



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE A

WOMEN & POVERTY

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES A

Objective A.1 Review, adopt and maintain macroeconomic policies and development strategies that address the needs and efforts of women in poverty.

Objective A.2 Revise laws and administrative practices to ensure women's equal rights and access to economic resources.

Objective A.3 Provide women with access to savings and credit mechanisms and institutions.

Objective A.4 Develop gender-based methodologies and conduct research to address the feminization of poverty.

(147)...*"Poverty has various manifestations, including lack of income and productive resources sufficient to ensure a sustainable livelihood; hunger and malnutrition; ill health; limited of lack of access to education and other basic services; increasing morbidity and mortality from illness; homelessness and inadequate housing; unsafe environments; and social discrimination and exclusion. It is also characterized by lack of participation in decision-making and in civil, social and cultural life."*

(Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA))

OVERARCHING CONCERNS

Despite increased positive government actions over the last 2 years, the impact of issues such as the Global Financial Crisis and natural disasters have exacerbated the feminisation of poverty in Australia. Women remain overrepresented in casual, part-time and stereotypical employment positions. This creates less security for women through their working lives and results in less financial security in retirement, especially for women and girls in CALD, refugee and indigenous communities and women with disability. This is prevalent across all ages, families and sectors in both the urban and rural context.

Inaccessible housing, across the three tenure forms is a key barrier for women and families in dire financial circumstances either due to lack of affordability (home purchase or private rental) or lack of supply (social housing). Negative social attitudes are a major barrier for women with disability, indigenous, lesbians, refugee and CALD women in seeking and securing private house rentals and employment, making it difficult to cope financially and socially. Difficulties in housing, employment and education intersect with racial and social discrimination and result in growing social exclusion and poverty.

There is a disturbing pattern of lack of basic services, high rates of domestic violence, poor education outcomes, and limited job opportunities, alongside high rates of housing stress in many communities across Australia. These problems are compounded for women with disability, indigenous, CALD and refugee women.

The lack of safe, secure, affordable, appropriate and accessible transport infrastructure is a major contributor to perpetuating women's poverty and social isolation, especially for women with disability and indigenous women. Women with disability especially reported having to live away from services as a result of low income and high urban rental costs. Rural women driven from farms and properties have a particular challenge in finding sustainable incomes due to a lack of public transport and support services. Indigenous women have lower incomes, higher rates of chronic disease, are more likely to live in overcrowded housing and are less likely to continue their education. Life expectancy for Indigenous Australian women is 10 years less than for all Australians (Feb 2010).

GAINS

- ✿ Increased government incentives aimed at improving women's economic outcomes through a range of measures to produce a liveable income. These include initiatives that promote family-friendly working arrangements, the introduction of a new workplace relations system with strengthened equal remuneration provisions and fairer safety net and practical superannuation incentives with improved access to superannuation education and financial literacy programs.
- ✿ The Minister for the Status of Women has challenged the Australian Public Service to deliver positive outcomes for women under the Government's women's work program.
- ✿ The Australian Government is currently conducting a broad ranging review of Australia's future tax system which includes equity as a key principle and a comprehensive review of the pension system. The Pension Review will investigate measures to strengthen the financial security of seniors, carers and people with disability. Long term pension reforms will be delivered through the 2009-2010 budget context. The \$4.8 billion package builds on the \$7.5 billion in support provided in the Government's first budget, bringing new spending on pensioners, seniors and carers to \$12.3 billion. Payments will be non taxable and not included for income testing purposes. The Government's Economic Security Strategy also includes help for self-funded retirees, who are eligible for a Seniors Concession Allowance or hold a Commonwealth Seniors Health Card.
- ✿ One year on from the White Paper on Homelessness, Minister for Housing, The Hon Tanya Plibersek MP, has released '*Along the Road Home*' that sets out the achievements over the first year of the White Paper on homelessness. This new work is being supported by an investment of \$20 billion to increase the supply of affordable housing and deliver new and improved homelessness services. (Dec 2009)
- ✿ The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) has agreed to the renegotiation of the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing. The renegotiation will enable a more competitive process for allocation of funding by the Commonwealth for capital works and provide strong incentives for the States and the Northern Territory to progress the construction of new housing, repairs and maintenance in remote Indigenous communities over the remaining eight years of this National Partnership. (Nov 2009)
- ✿ Commonwealth commitment of \$5.5 billion over ten years to address the disastrous levels of overcrowding and poor housing conditions in remote communities. (Nov 2009)
- ✿ Following the Australian Human Rights Commission's report, *Same-Sex: Same Entitlements* (2006) and an audit of Commonwealth legislation, the Australian Government introduced reforms to remove discrimination to enable same-sex couples and their children to be recognised by Commonwealth law. The reforms aim to ensure that same-sex couples and their families are recognised and have the same entitlements as opposite-sex de facto couples. The reforms amend 84 Commonwealth laws to eliminate discrimination against same-sex couples and their children in a wide range of areas,

including social security, taxation, Medicare, veteran's affairs, workers' compensation, educational assistance, superannuation, family law and child support.

- ✿ In January, 2010 Deputy Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, launched the Australian Government's national statement on social inclusion, *A Stronger, Fairer Australia*. Social Inclusion means ensuring no Australian is left behind by giving all the opportunities, resources, capabilities and responsibilities to learn, work, connect with others and have a say in community life. The Rudd Government's social inclusion strategy will form partnerships between the people in government, the not-for-profit sector and businesses that have the greatest experience in addressing disadvantage. The strategy builds on the many reforms and investments the Government has made over the past two years, including those in fairer workplace relations, employment, pension reform, housing and homelessness, early childhood education and schools. It also builds on the existing strengths of individuals, families and communities.

GAPS

- ✿ Focus of current action is on workplace reform. There needs to be more focus on accessible pathways for women and girls in poverty through appropriate, affordable and accessible training and mentoring, and job placement schemes.
- ✿ Despite current government actions, there continues to be a lack of adequate, safe and secure housing for women. Groups particularly affected are Refugee and Indigenous women and women with disability. Currently there appears a lack of planning of housing in terms of location and resident needs. In particular plans do not consider safety for women in relation to violence, sexual and physical and there remains weak legislation for the private rental market.
- ✿ Need to review, adopt and maintain macroeconomic policies and development strategies that address the needs and efforts of women in poverty.

EMERGING ISSUES

- ✿ Increase in women on aged pension in poverty due to gaps in superannuation.
- ✿ Growing vulnerability for women lacking safe, secure and adequate housing.

SUGGESTED UN LANGUAGE FOR KEY PRIORITY AREAS OF ACTION

- ✿ Calling on governments to implement economic policies that are designed and monitored, with a full and effective participation of women, within the overall framework of achieving sustainable development and ensure poverty eradication programs especially for women, in particular during periods of economic hardship, including long term support for women in areas affected by natural disaster.
- ✿ Calling for governments to develop a national action plans for poverty alleviation, developed with the full and effective participation of women, which include ambitious targets to reduce poverty, and an independent umpire to monitor progress.
- ✿ Calling for governments to provide resources to enable women to obtain affordable housing by, among other things removing all obstacles to access, with special emphasis on meeting the needs of women, especially refugee, indigenous and those with disability

- ✿ Ensure that adequate investments are made to strengthen efforts through the allocation of resources, in all areas, and to provide quality accessible and affordable public housing options, including social housing options, accessible and safe public or community transport options and other services such as legal literacy programs for women around tenancy rights and responsibilities which increases the availability, access and use of critical housing services for women as a key priority to fight poverty.
- ✿ Urging government, intergovernmental bodies, corporations, international finance institutions and development agencies to be guided by the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) as a framework for development and to prevent economic displacement and subversion of rights and violence against indigenous women and girls and women with disability.
- ✿ Calling for governments to abolish discriminatory laws, discriminatory customary laws, particularly personal laws which adversely affect the rights of women with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and indigenous women and girls.

UN REFERENCES

BPFA

Strategic Objective A1 Action 58 (a) (b) (c) (d) (g) (h) (m) (p) (q) ; Action 59 (g) ; Action 60 (a) (b) (c) (d) (e) (f)
 Strategic Objective A.2 Action 61 (a)
 Strategic Objective A.4 Action 67 (a) (b) ; Action 68 (a) (b)
 Strategic Objective I.1 Action 230 (n)

B+5 OD

B+5 IV Action 50, 51, 53, 54, 68 (j), 78 (a), 104

CEDAW

Articles 9, 11, 13, 15, 16

MDGs

MDG Goal 1, Target 1B, Indicator 1.4

Reference in other documents

E/ESCAP/BPA/2009/CRP.1 para 27, 33, 38, 51, 52, 53

CSW Outcomes Documents 2005 – 2009

E/CN.6/2006/15 para 7 (b) (o)
 E/CN.6/2007/9 para 14.2 (a)
 E/CN.6/2008/11 para 21 (a) (b) (c) (e)
 E/CN.6/2009/15 para 15 (d) (ee)