



**REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE WESTERN PACIFIC  
BUREAU REGIONAL DU PACIFIQUE OCCIDENTAL**

**REGIONAL COMMITTEE**

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Agenda item 11

**STATEMENT BY THE SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL (SI)**

**By Mrs Siew Yong Gnanalingam**

Soroptimist International, a global service organization of women, is committed to a world where women and girls together achieve their individual and collective potential, realise aspirations, and have an equal voice in creating strong, healthy communities worldwide. Soroptimist International is gravely concerned that failures in health systems, reactive policy making, and deeply rooted gender inequalities at family, community, and national levels combine to have a devastating impact on women's health throughout their life cycles.

To address these concerns, Soroptimist International raises awareness around the specific health care needs of women and girls across the life-course and encourages learning which can positively impact on attitudes and behaviours; advocates for civil society monitoring the actions of governments; and acts to identify and implement simple and effective methods of disease prevention, responsive and tailored community based health interventions, and preventative health care and health education for women and girls. We also work with women and girls to impart health care skills for personal and professional goals.

(As an example of community based health intervention and education, SI Federation of the South West Pacific will be launching a project that addresses a concern highlighted by the Regional Director that in some countries of this region ,achieving MDG 5 is still a problem. The SI of SWP Federation Biennium Project entitled 'Birthing in The Pacific' to be implemented in PNG aims to upskill and professionally develop the competencies of midwives and birthing attendants as a way of reducing infant and maternal mortality. Soroptimists clubs from the federation will fund the training program by providing the trainers from Australia and scholarships for about 150 participants who will be from the city as well as rural and remote areas. )

As the Western Pacific Region of the WHO debates and develops their future agenda for women's health, Soroptimist International wishes to draw attention to the following points, built upon the above position on women's health and SI's experience from field work in 125 countries around the world:

1. That policies and programmes take a life course approach and do not focus solely on reproductive health or women of childbearing age, calling equal attention to the unique needs of adolescent girls and young women, women's sexual and reproductive health, and the specific needs of older women.

2. That attention is paid to the critical necessity of a systems-based approach underpinning any sustainable improvements in women's health.
3. That the future direction of women's health in the Western Pacific Region embraces a human rights based approach, ensuring that care is accessible, acceptable, available, and of good quality, and that the voices of women and girls are included in decision making, policy setting, and programme design.