



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE K

WOMEN & THE ENVIRONMENT

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES K

Objective K.1 Involve women actively in environmental decision-making at all levels.

Objective K.2 Integrate gender concerns and perspectives in policies and programmes for sustainable development.

Objective K.3 Strengthen or establish mechanisms at the national, regional and international levels to assess the impact of development and environmental policies on women.

(246).... "Women have an essential role to play in the development of sustainable and ecologically sound consumption and production patterns and approaches to natural resource management, Awareness of resource depletion, the degradation of natural systems and the dangers of polluting substances has increased markedly in the past decade. These worsening conditions are destroying fragile ecosystems and displacing communities, especially women, from productive activities and are an increasing threat to a safe and healthy environment...."

(Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA))

OVERARCHING CONCERNS

Over the last ten years, integrating gender concerns and perspectives into policies and programs for sustainable development has not been accepted, much less implemented. While recent community-based management programs have explicitly included women as stakeholders, they are often treated as a group on whom to pass the principal care for the environment, as one more task on their long list of many. Women have as yet to be recognised as equal to men to share joint responsibility for sustainable development and care for the environment. Increased density of housing, without quality community green space, impacts on the psyche of the people and limits spaces for mothers to take their children to play. There have been some excellent government initiatives to support energy saving, however, for many women on low incomes; the perception is that being environmentally conscious is only accessible as economic and class privilege. In urban public housing and in rural and remote areas there are not enough free facilities to support sustainable living such as recycling bins and composting.

In Australia's rural and regional areas, the impact of drought and climate change has been felt for a long time. Indigenous peoples have recorded and recognised the changes in the flora and fauna on their lands, yet, they are tied to government policies that state they cannot 'burn off' and care for their lands in the traditional way, which may assist some of the animals returning.

Changes in climate and concerns over water and food security are a paramount concern. The impacts of climate change affect women and men, but tend to impact differently. For example, women in farming communities are working longer and harder (on and off the farm) to support their husbands, families and communities

from the effects of reduced income and the heartbreak of the drought. Men in farming communities are growing more and more depressed in some cases to the point of suicide. Women are left to support their husbands, sons and community, often at the cost of their own health. It was noted that when money was scarce, and food yield was low, women would spend their money on food and clothing for the family rather than their own health requirements.

The impact of the drought will be felt by the farming community for many years after the water is replenished. Farms have had to de-stock, and with income scarce, many women have had to move to local towns to work. This can involve up to 3 hours travel a day each way, resulting in some women having to spend time away from their families and farm duties to find paid work in highly competitive yet small markets.

The degradation of the environment is having both a direct and indirect impact on women with disabilities who live in regional, rural and remote locations. A direct effect of environmental degradation is that there are increased levels of human disease and disability. Measuring the changed incidence of environment related disease factors can be used as a tool for promoting environmental protection measures. However, there is little evidence that such data is being collected. Indirectly, rural communities are depleting in size with accompanying degradation of infrastructure. Women with disabilities who already face barriers in accessing services are further restricted, as facilities retract to the regional centres, and as transport and other services become less frequent and less reliable.

GAINS

- ✿ Ratification of Kyoto Agreement (2007).
- ✿ High level participation in the Copenhagen Treaty and Australian domestic targets for reducing green house gasses continue.
- ✿ The Australian Government is investing more than \$5 billion in developing and commercialising clean energy technologies as these technologies will be crucial for Australia's efforts to reduce its carbon pollution emissions (2009).
- ✿ Through the Clean Energy Initiative the Australian government is investing \$4.5 billion to create a cleaner energy supply and to reduce carbon pollution emissions.
- ✿ The Government is supporting Australia's car manufacturing industry through the Green Car Innovation Fund. The \$1.3 billion Fund will provide assistance over ten years to Australian companies to enhance the research, development and commercialisation of Australian technologies that significantly reduce the carbon pollution emissions of passenger motor vehicles. It will also help create green collar jobs in the car industry (2009).
- ✿ Set up of the Clean Business Australia program (2009).
- ✿ The Australian Carbon Trust is being established to further support individual action by households and businesses, with the Government committing \$75.8 million over 5 years (2009).

- ✿ The Clean Energy Initiative (CEI) complements the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme and Renewable Energy Target, by supporting the research, development and demonstration of low-emission energy technologies, including industrial scale carbon capture and storage and solar energy (2009).
- ✿ The Government has established the \$2.75 billion Climate Change Action Fund to provide targeted assistance to business, community sector organisations, workers, regions and communities, helping to smooth the transition to a low-pollution economy. The Climate Change Action Fund will operate over seven years from 2009-10 to 2015-16.
- ✿ \$4.4 billion investment in the Energy Efficient Homes Package (2009).
- ✿ Provision of a Green Homes Loans program (2009).
- ✿ COAG development of National Strategy on Energy Efficiency.
- ✿ The importance of women's roles and gender equality in protecting the environment and promoting sustainable development is being acknowledged through small community grants and support for women in farming areas.
- ✿ Beyond Blue (for men) and Headspace (for young people) has been actively reaching out to the rural and remote areas. This has served to support not only those suffering from depression, but also their families and communities.
- ✿ The Australian Government has pledged \$5 million to a US-led initiative to promote clean technology in developing countries.
- ✿ Government sponsored community development programs, planning schemes; land maintenance schemes are slowly changing landscapes.
- ✿ There has been a growth in environmental education for schools and communities (especially in the last 2 years.)
- ✿ The Victorian Women's Trust initiative Watermark and other groups such as COAL are actively working together with Indigenous women on issues of the environment.

GAPS

- ✿ When it comes to climate change—the most important issue of our time—women are noticeably absent from the discourse and debate around this global crisis.
- ✿ Many government incentives are in progress on energy efficiency, there is little evidence of a gender analysis being applied in these incentives.
- ✿ Billions of dollars are being spent on environmental technology and environmental initiatives to reach ambitious environmental targets with little or no gender analysis or targeting of the impacts of climate change on women and families.
- ✿ There is a lack of understanding on the current economic debate, or on the impacts of current government initiatives, especially amongst younger women.

- ✿ Women's participation in decision-making has been nominal and often upholds traditional women's domains reinforcing gender stereotypes. This is seen specifically in the case of indigenous women, young women, rural women and women in lower socio-economic groups.
- ✿ There are few, if any, strategic actions which incorporate a holistic, multidisciplinary and inter sectoral approach to gender and the environment.
- ✿ Sex disaggregated data about the direct and indirect, as well as short and long term effects, on health have not been properly collated, analysed and distributed.
- ✿ There is a lack of legislation and incentives for Trans National Corporations and large businesses to be more environmentally responsible.

EMERGING ISSUES

- ✿ The reality of impacts of climate change on women and families, especially in disaster affected areas. This includes the breaking down of communities, suicides, break up of families, poor health outcomes and increased domestic violence.
- ✿ There are high levels of depression and suicide of men in rural and farming areas.

SUGGESTED UN LANGUAGE FOR KEY PRIORITY AREAS FOR ACTION

- ✿ Calling for governments to provide incentives to promote adaptation through inter alia regulatory policies, legislative changes, removal of barriers, involving women as active participants, and other supportive approaches in order to enhance women's capacity to act and to contribute to adaptation actions effectively.
- ✿ Calling for governments to create a new development paradigm that integrates environmental sustainability with gender equality and justice within and between generations.
- ✿ Calling for governments, UN agencies and bodies to recognise gender equity as an integral part of effective implementation of adaptation and integrate a gender perspective and a community-based and ecosystem approach to adaptation. Adaptation should be based on a solid foundation of scientific and technical knowledge, including traditional knowledge and enhance, support and promote the local traditional adaptation methods which have been experienced historically and successfully.
- ✿ Calling for governments, academic institutions, corporations and UN bodies to increase the proportion of women decision makers, planners, technical advisers, managers and extension workers in environment and development fields.
- ✿ Calling for governments to strengthen agricultural policies and mechanisms to incorporate a gender perspective, and in cooperation with civil society, support farmers, particularly rural women, with education and training and provide resources and services, including mental health services, to strengthen rural women and their communities and resource programmes for people in rural communities to explore opportunities for changing industries, eg tree planting for carbon credits, solar electricity generation.

UN REFERENCES

BPFA

Strategic Objective K.1 Action 253 (a) (b) (g)

Strategic Objective K.2 Action 256 (a) (d) (e) (g)

Strategic Objective I.1 Action 231 (d)

B+5 OD

B+5 IV Action 53, 57, 71 (a) (b), 101 (d), 102 (d)

CEDAW

Article 14

MDGs

MDG Goal 1, Target 7A

Reference in other documents

E/ESCAP/BPA/2009/CRP.1 para. 39, 47, 48, 49, 53

CSW Outcomes Documents 2005 – 2009

No references found on these issues

Other

Chapter 24 of Agenda 21