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## **WHITE PAPER: Reaching Out to Women When Disaster Strikes**

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*The tsunami's swirling waves hit the Indonesian shoreline before anyone had time to react. In a split second, Tanya's entire life is washed away—her home and village gone, her husband dead. She sets off with the other survivors to a village on higher land. But Tanya struggles; she must also look after the welfare of her ailing daughter and sick mother.*

*At the tsunami refugee camp, Tanya lies awake at night, worrying about how she will feed her daughter and mother. She cowers in fear wondering whether she, like some of the other women at the camp, will be raped by her fellow refugees. When the international aid ends, she wonders how she will survive.*

On any given day, natural disasters—floods, hurricanes, earthquakes, tsunamis or wild fires—can strike any area of the world. Disasters result in property damage, loss of life, and the creation of displaced persons or refugees needing assistance with safety, housing, nutrition and health care. When disaster strikes, relief organizations work to ensure that people are safe and have access to basic necessities.

In the last few years, disasters have been on the rise and their impact increasingly devastating, with 2011 and 2010 especially deadly. An 8.9 earthquake rocked Japan in March 2011, followed by a deadly tsunami, with at least 25,000 people dead at last count. In addition, radiation contamination from nuclear power plants, as a result of the disasters, threatened the health of the Japanese people. Christ Church, New Zealand's second largest city was hit by a 6.3 magnitude earthquake in February 2011 with multiple fatalities reported; and the most deadly earthquake of all struck Haiti in January 2010, claiming more than 222,000 lives. In February 2010, an earthquake in Chile took more than 700 lives. (The Huffington Post)

While number of deaths are still being tabulated for 2011 disasters, in 2010 there were about 304,000 people who died due to disasters, compared to 15,000 in 2009, and the highest number since 1976. In 2010, worldwide economic losses totaled \$218 billion. This represents a sharp increase over 2009, when economic losses totaled \$68 billion. (The American Pundit) More people were killed worldwide by disasters in 2010 than have been killed in terrorism attacks in the past 40 years combined, with flooding alone killing more than 6,300 people in 59 nations through September 2010. (Global Disaster Watch)

According to a landmark study by the United Nations, global disaster risk is increasing worldwide due to structurally unsafe cities and the combined impact of environmental destruction and climate change. On average almost 250 million people each year are affected by natural disasters, the vast majority of them climate related such as hurricanes, droughts and floods, along with earthquakes, according to a report by Oxfam. But the numbers are rising. By 2015, the report states these numbers could grow by 50 percent to an average of more than 375 million people affected by climate-related disasters each year, in part because of climate change. (Duncan Green)

While disasters create hardships for everyone, women and children are disproportionately vulnerable. During natural disasters, women and children are 14 times more likely to die than are men (Kristina Peterson). During the Haiti earthquake, for example, more women were at risk for death because Haitian women customarily stayed at home to take care of young children or were likely to be working in or around buildings that collapsed. As to numbers of women who died in the earthquake compared to men, numbers are difficult to come by because more women than men within Haiti's poor majority do not have official state identification. (Mark Schuller)

No matter the country in which a disaster strikes, more women are at risk and continue to be at risk, during and after disasters because of existing gender inequities – they are among the poorest, lack mobility and access to resources and have increased family responsibilities. Despite the vulnerable position of women prior to and following a disaster, their special needs are often ignored, as are their unique abilities to respond. (Elizabeth Ferris)

While women suffer disproportionately during and after disasters, it is important to also note that they can be, and often are, remarkable change agents and leaders on both household and community-levels. As such, women must be included in pre- and post-disaster planning. As national and international agencies consult with affected communities, they must make sure that women are at the discussion and decision-making table. Plans made by relief agencies must include the input of local women leaders and organizations. Rather than remain solely passive victims of disasters, women must be provided with opportunities to serve as change agents, gain self-confidence, and leadership skills and emerge as community leaders. (Lin Chew and Kavita Ramdas)

### **Why Women Are More Vulnerable**

Women suffer more in disasters for two main reasons: women occupy a more tenuous position in society prior to the disasters, and they have additional burdens as caregivers to children and the elderly. For example, after floods ravaged Pakistan in 2010, women and children made up 70 percent of the nearly 18 million people affected by the disaster. Many were left homeless when their husbands perished, according to UNICEF. (Asiya Islam)

As a result of historical, political, cultural and societal conditions, women occupy an inferior position in society in most countries around the world. In a study of 141 countries, it was found that when it came to deaths, gender differences were directly linked to women's economic and social rights. In societies where women and men enjoyed equal rights, disasters caused the same number of deaths in both sexes. (International Union for Conservation of Nature) The reality remains, however, that women make up 70 percent of the 1.3 billion people living in abject poverty worldwide (on less than \$1 per day). As a result, they are more vulnerable to the impact of disasters due to existing socio-economic, political and cultural conditions. (International Strategy for Disaster Reduction)

Therefore, women are at a disadvantage even before disaster strikes. Women often lack access to formal jobs, transportation, communication systems and secure housing. Women also make up the majority of those working in agriculture and in the informal economy, which constitute low-paying jobs with little or no security and benefits. When disaster strikes, these areas are hardest hit, resulting in women making up the majority of the unemployed post-disaster. (Pan American Health Organization)

In addition, women have responsibilities as caregivers. Women are most often responsible for taking care of children, the elderly and the disabled. This caregiver role limits their mobility and options during and after disasters. During disasters, women are less able to evacuate. Even if there is warning of a coming disaster, poor women lack the resources needed to flee. Evacuating is even more difficult for women with children and elderly women, as was witnessed in the international media when the

earthquake and tsunami hit Japan in 2010 and images were seen on television of mothers looking for lost children, as well as elderly women struggling to escape the devastation.

Women's responsibilities as caregivers also impede their ability to rebuild after the disaster. Following disasters, women are unable to migrate for work, as men do, and the number of female-headed households increases. When housing is destroyed and families are moved to refugee camps or temporary shelters, the "domestic burdens of caring for dependents increases at the same time that economic burdens increase." (Pan American Health Organization) In addition, women are less able to access jobs available in the aftermath of disasters because they need to care for children and there is no access to safe or reliable childcare.

Furthermore, at any given time, an average of 18 to 20 percent of the reproductive-age female population is either pregnant or lactating. (Shrade and Delane) This biological fact creates a highly vulnerable population within a group that is already at risk. For pregnant or lactating women face additional challenges, as they have an increased need for food and water. These women are more likely to suffer malnutrition because they have specific nutritional needs when they are pregnant or breastfeeding. This can be especially acute within cultures that maintain food hierarchies. Such as in Kenya where men often eat first and are served the highest quality of food products. (African Health Sciences)

The unique disaster related risks facing pregnant women also extends to their unborn children. For example, following the 2011 earthquake in Japan pregnant women may be at risk in areas of high concentrations of radiation due to nuclear power plant contamination, and therefore may be jeopardizing the health of their embryo and fetus. (Bonnie Rochman)

During and after disasters, women and girls also suffer from a heightened risk of physical and sexual violence. Women and girls' vulnerability increases when they are left alone because male relatives leave to migrate for work or are killed. The likelihood of sexual violence grows when women and girls are living in shelters or refugee camps. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, there were dozens of reports of rape in emergency shelters and relief facilities. Further, lack of adequate reporting procedures made it difficult for authorities to effectively track rape cases and apprehend perpetrators. (Lauer, *Rape Reporting Procedure Missing After Hurricane*)

The stress and economic uncertainty that results from disasters can also translate into increased domestic violence, which has been documented after natural disasters in several areas of the world. When shelters are damaged or destroyed and alternate housing is unavailable, it is more difficult for women to leave. In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, at least six domestic violence shelters in Louisiana were destroyed, along with several others in Mississippi, limiting domestic violence services to women and children in need. Domestic violence is not a priority for overburdened police and disrupted courts. (Enarson, *Does Domestic Violence Increase After Disaster?*)

In addition, following a disaster, women and girls are increasingly at-risk for sex trafficking. Sex trafficking is one of the most corrosive forms of the violation of human rights that must be addressed from a gender and a human rights perspective. In addition to immediate efforts to prevent trafficking in the aftermath of a disaster, the rebuilding efforts must explicitly also tackle the root causes of trafficking in women, including poverty, women's inferior status in the family and society, lack of legal protection and of awareness of their rights. Traffickers must be speedily prosecuted and punished, and trafficked women and girls must have access to adequate support and protection. (United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women.)

In Haiti, violence against women has always been an unaddressed catastrophe, according to Haitian women's rights organizations that state that human trafficking and sex tourism were thriving businesses even before the earthquake. Since the disaster, the United Nations reports, over 2,000 orphaned children (mostly girls) have been sold as sex slaves by child traffickers, most having ended up in neighboring Dominican Republic or sold in the Caribbean or Latin America. Furthermore, prior to the devastating quake there, 72 percent of Haitian girls surveyed had been raped and at least 40 percent of women were victims of domestic violence. In the aftermath of the earthquake, the risk to women and girls has dramatically increased. (Bien-Aime, *Haiti's Women in the Aftermath of Disaster*) Sexual assaults are daily occurrences in the biggest camps, aid workers say – and most attacks go unreported because of the shame, social stigma and fear of reprisals from attackers. (Faul, *Rape in Haiti: Women, Girls Detail Violent Attacks in Aftermath of Haiti Earthquake*)

In a show of solidarity, former Chilean President Michelle Bachelet, now the head of United Nations Women, visited earthquake-ravaged Haiti and joined forces with the United Nations Women's Fund (UNIFEM) to advocate for the women of Haiti. During her visit to Haiti in February 2009, Bachelet called for equal participation of women in discussion of Haiti's future, and also the need to focus on immediate needs, including preventing gender-based violence. She also presented strong recommendations of the central role of women in post-disaster reconstruction and relief work. (United Nations News Service)

The risk of forced marriage, labor exploitation and trafficking all increase in the uncertain times during and after a disaster. These issues came to light following the Asian tsunami in 2004. Oxfam reports that with the overwhelming loss of women, young girls are being forced into marriage with remaining widows. Furthermore, they are encouraged to have more children with less spacing between births in order to replace lost community members.

### **What Women Need**

In the aftermath of disasters, people need shelter, food, water, health care and new sources of income. Women need all of this plus recognition of additional assistance and protections due to their vulnerable position.

**Women need housing.** Depending on the situation, women need access to safe housing or shelter separate from men to whom they are not related. Women living in safe housing prior to disasters should be transferred to a new safe location and not housed with the general population, as this could put them and their children at risk. Women also need access to safe and secure bathrooms that they do not share with men. According to the Soroptimist-IWPR (Institute for Women's Policy Research) study, the overwhelming destruction caused by Hurricane Katrina created an acute affordable housing shortage throughout the region, especially in the city of New Orleans. As a result, many women and girls were forced to share accommodations with extended family members, acquaintances, or even in some cases, former abusers, simply to have a place to call home. The city's remaining domestic violence and sexual assault service providers pointed to the resulting overcrowding as a factor in abuse specifically linked to Katrina. (Soroptimist International of the Americas)

**Women need safety.** Women need special protections against the increased risk of sexual and physical violence. Yifat Susskind, associate director of MADRE, an international human rights organizations, states "in a crisis, the mechanisms that are usually in place to prevent rape, violence and molestation have disappeared. There are no family members to protect women and girls, no houses in which to hide, and fewer police and armed forces to dissuade would be criminals." (Pikul) And, as stated earlier, women are also vulnerable to trafficking and domestic violence. Although no current statistics are available in the wake of the Japanese earthquake in March 2011, in the aftermath

of the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake that shook the Kobe area in 1995, hotline workers reported that 60 percent of calls concerned spousal abuse, along with stories of rape in unsafe post-quake neighborhoods. Many cases went unreported, however, because women were urged to remain silent. (Masai, Kuzunishi and Kondo. *Women in the great Hanshin earthquake.*)

***Women need health care.*** Women's special health care needs must be addressed. Care packages should be designed for women to provide for their health and nutritional needs. Reproductive health care must be provided during and after disasters to prevent and reduce illnesses and disabilities during pregnancy and labor. (International Committee of the Red Cross) Swanee Hunt, Director of the Women and Public Policy Program at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, and Dan Steinberg, Senior Fellow at the US Institute for Peace, argue that during and after disasters "when emergency care is a priority, reproductive health is relegated to second place, which can lead to skyrocketing infant and maternal mortality rates." In the wake of the 2010 Haiti earthquake, the Pan-American Health Organization dispatched a specialist on gender issues to work to ensure that women's special needs were being addressed by agencies providing health-related relief. (Relief Web, *Haiti seeks more support for women's health needs.*)

***Women need access to resources.*** Women should have equal access to disaster relief resources. Many reasons exist as to why women lack access, including the patriarchal structure of society; lack of access to transportation to get where the relief is being distributed; and a lack of knowledge about and inability to complete needed paperwork. Experience from past disasters also suggests that women and children do not get a fair share of immediate disaster relief aid. Existing inequalities are made worse by disasters, according to Dr. Marijke Velzeboer-Salcedo, gender expert with the Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO). "Those who are stronger and more powerful, whether physically or psychosocially – or both – are going to have better access to scarce resources. But when women are deprived of resources, entire families are likely to be deprived, too." (Relief Web)

Also, because women are the primary caregivers in families, they are often required to stay home or in shelters with children, the elderly or the disabled, while men can access resources. Women need to be directly targeted to receive resources such as food and water. The resources available should also be distributed in equitable ways that respect women's traditional roles as caregivers and managers of the household.

***Women need equality before the law.*** Following disasters, women have more difficulty replacing lost identification papers that are needed to access relief and social services. (Hunt and Steinberg) Both Oxfam and the Global Fund for Women reported that women had difficulty accessing disaster relief resources because government or insurance benefits had been registered in only the man's name, and in some areas only male-headed households were recognized by authorities as being eligible for relief. Finally, around the world women are denied the right to own property. This problem is magnified following a disaster when women cannot claim ownership of the family property if their male relatives have died or cannot access insurance or other resources if the property has been destroyed.

***Women need earning opportunities.*** Finally, women need access to both short- and long-term earning opportunities. Disasters can result in even more single female heads of household, and their need to rebuild their lives is crucial for them and their children. In the short-term, disaster relief for cash projects should be made available to women. And, in longer term planning, income-generating activities targeted to women also must be included. (Oxfam)

## **Women as Powerful Change Agents**

Women are not only victims of disasters, but they are also effective and powerful agents of change in relation to risk reduction, relief and recovery. Women have a strong body of knowledge and expertise that can be used in climate change mitigation, disaster reduction and adaptation strategies. Women's responsibilities in households and communities as stewards of natural resources has positioned them well for livelihood strategies adapted to changing environmental realities.

Therefore, gender-specific capacities of women derived from their social roles prove to be beneficial for their entire communities during every stage of the disaster cycle. Women's high level of risk awareness, social networking practices, extensive knowledge of their communities, abilities to manage natural resources and their caring abilities all make them important players in effective risk assessment, early warning, disaster response and recovery actions. (International Union for Conservation of Nature.)

To target scarce resources effectively, disaster practitioners should be aware of gender patterns in disasters, and respond appropriately. Seeing disaster through a gender lens can help identify key issues for policymakers, planners and practitioners, expose critical system gaps, and bring a gender focus into the analysis of disaster mitigation and response. (United Nations Commission on the Status of Women)

## **Disaster Risk Reduction**

While women's vulnerability to disasters is often highlighted, their actual and potential roles in disaster risk reduction have often been overlooked. Because women understand their needs and vulnerabilities and those of their communities, they more often work proactively to put systems in place in the event that disaster strikes. Few existing disaster risk reduction policies and projects, however, have recognized the skills and capacities that women contribute toward disaster risk reduction. Therefore, special attention needs to be given to enhance women's capacity to manage risks, and to mitigate the impacts of a disaster by implementing risk reduction projects prior to disasters. (International Union for Conservation of Nature.)

Some examples of the different ways women can participate in disaster risk reduction include helping to:

- construct disaster resistant housing;
- increase food security;
- collect and disseminate information about disaster risk reduction and early warning systems;
- improve and mainstream a gender perspective in the coordination of disaster preparedness humanitarian response and recovery through capacity building and training.

The goal is to shift the identity of women from beneficiaries to that of key actors in building, shaping and sustaining resilient communities. (International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. *Gender Perspective: Working Together for Disaster Risk Reduction*.) At the level of the United Nations, the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) secretariat has the mandate and responsibility for gender mainstreaming in disaster risk reduction, in line with the Hyogo Framework for Action adopted by 168 countries at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction in 2005. (International Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction, *To build the resilience of nations and communities to disasters, we need equal and active participation of men and women in disaster risk reduction*.)

## **Disaster Relief**

A major component in assisting women during and after disasters is to involve them in the planning and implementing of disaster relief programs. Women are better able to communicate their needs and devise plans to meet them. However, immediately following a disaster, urgency prevails and as such, gender concerns are often overlooked or dismissed as irrelevant. The majority of relief efforts are intended for the entire population of a disaster-affected area. However, when they rely solely on existing patriarchal structures of resource distribution, women are marginalized in their access to relief. (Pan American Health Organization)

Women have special needs following a disaster and special talents to respond to the disaster. Disaster relief can only be successful when these needs are met and women's talents utilized. It is important, as the Oxfam report argues, that thinking shift from women as "vulnerable victims" to the understanding that women are citizens with specific capabilities and perspectives.

Following disasters, women are generally better at organizing the community. Women form groups and networks to act on the most pressing needs of the community. They work by creating formal and informal groups to organize shelters, coordinate relief efforts, and re-activate existing women's groups to meet immediate needs. These networks often work across differences such as ethnicity, religion or politics. While men often rely on government aid and on strategies that take them away from the community, women are savvy at solving problems locally. (Viñas, Schrade and Hunt and Steinberg)

Women are fair and effective distributors of resources, and are more likely to ensure that food and other essential items are equitably distributed within the household. Men are less likely to understand household needs, and are more likely to sell or barter these items in order to engage in activities for their personal benefit. (Schrade) Including women in the distribution of relief resources limits the potential for exploitation, which can occur when men have control of the resources. (International Committee of the Red Cross) Furthermore, empowering women during disasters and in disaster relief increases their status as leaders. (Hunt)

## **Disaster Recovery**

Disaster recovery is the long-term efforts of a community to adapt, grow and recover following the ravages of a disaster. The process can take months or years, and while of lower intensity, it is often of more lasting benefit than the immediate help offered to disaster-affected areas to alleviate emotional and economic severities of the disaster.

Disasters often creates an opportunity for women to challenge and change their gendered status in society – which is why it is crucial that women be included in long-term disaster recovery efforts. When women are included in the rebuilding process, there is a greater chance that long-lasting improvements in the lives of women and girls within society will be made. Disasters may be traumatic, but they are means whereby old and dysfunctional relationships can be set aside and new ones brought in, in which all members of a community are enabled to maximize their potential. (Elaine Enarson, *Gender and Natural Disasters Working Paper.*)

The unique opportunity to change traditional gender roles that a disaster situation provides is wasted if women do not take advantage of it or if decision-makers ignore it. Organization by women at the community and national levels is essential if recovery measures are to respond to women's needs and concerns. In fact, women have proven themselves indispensable when it comes to responding to disasters, by building houses, digging wells and ditches, hauling water and building shelters. As such, women have been willing and able to take an active role in what are traditionally considered "male" tasks, which can effect for the positive society's misconceptions of women's abilities. In reality,

women are most valuable at mobilizing the community to respond to disasters, often forming groups and networks of social actors to respond to the most pressing needs of their communities. (Pan American Health Organization.)

Speaking at a United Nations conference, Jan Peterson of the Huairou Commission on Women, Homes and Community stated “the challenge lies in looking at a disaster and making it an opportunity for development, supporting the work of grassroots women, and creating an international network of women who are experts on disasters at the local level. ...” Following a disaster and the subsequent recovery period, women may find they have carved out new roles for themselves in the community.

### **Conclusion**

An increasing number of governments are recognizing the importance of gender issues in their national Disaster Risk Reduction report to the UNISDR. In 2009, 51 of 62 national reports to UNISDR acknowledged gender as important to Disaster Risk Reduction. (United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction Secretariat; International Union for the Conservation of Nature; United Nations Development Programme) And, at the International Disaster and Risk Conference in Davos, Switzerland in 2010, leading experts, policy and decision makers, governments, UN organizations and NGOs around the world discussed various fields of risk reduction, disaster management, sustainable development, climate change and other topics, with a portion of the conference dedicated to gender aspects. (Contingency Today)

For the most part, however, gender considerations are still largely marginalized from the disaster risk reduction progress – not to mention disaster relief and recovery. Nonetheless, in communities throughout the world, it is the women, who despite suffering the most in the aftermath of natural disasters, are routinely the most resilient. (Beijing Agenda for Global Action on Gender-Sensitive Disaster Risk Reduction) It is this resiliency that needs to be recognized and utilized during times of disaster. As a global community, we must give women a voice and place at the table during the process of preparing for disasters. And we must provide the opportunity for women to serve as community leaders and change agents in the immediate aftermath of a disaster as well as during the long-term recovery process. By doing so, women will be supported and recognized as community leaders and will help ensure that the unique needs of women and girls are addressed during times of disaster.

### **Soroptimist Disaster Grants for Women and Girls**

The Soroptimist Disaster Grants for Women and Girls, funded solely by donations, is a joint project of Soroptimist International of the Americas (SIA) and Soroptimist International of Europe (SIE). Clubs, regions or unions in SIA and SIE can apply for grants up to \$20,000 to assist women and girls who are at-risk or are victims of disasters in their local communities.

### **Japan Earthquake and Tsunami**

In response to the 2011 earthquake and tsunami in Japan, a \$10,000 donation was made to the Iwaki Fureai Support Center in Japan. The support center is an organization that works with victims of domestic violence in Iwaki city, Fukushima prefecture. The earthquake and subsequent tsunami destroyed the domestic violence shelter and the donation will be used to help rebuild and reopen the shelter.

### **Haiti Earthquake**

To help with long-term recovery efforts following the devastating earthquake in Haiti in 2010, a \$50,000 donation was made to Relief International to fund their project Small Business Development Training for Women, which helps Haitian women enhance their economic status by providing them

with vocational, business, and financial literacy skills trainings, and sessions with microfinance agents. Another \$11,000 was given to AmeriCares, who will use the donation for its Haiti Adolescent Girls Network, a collaborative effort of multiple organizations, committed to empowering and protecting adolescent girls in Haiti so they may safely navigate the volatile post-earthquake environment and break the cycle of poverty.

### **Chile Earthquake**

After the February 2010 earthquake, \$20,000 was donated to SI/Santiago, Chile,. The grant was used to help rebuild the damaged homes of 10 families (47 people) in Huechuraba who were affected by the earthquake. The primary financial caregivers of these families are women who live with their children or other dependent relatives.

### **Kenya Election Violence**

In 2007, following the disputed general elections in Kenya, political violence erupted throughout the country, resulting in an estimated 255,000 people displaced from their homes. Soroptimist donated \$52,000 to clubs in Kenya to help aid in disaster recovery efforts. Funds were used to address the needs of women and girls, including providing basic necessities, such as food, personal hygiene items, blankets; clothing, and shelter; financial support for women to start/restart businesses; and financial support for girls to attend school.

### **Hurricane Katrina**

Following Hurricane Katrina in 2005, Soroptimist donated \$10,000 to the Louisiana Coalition against Domestic Violence. Funds were used to provide basic needs for women and their children, such as food, diapers, clothing and prescriptions. Funds were also used to help relocate domestic violence victims whose shelters were destroyed by the hurricane.

Soroptimist also donated \$34,500 to the Institute for Women's Policy Research to fund their study, *Women in the Wake of the Storm: Examining the Post-Katrina Realities of the Women of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast*. The study chronicles the effects of the disaster on the women of New Orleans and the surrounding affected areas of Mississippi and provides concrete information about what women need both during and after disasters, including affordable housing, non-traditional job training and laws that protect against job discrimination, quality child care, schools and health care services.

Two years after Hurricane Katrina, as women's agencies in New Orleans still struggled to keep their doors open, Soroptimist donated \$20,000 each to the SARA Center of the Metropolitan Center for Women and Children and the New Orleans Women's Health Clinic (NOWHC). The SARA Center used the funds to provide clients with legal services and transportation to court and medical appointments. NOWHC used the funds to help pay salaries of the clinic's nurse practitioner and medical director.

### **Asia Tsunami and Earthquake**

In response to the 2004 earthquake and tsunami in Asia, Soroptimist donated \$10,000 to the United Nations Population Fund to help meet the urgent health, hygiene and protection needs of women in Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Maldives. Funds were used to provide women with: obstetric care; psycho-social support; access to basic services including water, sanitation, and food; support services following incidences of violence; and for personal hygiene products.

At the one-year anniversary of the tsunami, three additional donations were made. Soroptimist donated \$40,000 to the Center for Women's Development and Research in India to create and

strengthen employment opportunities for single women; provide health services to women; and to provide supplementary education, life skills and vocation skills-training to adolescent girls.

Soroptimist also donated \$29,000 to Project Sri Lanka to assist with the reconstruction of a girls' school; and an additional \$18,000 was donated to establish a scholarship program enabling low-income girls to attend the school. Thirdly, Soroptimist donated \$33,000 to MADRE and INFORM in Sri Lanka in support of their project: *Women in the Reconstruction Process: A Human Rights and Relief Initiative for Tsunami-affected Sri Lankan Women*, which helped ensure that women and girls were included in the planning and implementation of resettlement and reconstruction efforts. Funds were used for the construction of a resource center to house the offices of INFORM and other local women's organizations.

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