



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE B

EDUCATION & TRAINING OF WOMEN

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES B

Objective B.1 Ensure equal access to education.

Objective B.2 Eradicate illiteracy among women.

Objective B.3 Improve women's access to vocational training, science and technology and continuing education.

Objective B.4 Develop non-discriminatory education and training.

Objective B.5 Allocate sufficient resources for and monitor the implementation of educational reforms.

Objective B.6 Promote lifelong education and training for girls and women.

'(69) Education is a human right and an essential tool for achieving the goals of equality, development and peace. Non-discriminatory education benefits both girls and boys, and thus ultimately contributes to more equal relationships between women and men. Equality of access to and attainment of educational qualifications is necessary if more women are to become agents of change. Literacy of women is an important key to improving health, nutrition and education in the family and to empowering women to participate in decision-making in society. Investing in formal and non-formal education and training for girls and women, with its exceptionally high social and economic return, has proved to be one of the best means of achieving sustainable development and economic growth that is both sustained and sustainable.

(75) Women should be enabled to benefit from an ongoing acquisition of knowledge and skills beyond those acquired during youth. This concept of lifelong learning includes knowledge and skills gained in formal education and training, as well as learning that occurs in informal ways, including volunteer activity, unremunerated work and traditional knowledge.'

(Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA))

OVERARCHING CONCERNS

Education of women and children is one of the prime indicators to the alleviation of poverty and is key to women's economic stability and understanding of available services. Anecdotal evidence indicates an increase in women's participation in both vocational and higher education. While there have been vast improvements in this area in the last 5 years, women and girls continue to experience barriers within educational settings.

In public schools, large class sizes and packed curriculum brings pressure on teachers as they work with a diversity of language and social development skills among students. Verbal and physical abuse of staff occurs and bullying among students is commonplace. With some groups, such as lesbian, refugee, migrant and girls with disability sometimes fear attendance at school.

Inaccessibility remains a widespread problem for school education in rural and remote Australia, particularly for girls with a disability. There is still a lack of access to special education teachers and local qualified support to take on the role of aide and a lack of specialist learning environments.

While the rate of non-completion of education by females is lower than that of males, the labour market consequences for females who do not complete school are more severe than for males and more so for indigenous girls. Girls who leave school without completing Year 12 are more likely to be in low paying unskilled occupations. The retention rate of girls for school completion is lower in non-metropolitan locations and less so for indigenous girls. There are also insufficient numbers of places in childcare and after school care particularly for students with young children.

There is a lack of specialist support services for students who have had large gaps in education due to conflict. Intensive English Centres (IEC) are only in urban situations and the transition from IEC to high school can be challenging. For refugee students, there is a difference between the rate at which children learn and adapt to the new culture in Australia, and that of the parent. This leaves the parent with a gap in understanding of the educational context and expectations and can create conflict for both parents and children.

A key barrier to indigenous students' advancement in school is the first four hours spoken in English. This has not only disadvantaged students who need to learn new ideas in their own language first, but also disempowered classroom aides who previously worked as a cultural bridge between student's first language and English. Secondary schooling for indigenous girls is of serious concern as secondary schooling is not provided outside the six major urban and regional centres in the NT. Community Education Centres in remote communities provide only the most basic primary education, with limited tuition support for secondary students to study by correspondence, which very few take up.

Higher education is expensive for many women. Single mothers face high costs of child care which adds to financial burden. Youth allowance is low and many do not qualify as they enter into university study and remain dependant on their parents. Female head of households with large families find they have few options to study due to family and work pressures. For many refugee women who fall in this category, they become unable to move ahead economically and feel socially isolated from mainstream Australia. Women with disability face considerable access issues in attending higher education.

A severe gap remains between women qualifying in professional degrees and uptake into the professions.

GAINS

- ✿ The last 5 years has seen an increase in women's participation in both vocational and higher education, and an increase in the retention rate for young women's participation in school.
- ✿ A reported increase in scholarships for women to enter 'non-traditional' areas of education such as engineering, medicine and law.
- ✿ An excellent 'school of the air' to support distance education for rural and remote students.
- ✿ To improve equity, full fee-paying undergraduate places will be phased out in public universities for domestic students from 2009.

GAPS

- ✿ Need for IEC's in rural and remote areas to assist CALD and refugee students to participate in school.
- ✿ There is a need to ensure that more children complete year 12 or the equivalent vocational training. More than 1 in 10 teenagers are not in school or working. Many others are failing to complete their studies with retention rates significantly worse for poorer students.

EMERGING ISSUES

- ✿ There is a gap between job opportunities and educational opportunities accessible to women. For example, the job market in mining, defence, infrastructure, carpentry and plumbing (traditionally male dominated) are said to grow at a rapid rate. However, little is being done to ensure that women can access training and education to access this growing market.

SUGGESTED UN LANGUAGE FOR KEY PRIORITY AREAS OF ACTION

- ✿ Calling on governments to support the implementation of plans and programmes of action to ensure quality education and improved enrolment retention rates for girls and to eliminate gender discrimination and gender stereotypes in educational curricula and materials, as well as in the process of education.
- ✿ Urge governments to recognize and support the right of indigenous women and girls to education and promote a multicultural approach to education that is responsive to the needs, aspirations and cultures of indigenous women, including by developing appropriate education programmes, curricula and teaching aids, to the extent possible in the languages of indigenous people, and by providing for the participation of indigenous women in these processes.
- ✿ Urge governments to promote education, training and relevant information programmes for rural and farming women through the use of affordable and appropriate technologies and the mass media - for example, radio programmes, cassettes and mobile units.
- ✿ Urge governments to provide quality, affordable and accessible education in a safe environment for all women and girls.
- ✿ Calling on governments to develop early intervention programs for national curriculum and broader education programs for parents, children and teachers, which address the issues of violence at an early age.

UN REFERENCES

BPFA

Strategic Objective B.1. Action 80 (a) (c) (f)
Strategic Objective B.4 Action 83 (i) (n) (o) (p) (q)

B+5 OD

B+5 IV Action 55, 58, 67 (a) (b) (c)

CEDAW

Article 10

MDGs

MDG 3

Reference in other documents

E/ESCAP/BPA/2009/CRP.1 para 38, 40

CSW Outcomes Documents 2005 – 2009

E/CN.6/2006/15 para 12 (a), 14.2 (a) (b) (e), 17 (l)
E/CN.6/2007/9 para 14.2 (c)
E/CN.6/2009/15 para 15 (dd)