stacy Ciulik

Pascale Muylaert

Nairobi

Beatrice Oluoch

Shaleen Wanjiru Njoki

Paris

Evelyne Para

Rina Dupriet

Marie-Christine Gries

Rome

Liliana Mosca

Front cover image courtesy of the Cambodia Academy
www.cambodiaacademy.org/

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