a global voice for women

Soroptimist International

President Ann launches December 10 Appeal for Solar Lamps and Cookers

"Can you imagine finding time to earn your living if you had to spend hours every day collecting firewood? Or how you would study with no electric light in the evening? One quarter of the world's population do not have reliable access to electricity; 70% of these are women and girls living in developing countries."

Soroptimist International President Ann Garvie 2013-15

Soroptimist International President Ann Garvie has launched her December 10 Appeal, which will support Soroptimist projects all over the world providing education and solar solutions to women. Read President Ann's full message.

Energy poverty is a significant barrier to women and girls' education and empowerment in many parts of the world. Around 1.4 billion people have no access to electricity and a billion more only have access to unreliable electricity networks. About 3 billion people rely on solid fuels (traditional biomass and coal) to meet their basic needs.

Women are particularly affected because of their role in collecting fuel, cooking and other domestic work. It forces them to spend hours a day on manual labour to prepare food or collecting firewood. It damages health, because of harmful smoke from cooking fires or by compromising health services. It hinders communication by internet or mobile phone, prevents women and girls from studying or working in the evenings, and places women at greater risk of violence in low-lit or darkened streets.

See Solar, Cook Solar: Educating, Empowering and Enabling Opportunities

"Sustainable energy—energy that is accessible, cleaner and more efficient—powers opportunity. It grows economies. It lights up homes, schools and hospitals. It empowers women and local communities. And it paves a path out of poverty to greater prosperity for all."

UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon's Sustainability for All initiative

President Ann's December 10 Appeal will support Soroptimist projects that **educate** women about renewable energy and **empower and enable opportunities** for them, by providing solar lanterns and cookers. Project sites will be announced soon.

By increasing their access to solar energy, the projects will provide women and girls with:

- Increased time to pursue other activities
- Ability to read and study at night
- Ability to undertake income generating activities at night
- Health benefits (decreased access to harmful smoke)
- Increased access to health services (powered by renewable energy)
- Water purification
- New jobs and areas of employment
- Decreased risk of violence with increased lighting, particularly in refugee camps and other notably dangerous areas

- Increased communications and access to information (mobile phone chargers, radios, etc.)

Soroptimist International clubs and federations already have a strong track record of supporting solar energy projects. “A Soroptimist International of Europe Club partnership between Denmark and Kenya has shown how successful such solar projects can be, with over 200 women benefitting”, says President Ann, who was particularly inspired by this SI Eldoret (Kenya) project to provide solar chargers, lanterns and cookers by, winner of one of SIE’s 2013 Best Practice Awards. Read more about the SI Kenya/Denmark solar partnership.

Get Involved – Action Ideas for December 10

The “See Solar, Cook Solar” campaign will officially launch December 10, 2013. During the initial phase, while the project sites are finalised, why not raise awareness and understanding of sustainability, energy poverty and solar energy by:

- **Organise a “See Solar, Cook Solar” quiz** evening to test your knowledge! We’ll provide the questions (and answers), which will be available from the SI website soon.

- **“Lights out” for December 10** – get a taste of what it’s like for the 2.4 billion people who do not have access to reliable electricity by committing to go mains-free for a day, an evening, a club meeting… you could ask for sponsorship or donate the money that you’d have spent on electricity to the Appeal.

Club resources will be available soon from the SI Facebook page and website.

More information

What does it mean to be a woman in a place without energy? In this video, Helen Clark, Administrator of the UN Development Programme and member of the UN Secretary-General's High-level Group on Sustainable Energy for All, describes how access to basic energy can transform lives.

UNDP Fact sheet http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/corporate/fast-facts/english/FF-Universal-Energy-Access.pdf

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, speaking on “Energy, Gender and Economic Growth”, Rio de Janeiro, June 2012:

“Energy poverty takes an especially heavy toll on women. Most of the 3 billion people in the world who rely on wood, charcoal and dung for cooking are women. Most of the nearly 2 million people each year who die from smoke caused by dangerous cooking, heating and lighting are women. Too many women spend hours each day foraging for fuel. In some cases, venturing too far puts them at risk of attack. Just going out for firewood can expose a girl to rape.”

“Women face especially grave risks when they have to rely on a clinic that has no electricity. More than a quarter of a million health facilities in our world are dark at night. As we know, a pregnant woman can go into labour at any time. Her survival should not depend on daylight.”