

Beat: Health

## **SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL TARGET 80 000 GIRLS & WOMEN LIVES FOR WRITE AND READ**

### **COMMITTED TO LITERACY AND ILLITERACY**

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**USPA NEWS** - Soroptimist International is a women's NGO that has been working since 1921 to improve the lives of girls and women around the world through five areas of intervention: education, financial self-sufficiency, against violence against women, health and sustainable development. With regard to education, the global network of 80,000 women has chosen to focus on literacy and the fight against illiteracy. Focus on a crucial battle that has become a major national cause in France since 2013.

### **FIGHT AGAINST ILLITERACY AND LIFELONG LEARNING**

First and foremost, it is important to define literacy and illiteracy in order not to confuse an illiterate and illiterate person. Literacy is the act of learning to read and write, while illiteracy concerns a person who has been educated but does not have mastery of reading, writing and numeracy.

Today, the challenges of literacy and the fight against illiteracy are multiple: they affect human rights, peace, freedom but also social justice. However, access to education for all is still a utopia and the figures are irrelevant: 263 million children and young people are not enrolled in the world. France is not spared since it has 7% illiterate between the ages of 18 and 65 despite compulsory schooling up to 16 years, ie 3 million people (INSEE source), most of whom are women between 16 and 25 years. Evelyne Para, President Soroptimist International France, responded: "We can not ignore the fact that 24 million children will never go to school, including 16 million girls, or that 2/3 of the 800 million adult illiterates are of women [1]".

A real stake in society, illiteracy is everyone's business; governments, professors, managers, individuals, etc., we all have a role to play. Of course the nature of the problem differs according to the countries concerned. In France, people are hiding, illiteracy is seen as a failure and they develop a sense of shame that slows down or even blocks learning. This is why it is important to pay attention to it from an early age and especially to continue in the world of work. On September 11, Soroptimist International organized a day of conferences and debates under the auspices of UNESCO, in which Hervé Fernandez, Director of the International Literacy Day The agency for combating illiteracy, commented: "In France, illiterate people all have in common that they have been educated and half work! We note that these people find themselves faced with other obstacles such as poor access to care, for example, because they go less with the doctor because of the procedures that seem insurmountable to them.

### **LITERACY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IS A VIRTUOUS TANDEM**

Literacy is paramount, it is the one that allows adults to be autonomous and facilitates their insertion on all aspects of life, be it professional, social, etc. And, more broadly, education is not only academic, insofar as the school must also inculcate values "that are integral to learning such as self-esteem, social recognition, tolerance", etc. In the long run, in a manner complementary to this transmission of values, literacy must develop the capacity to learn and thus to rebound throughout life.

Meanwhile, macro-economist Derek H.C Chen has theorized the link between literacy rates by gender and level of growth of the country [2]. Worldwide, 80% of women know how to read. If we compare it with the opposite sex, we see that 89% of men know how to read. Looking at the least developed countries, it can be seen that just under half of women can read [3], which is the case in sub-Saharan Africa where only 23% of poor girls in rural areas complete primary education [4]. Also during the day Soroptimist conferences and debates at UNESCO, Maud Ritz, Head of Operations of the UN Women Committee, argues: "Lack of access to education is a de facto inequality. But this inability to access education is also a consequence of other gender inequalities: the propensity of girls to take care of domestic tasks, to be "trained" to make future good wives, to be married young and forced to be harassed in the public sphere, are all factors that confine them to the domestic space, leaving them no possibility of being educated. ... Some economists consider that the inequalities of in addition to contravening a principle of justice, affect long-term growth by keeping half of the population at a low or unqualified level. "[5]

Enabling literacy for all means increasing women's economic independence, increasing the country's growth, reducing the birth rate, improving the education that parents give their children and increasing their chances of being at home. turn education, reinforce commitments in social, political and cultural life, change attitudes, behaviors, values “and is an essential factor to achieve equality. "Some think it's a utopia, the Soroptimist prefers to see it as a feasible fight. This is why its members directly engage or support concrete actions to promote literacy and combat illiteracy in the world, such as street schools, books for disadvantaged groups, competitions to encourage those who are in the process of re-acquiring knowledge. "Explains Evelyne Para.

**ABOUT SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL**-----

Founded in 1921 in the United States, Soroptimist International is a women's NGO that works to improve the lives of girls and women around the world. This global network of 80,000 members is present in 125 countries. In France, 2,700 women join the NGO in 118 different clubs. "Understanding, Defending, Entrepreneurship" is the motto of the NGO, which has representatives in the Council of Europe and in each of the main UN centers. The five main axes of its intervention are education, financial autonomy, the fight against violence against women, health and sustainable development.

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