



## **International Women's Day 2014:**

### **35,000 Soroptimists Calling for Full Gender Equality**

On the occasion of March 8<sup>th</sup>, International Women's Day, Soroptimist International of Europe and its 35,000 professional women members stand together with women around the world to demand full, across-the-board gender equality in every domain of private and professional life where it remains unfulfilled, even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As a daily witness of many different forms of inequality suffered by women across the 59 countries in Europe, the Middle East, and Africa where our members are active, with one voice we reiterate the call made by the United Nations on the occasion of March 8<sup>th</sup>, International Women's Day, this year: "Equality for women is progress for ALL."

Gender inequality today still comes in many shapes and forms. Women and girls still constitute the majority of the world's illiterate people. Girls are still not equally represented in secondary and tertiary education. Women and girls are still less likely to own property and own the land they work on. Women and girls are still more likely to be poor. And women and girls continue to be the vast majority of victims of domestic and intimate partner violence, which exacerbates all of the problems listed above. Women and girls who have suffered emotional, psychological, or physical harm, which can have lasting, if not lifelong, consequences, often fail to raise themselves out of poverty, to empower themselves educationally, to be the role models and the providers they seek to be for their children.

For 90 years, the 35,000 professional women members of Soroptimist International of Europe have been advocating for the articulation and implementation of women's rights at the local, national and international levels and have been actively improving the lives of women and girls by designing, fundraising for, and implementing thousands upon thousands of on-the-ground projects. For 90 years, we, as Soroptimists, have been fighting for equality.

Just last year, members of Soroptimist International of Europe reported as astonishing 4,500 projects which contributed directly to the improvement of women's lives – from Russia to Morocco, from Norway to Madagascar. With millions of euros raised, Soroptimists conducted more than 600 projects related to education, in addition to the countless scholarship and mentoring initiatives they lead, and implemented more than 700 projects dedicated to the prevention of violence against women and the protection of victims of such violence.

And yet, much work remains to be done.

This year, on International Women's Day, Soroptimists renew their pledge to combat any form of violence against women and girls, to promote the human rights of women, to support women's and girls' education and empowerment.

For Soroptimists, every day is International Women's Day.