

# Thank You Soroptimist International!

Spirit and enthusiasm are words that describe our partnership with Soroptimist International. Since 2003, Women for Women International has partnered with Soroptimist International to create Project Independence: Women Survivors of War. With the commitment of Soroptimists, the project has:

- raised over **\$1.6 million** supporting our programs in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Rwanda
- moved **1,800 women** from victims to active citizens through our Sponsorship Program
- provided **660 women** with loans through our microcredit program.

Now after four years, this wildly successful partnership is coming to an end but its impact will continue to be felt in the lives of thousands of women and their families.

***Women like Judi Moline fill the ranks of Soroptimist International members that joined our partnership to help women across the world.***

Judi, a resident of Germantown, MD, is a member of Soroptimist of Upper Montgomery County. She sponsored Sameera, a 45 year-old mother of two living in Afghanistan. With Judi's monthly support, Sameera was able to transform her life.

Sameera and her family had always lived a life of poverty. It was a

daily occurrence not to have enough money for food. When the war began, her neighbors started to flee to safety. Realizing they also needed to leave, Sameera and her family sold their furniture and moved to Pakistan.

In Pakistan, conditions worsened for Sameera's family. As Sameera and her husband struggled, they looked for ways to support themselves. They decided to sell her gold ring and buy shoe repairing tools. Sameera assisted her husband in his shoe repair business, and her family's life started to improve.

Then one night, everything changed. Sameera's house was invaded and her husband was killed.

Sameera told our staff in Afghanistan, "This is the saddest memory of my life. After this incident, we decided to return to Afghanistan, which was really very difficult in the beginning. Our neighbors helped us with some food upon our return to the village. I wanted to start my husband's business again but didn't have any money."

Then she joined Women for Women International. With Judi's support Sameera successfully completed the program. But learning skills wasn't enough for her; she wanted to fulfill the dream of a sustainable income that she and her husband had discussed. She decided to join with other women in her village and applied for



*Sameera repairs shoes in her village.*

a microcredit loan. She was approved for her first loan and she once again started repairing shoes.

With a steady income came improvements in her life. Her son became involved in the family business and together they were able to expand their operation. Sameera has received subsequent loans through Women for Women International and maintains an excellent repayment record.

Sameera said, "My life is now totally different. As we make more money, I would like to have a very big and famous shoe store in the future in the city where we will sell our own product!"

The hope of having a store... a life where she didn't have to struggle to feed her children... none of these things would be possible without Judi and Soroptimists. Through her commitment and her exchange of letters, Judi helped Sameera move from widowed refugee to hopeful business woman.

As our partnership with Soroptimist International comes to a close, we'd like to thank the thousands of Soroptimist members for an incredible four years. They have helped thousands of women, some with life stories more difficult than Sameera's. They have truly made a difference in the lives of women survivors of war. ●

***Founded in 1921, Soroptimist International works to advance human rights and the status of women through service projects. Women in business, management and other professions make up the more than 95,000 members in 120 countries.***

*Soroptimists with a group of women they supported in Rwanda.*

