

BREAKING THE SILOS, TOWARDS A CERVICAL CANCER FREE AFRICA
BY:
SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL AFRICA FEDERATION
2023 ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT



**CERVICAL
CANCER
ELIMINATION
CAMPAIGN
AFRICA** 



Soroptimist
International
Africa Federation

UNITED NATIONS
Health4Life
Fund



Abstract

This progress report summarizes the establishment of the partnership between Soroptimist International Africa Federation (SIAF) and the United Nations Health4Life Fund (H4LF) agreed in September 2022, announced at the SIAF conference in May 2023 and launched globally in July 2023. It highlights the key actions undertaken in 2023 and an overview of 2024 plans.

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*“One woman dies of cervical cancer every two minutes...
Each one is a tragedy, and we can prevent it.”*

*Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus
Director-Geneva
World Health Organization*

1. Introduction

1.1. Overview and Background:

The purpose of the Soroptimist International Africa Federation 2023 annual progress report on its action toward the elimination of cervical cancer in Africa is to update the Africa Federation Board, United Nations Health4Life Fund Secretariat, Soroptimist worldwide members and stakeholders on the status of this collaborative partnership established in September 2022, announced to the Africa region in May 2023 and launched globally in July 2023 across the Soroptimist worldwide network. This report presents an overview of achievements, in-progress tasks, opportunities, and challenges faced during the reporting period.

This report will also provide insights to key performance metrics and future planning on the SIAF collaboration with UN Health4Life Fund (H4LF) in “charting a course of the elimination of cervical cancer in Africa”.



Figure 1 The first meeting to discuss the potential for Soroptimists to collaborate with the UN for the elimination of cervical cancer was held with members from Soroptimist Europe Clubs Dubai (UAE) and Witten-Ruhr (Germany) and members from SIAF Clubs Central Nairobi, Milimani and Mombasa (Kenya) was held in January 2023

The partnership between SI Africa Federation and H4LF began with Soroptimist women getting together from Soroptimist International Europe (SIE) Federation and SIAF, dreaming up and then developing this UN partnership. Key steps in the collaboration and process included:

- SIAF has had the support of SIE Clubs Gulf Dubai and Witten Ruhr from the start to help shape this incredible partnership. From the initial idea discussed in January 2022, the SIAF board worked with the UN to explore the parameters for a successful collaboration and conceptualize the potential partnership scope.
- SIAF invited all Clubs in Africa to a briefing session on the proposed partnership on 15th September 2022 to seek their inputs.

- At the end of September 2022, President Connie pledged to the United Nations that Soroptimist Clubs in Africa will seek to partner with the UN Health4Life Fund on cervical cancer elimination.

The above key steps led to setting up of a SIAF Working Group with representatives from the 5 regions, including the Soroptimist International United Nations (SI UN) Representative in Nairobi Kenya, SIAF Past President-Connie -Zimbabwe and SIAF President -Morocco.

2. Why Africa?

Women are dying needlessly from an invisible and insidious cancer. One woman is lost to cervical cancer every 2 minutes somewhere in the world. Africa is the hardest hit, particularly sub-Saharan Africa. Yet, the world has cost-effective means to prevent and treat this deadly disease if caught in time.

Cervical cancer is the 2nd leading cause of cancer deaths in Africa. With nearly all deaths from cervical cancer occurring in low income countries (LMICs), Africa is disproportionately affected. If nothing is done, in the coming years, the situation will get exponentially worse. The number of new cases continues to rise, each year, and the loss of life due to cervical cancer is completely unnecessary and within our power to change.

Through a ground-breaking partnership with the United Nations Health4Life Fund, Soroptimists International Africa Federation stands up for women and girls across the continent to ensure they can access vaccination, regular screening, and early treatment. This is a cause that every Soroptimist can call their own. It is also timely for Soroptimists to engage with the United Nations.

In 2020, all countries agreed at the World Health Assembly (WHA) to a global strategy for the elimination of cervical cancer.

In 2021, the United Nations (UN) set up Health4Life Fund under the auspices of the United Nations Inter-Agency Trust Fund for non-communicable diseases (UNIATF). This comprises 45 members from across UN agencies and programs, along with development banks. Three UN agencies, UNICEF, UNDP, and WHO, established the H4LF as a wide-ranging financing vehicle to support low- and middle-income countries overcome chronic diseases and promote mental health. H4LF provides countries with catalytic grant funding that will trigger country-led, participatory and inclusive action as well as unlock domestic resources and efficiencies.

H4LF has a dedicated thematic pillar on cervical cancer elimination. Notably, several other members of the UNIATF, including UNFPA and UNAIDS, are actively collaborating under the United Nations Joint Advisory Group (UN JAG) to coordinate efforts for cervical cancer elimination. The UNJAG provides a mechanism to ensure a One-UN approach at country level.

The scope of this collaboration between SIAF and with the UN, was defined at the end of 2022. The SIAF and H4LF Partnership was officially announced during the 2nd Biennial SIAF Conference that was held on the 18 to 21 May 2023, in the coastal city of Durban, South Africa. Soroptimist delegates at the SIAF conference embraced wholeheartedly the proposed engagement and received the partnership with passion to ensure that Soroptimists will become an important voice in the fight against cervical cancer. Soroptimist International's clarion call is "A Global Voice for Women and Girls" which resonates well with SIAF's new initiative to champion the elimination of cervical cancer in Africa.

3. Cervical Cancer Elimination Strategy:

The UN recognizes the valuable contribution that civil society organizations such as Soroptimists International Africa Federation can bring to its efforts to reach the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and ensure good health for all.

SIAF's collaboration with H4LF has been built around three key areas where Soroptimists can play an important role and which are also fundamental components of the global elimination strategy.

- i. **Multi-stakeholder & cross-sectoral collaboration:** Inclusive and strategic national, regional and global partnerships that extend beyond the health sector and **involve women themselves.**
- ii. **Resource mobilization:** Channeling grants to LMICs through the UN's Health4Life Fund ensuring **collaboration**, and transparent, efficient and effective use of funds.
- iii. **Vigorous health promotion at all levels:** an enabling environment for a wide range of organizations, e.g. **youth and women's groups** with experience in demand-creation strategies, to help communities reduce barriers to care with culturally relevant and context-specific activities.

The SIAF cervical cancer elimination initiative is centered on the three targets of the World Health Organization (WHO) global elimination strategy: *vaccination*, *regular screening* and *early access* to treatment. The aim is to reach these targets by 2030 to ensure the incidence rates decline and the death ends. At the launch of the Partnership, SIAF identified immediate Program Action targets as follows;

- **COLLABORATION:** Coordinated, Country Led, Participatory, and inclusive partnerships
- **VACCINATION:** 90% of girls receive HPV vaccination by age 15
- **REGULAR SCREENING:** 70% OF women screened using a high-performance test by age 35 and again by 45
- **EARLY TREATMENT:** 90% of identified women with cervical cancer receive treatment

3.1. Key Approaches:

Further, the partnership strategy outlines three key approaches towards achieving the above program targets;

1. ADVOCACY

- Advocacy to include HPV vaccination in national immunization programs
- Strengthen cancer registry capacity,
- Increase domestic investments in health professionals' training & cancer treatment options.

2. AWARENESS RAISING

- Reaching every pre-teen girl and every woman in Africa with accurate information and evidence on the importance of vaccination & early screening.

3. FINANCING

- Financing sustainable domestic responses to cervical cancer through pooled funds raised by Soroptimists and other partners that will be made available as grants for collaborative approaches.

4. 2023 Results & In-Progress Tasks:

- Action on the partnership objectives (awareness-raising, advocacy and fundraising over the long-term) commenced with clubs in all five SIAF regions engaging with members and the general public to raise awareness on cervical cancer elimination in the first instance.
- This has however taken longer than anticipated to engage the Clubs across the five African regions.
- SIAF shared the fundraising toolkit with its members soon after the Durban Conference in May 2023 in both English and French. The completion of the toolkit was delayed as we needed to simultaneously share it in French given that SIAF has two official working languages.
- The partnership was announced with a first fundraising campaign to sell *'invisible seats'* for the Durban Gala; many SIE & SIGBI Clubs contributed raising 16,000 Euros.

Below is the list of club contributors:

- SI Europe Federation
- SIE Aalst (BE)
- SIE Austria Union
- SIE Chaux de Fonds (CH)
- SIE Crans-Montana (CH)
- SIE de la Broye (CH)
- SIE Fribourg (CH)
- SIE Fricktal (CH)
- SIE Gelsenkirchen-Buer (DE)
- SIE Geneve Fondateur (CH)
- SIE Greece Olympias
- SIE Gstaad-Saanenland (CH)
- SIE Gulf Dubai
- SIE Lausanne (CH)
- SIE Liestal (CH)
- SIE Moesano (CH)
- SIE Romania Union
- SIE Solothurn (CH)
- SIE St Gallen Rheintal (CH)
- SIE Steyr (AT)
- SIE Wien Vivata (AT)
- SIE Witten Ruhr (DE)
- SIE Zurich (CH)
- SIGBI Edinburgh
- SIGBI Manchester
- SIGBI Saint Austell & District
- SIGBI Slough Windsor & Maidenhead
- SIAF Benin
- SIAF Cameroon
- SIAF Cote d'Ivoire
- SIAF Eldowas (Kenya)
- SIAF Eld (Kenya)
- SIAF Embu (Kenya)



- SIAF Kisumu (Kenya)
- SIAF Kisumu Winam (Kenya)
- SIAF KK (Kenya)
- SIAF Maseno (Kenya)
- SIAF Mombasa (Kenya)
- SIAF Mumias (Kenya)
- SIAF Nakuru (Kenya)
- SIAF NC (Kenya)
- SIAF Shiklia E (Kenya)
- SIAF Vihiga (Kenya)
- SIAF Violet (Kenya)
- SIAF Durban (South Africa)
- SIAF Agadir (Morocco)
- SIAF Rabat (Morocco)
- SIAF Zimbabwe
- Individuals:
- Abby Younis and friends (UK)
- Anita Huwiler
- Annemie Vandenstorme (BE)
- Berthe de Vos (BE)
- Jean d'Arc Nyirajyambere (SIAF)
- Kenya Union Program Directors
-
- As explained, SIAF Clubs have first begun with awareness-raising activities. Below is the list what has been done by different clubs to date:
 - SI Ghana Clubs held a successful public lecture and launch of Elimination Cervical Cancer Project in partnership with Doctors and Ministry of Health
 - SI Cameroon clubs have held awareness and screening outreaches
 - SI Congo Clubs held a public awareness and screening outreaches
 - SI Embu club in Kenya have held awareness raising sessions in schools and Research approach in Embu County
 - SI Nairobi Central Club integrates HPV awareness in Menstrual Hygiene Project in seven Narok schools.
 - SI Uganda in partnership with SI Libertas club of SIGBI held awareness session, screening and fund raising to build a community clinic
 - SI Zimbabwe held an awareness session and in partnership with MOH hosted a screening and treatment centre
 - SI Khartoum club conducted awareness raising
 - SI Nigeria Clubs held awareness and screening campaigns
 - SI Morocco clubs held awareness sessions
 - SI Mali Clubs held awareness sessions
 - SI Benin clubs held awareness and screening campaign
 - SI Club in Tunisia held awareness and screening campaign

5. Key moments in 2023:

The partnership was launched across our Soroptimist worldwide network at the end of July 2023 at the Quadrennial Convention in Dublin, Ireland. Two workshops were organized by SIAF with

the H4LF and UNFPA representatives. The SIAF cervical cancer elimination campaign was met with great enthusiasm from our worldwide membership.



Figure 2 Caption: Connie Mutunhu, Immediate Past President, SIAF, speaks at Sorooptimist global conference in Dublin, Ireland

Collaboration with other Sorooptimist International Federations has been started.

- Sorooptimist International Europe (SIE) which is promoting the partnership on their website to solicit matching funds for Africa fundraising efforts.
- Sorooptimist International Great Britain & Ireland (SIGBI) is engaging with Clubs in Africa to plan joint fundraising events - the first being Uganda.
- In addition, SIGBI held a session during its annual Conference in London in November 2023 to highlight the SIAF campaign on cervical cancer elimination.
- SIGBI also plans to raise awareness in their region which includes the Caribbean and India.

The SI UN Representative Mary Muia participated in the Africa CDC webinar as a panelist to advocate for greater action by governments and more meaningful engagement of civil society.

Lessons Learned: We have learned that its crucial to have on-the-ground actions as we move forward to demonstrate to the SI global network what can be achieved with funds that are raised.

6. 2024 SIAF Plan of Action

- SIAF priority plan in 2024 plans focuses on supporting Clubs in the 5 African regions with awareness-raising materials in local languages.
- The SIAF Board feels there is a critical need to support Clubs as they embark on this new area of work. Furthermore, it is crucial to demonstrate action and impact to grow the momentum for community-based fundraising activities across the SI network. Therefore, the funds raised (currently held on a dedicated ZA bank account) will be used for developing the common awareness-raising materials mentioned above.
- SIAF is prepared to work with the UN Health4Life Fund on joint efforts to approach major philanthropic donors, bilateral partners and corporates. SIAF is willing to learn from stakeholders such as Rotary International among others on how this can be realized.
- We recommend SIAF representatives work with the H4LF resource mobilization lead, Linda Merieau, to identify a set of key donors, develop a joint pitch deck and conduct joint outreach during 2024.

SIAF wishes to thank the UN Health4Life Fund for embarking on this collaboration with women in Africa to enable our participation in the fight against cervical cancer. We also wish to thank the Soroptimist Clubs and individual members who have been early adopters of the SIAF campaign and contributed funding during our first SIAF fundraiser in 2023 and welcome your continuing support as we expand our effort throughout 2024 and for the years to come.

Lastly, we take this opportunity to invite the entire Soroptimist global network of members to support our action that will help banish cervical cancer from the African continent, saving the lives of millions of women and ensuring their children do not grow up as maternal orphans.

7. SIAF Cervical Cancer Elimination TWG-Committee

The Soroptimist International Africa Federation Board constituted a strategy committee on Cervical Cancer Elimination upon embarking on this path. Thus, technical working group meets quarterly with a focus to review progress, emerging concerns and provision of technical expertise to members through webinars and update reports. The membership is drawn from the five SIAF regions for representation and coverage. The team includes the following members;

Jalila Moufquia- SIAF President, Morocco, Northern Region

Connie Mutunhu, SIAF Immediate Past President, Zimbabwe- Southern Region

Mary Muia, SI United Nations Representative, Kenya, Eastern Region

Bernice Mengot- SIAF Regional Vice President, Cameroon, Central Region

Dr. Sulafa Abdalla, SIAF Regional Vice President, Sudan, Northern Region

Ann Marie Chinwena, SI Zimbabwe, Southern Region

Playne Foundjing- SI Cameroon, Central Region

Tadelech Debele-SI Ethiopia, Eastern Region



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