



Disaster Relief Fund

Application Instructions

The **Disaster Relief Fund** provides grants of up to \$20,000 to assist women who have been the victims of natural disasters or acts of war. A natural disaster is defined as a national or international calamity that has been declared a state of emergency due to loss of life, displacement of residents, or loss of property. These events include (but are not limited to) floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, forest fires, volcanic disturbances, and earthquakes. Acts of war include actions committed by a government against its own people; actions committed by an outside force; and civil unrest or terrorism resulting in property damage, loss of life or the creation of displaced persons or refugees needing immediate or ongoing assistance with safety, housing, nutrition and/or health.

The **Disaster Relief Fund** is supported by Soroptimist donations. Clubs are encouraged to sponsor disaster relief fundraisers throughout the year, and to watch for donation requests from Soroptimist headquarters during crisis situations.

Women and Girl-Focused Projects

In keeping with the commitments made in Soroptimist International of the America's Strategic Plan, the Beijing Platform for Action and the Outcome Statement of the 46th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, disaster relief projects should focus on women and girls. Specific relief efforts targeted to women are often overlooked during a crisis. This ignores the increased vulnerability of women during disasters, their lack of access to resources and their special abilities to respond to disasters. Women have special needs when disaster strikes for a number of reasons:

- Women have less access to resources including transportation, information, secure housing and employment.
- Women are overrepresented in the agriculture industry, the informal economy and are more likely to be self-employed. These are the lowest paying jobs and have little or no security or benefits. The informal and agricultural sectors are the hardest hit by disaster and women become overrepresented among the unemployed following a disaster.
- Because women are primarily responsible for caring for children, the elderly or the disabled, they are unable to migrate for work as men do, which leaves more women as the sole providers for their families.
- When housing is destroyed, families are moved to shelters. The domestic burden of women—childcare, cooking, caring for the elderly—becomes more difficult even as economic burdens increase.
- Disasters themselves increase women's vulnerability to violence. Studies have shown an increase in domestic and sexual violence against women following a disaster and women are more at risk in shelters or when living alone with their children.
- Health issues that affect women are often overlooked, including reproductive and sexual health.
- Women are marginalized in their access to relief resources because of the patriarchal structure of society.*

Women will continue to be disproportionately affected by natural disasters unless disaster workers and officials acknowledge their vulnerability and tailor relief efforts accordingly.

In Central America following Hurricane Mitch, and following the recent earthquakes in India and Turkey, women came together to confront the disaster by forming groups and networks to meet the most pressing needs of the community. In addition to creating relief organizations for women, they also performed work not commonly

*Information provided by the Pan American Health Organization, Regional Office for the World Health Organizations. Visit the web site at <www.paho.org/genderandhealth/>.

considered “women’s work,” including building houses, removing debris and hauling water. These events demonstrated that the time of disaster creates an opportunity to challenge gender-based stereotypes and discrimination. A disaster creates new space for women to undertake new projects. Disasters give women a chance to do things they would not generally be encouraged or allowed to do had the disaster not occurred.*

It is crucial that Soroptimists take the first step in overcoming the “tyranny of urgency,” which enables relief organizations to ignore the special needs and abilities of women following disasters. Soroptimists should focus on disaster relief projects that encourage women to work together to plan and execute projects that are most needed to assist themselves and their communities. Furthermore, Soroptimists should ensure that women have access to all of the resources and benefits provided by disaster relief agencies.

Instructions

Disaster relief grants, ranging from \$1000 to \$20,000, enable Soroptimists to provide assistance to women in their communities when they become affected by natural disasters or acts of war. The funds can be used to provide immediate assistance to women such as food, water clothing, shelter and housing repairs. Funds can also be used for longer-term recovery projects, including rebuilding businesses and community revitalization. Following the terrorist attacks in New York City on September 11, 2001, research showed that domestic violence agencies in lower Manhattan had suffered losses, decreases in funding and increases in requests for services. This information led the SIA Board of Directors to donate over \$80,000 in disaster relief funds, earmarked for the September 11th disaster, to four domestic violence agencies to assist in recovery efforts. Conduct research in your community to find out what types of disaster relief services are needed by women. Sample projects include ensuring women staying in domestic violence shelters have been transferred to safe housing in another area; providing for the special health care needs of women in temporary shelter; assisting women in identifying and applying for disaster relief and filling any gaps that might exist; working with other women’s groups to develop disaster relief plans for the community; assisting domestic violence shelters with rebuilding efforts; creating a special relief fund for single mothers; and providing assistance to women-owned businesses.

Funds can be used for projects administered by Soroptimist clubs or regions or to assist organizations that specialize in disaster relief. When time permits, clubs and regions are encouraged to develop partnered disaster relief projects. Soroptimist projects or projects assisting disaster relief organizations must focus on women and/or girls.

In order to be eligible to receive a disaster relief grant:

- The club or region must complete the application, providing all information and materials requested.
- The application must document the disaster. Because the approval process includes an international audience, please make sure to attach newspaper clippings or photographs documenting the disaster.
- The project must benefit women and/or girls.
- The grant must be requested by a club president or region governor.

If a disaster relief grant is approved, the club or region will receive:

- The grant funds.
- Letters to the club president or region governor, and if applicable one to the organization administering the grant.
- A project report form. (The club or region will be responsible for filing the report or following up with the organization to ensure timely filing of the report.)

Deadlines and Approval

Due to the unpredictability of events of this type, applications for club and community grants are accepted at any time. Decisions will be based upon the nature of the request and the availability of funds at the time of the request. Disaster relief grants of up to \$10,000 are approved by the federation president and the executive director. Grants of more than \$10,000 are approved by the federation Board of Directors. Please note that grant requests of more than \$10,000 require very detailed information and take longer to be approved.

Disaster Relief Fund

Grant Application

Soroptimist clubs or regions may request disaster relief grant in any amount from **\$1,000 to \$20,000**. These grants are intended to enable Soroptimists to provide assistance to women in their communities when they have been affected by natural disasters or acts of war. The funds can be used to provide immediate assistance to women such as food, water clothing, shelter and housing repairs. Funds can also be used for longer-term recovery projects, including rebuilding businesses and community revitalization. (See instructions for a full description.) Projects must benefit women and/or girls.

To apply for a grant, the club president or region governor should fill out the application providing all of the information requested and return the form to SIA headquarters for immediate review. If the grant is approved, the club president or region governor will receive notification and grant funds. In addition, they will receive a project report form to be completed and returned to headquarters within six months of the receipt of the grant or after the project has been completed, whichever comes first.

General Information

Date of request _____ Amount requested _____
Club _____ Region _____
Club president/region governor _____
Address _____

Telephone _____ Fax _____
E-mail address _____
Type of disaster _____
Location/area targeted for assistance _____

II. Narrative (Please attach additional paper to answer questions 1 through 4.)

1. Describe the disaster and how it has affected your community. Please detail how women have been affected by the disaster. Include any relevant documentation including news clippings or photographs.
2. Provide a detailed description of the disaster relief project and how women and girls will be assisted by the project.
3. What organization will administer the grant? Describe the past work of the organization. Include a contact name and address for the organization. If more than one organization is involved, please list all. (If the club or region is administering the grant, please go to question 4.)
4. What role will local clubs or the region play in the disaster relief project?

III. Budget

5. On a separate page, please give an outline of the budget for the disaster relief grant. Please itemize the expenditures. For example, how much will be spent on food, water, medical supplies or housing repairs? Please be as detailed as possible.
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Return completed applications or address any questions to:
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