



SOROPTIMIST
Best for Women®

*Improving the lives of women and girls
through programs leading to social
and economic empowerment.*

SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL OF THE AMERICAS

Dear SIA members,

This year we've seen an unprecedented number of devastating natural and man-made disasters within our federation and throughout the world. Hurricanes in Texas, Florida and Puerto Rico. An earthquake in Mexico. Wildfires in California. And the gruesome mass murder of almost 60 people in Las Vegas, Nevada. People in China, South Asia, Sri Lanka and Africa have suffered as well from flooding, monsoons and avalanches.

We are heartbroken by the devastation these disasters have inflicted. We know many of our members and their communities have been directly affected by these terrible events.

As you know, the SIA Board decided several years ago to discontinue our disaster relief program, as we simply could not undertake these efforts in a sustainable way throughout our federation. But that doesn't mean we don't care and we can't help. After all, helping is in our DNA!

So what can we do to ease the suffering?

1. If you want to provide immediate help, we encourage donations to local organizations that serve women and girls. We know that women and girls are always more vulnerable during and after disasters. Domestic violence shelters, for instance, are often in great need post-disaster. Domestic violence rates increase during and after disasters, and shelters may be damaged or overwhelmed by new demand.
2. Post-disaster need outlives the news cycle. Rebuilding after large-scale disasters, be it the wildfires in California, the hurricane in Puerto Rico, or the earthquake in Mexico, takes years and even decades. As an alternative to providing immediate funds, please consider applying for a Soroptimist Club Grant to fund a local post-disaster project benefiting women or girls.
3. Another way to help is by increasing the number of *Live Your Dream Awards* provided to eligible applicants who were affected by the disaster. Becoming homeless or losing a job can severely alter the course of a woman's life. Help her turn it around with a Live Your Dream Award.

Those are just a few ideas. I'm sure you can think of additional ways to provide assistance.

We welcome hearing from you about efforts to help local women, girls and their families rebuild their lives after disasters strike.

On behalf of the SIA Board and staff, please accept my best wishes to anyone who has been affected by these horrible disasters. Our hearts and prayers are with you.

Warmly,

**Dawn Marie Lemonds, President
Soroptimist International of the Americas**

