

OVERARCHING CONCERN

Notable gains have been achieved as a result of focused governmental and non-governmental initiatives. A number of countries are on their way to achieving the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015. Current indicators of MDGs on education, however, do not take into account gender equality in outcomes of schooling and quality of education. A narrow focus on primary education with the Millennium Development Goal 2 and 3 however, defeats the whole purpose of women's empowerment and leadership. Secondary and higher education still prove to be more catalytic in empowering young women to overcome challenges of patriarchy and poverty.

The implementation of MDG Goal 2 and 3 must be linked with the implementation of existing international educational commitments and must build not turn back on prior international treaties with provisions on gender equality (i.e. Jomtien Declaration, Education For All (EFA) Dakar Framework, ICESCR, ICCPR, CEDAW, and CRC).

GAINS

- Affirmative actions were institutionalized through the provision of scholarships, aid, and other positive entitlements to young women and girls.
- Many Governments have instituted legal reforms and established special commissions and bodies as well as undertaken new and diversified approaches to eradicate female illiteracy by setting up of half-day and part-time primary schools, girls' primary schools, etc.
- Governments and NGOs have made it possible for young women to access vocational and technical programs and opportunities especially for out-of-school youths.
- The establishment and burgeoning of women's colleges and universities with strong commitment to feminist scholarship and practices, the application of human rights education and values education in the curriculum and a focus on lifelong education by governments, NGOs, and international organizations are positive developments in the promotion of women's empowerment and leadership.

GAPS

- Although enrolment rates of girls have increased in primary education in many parts of the world, the gender gap in secondary and tertiary education remains prevalent.
- Gender-based discrimination in education and training persists despite the efforts of various actors and institutions.

EMERGING ISSUES

- The educational institutions perpetuate gender inequality through sexist programs and policies, teacher's practices and attitudes, programs and projects, facilities, most notably in textbooks and curricula. Gender tracking in selection of courses remains well entrenched. Academic institutions have been inadequate in protecting and securing female students from sexual harassment and other forms of violence against women (VAW).
- The lack of systematic and comprehensive integration of sexuality and reproductive health information and education in formal curriculum of educational institutions result in increased vulnerability of girls and young women to ill-informed and unsafe sexual behavior and practices. Girls have become vulnerable to sexually transmitted infections (STIs), HIV/AIDs, early pregnancies and other ill health consequences.
- An increasing rural-urban gap exists in vocational training opportunities for girls and women. Lack of training for women in business and entrepreneurial skills is undermining attempts to support women's involvement in business enterprises. In addition, women have limited access to training in information technology.

RECOMMENDED LANGUAGE

Gender-based discrimination in education and training

Reference in BPFA

Strategic Objectives and Actions B.1. a, b, g, e, f,

Strategic Objectives and Actions B.3. a, j

Strategic Objectives and Actions B.4. a, b, s,

Reference in CEDAW - Part III, Article 10 Sections a, b, d, e, f, g

Reference in ICPD Program of Action - Chap 4 Par 4B & 18

Reference in Dakar Framework of Action: Goals 1, 2, 3, 4,5, 6

By Government:

- Eliminate gender disparities in all areas of tertiary education ensuring that women have equal access to career development, training, scholarships, and fellowships.
- Eliminate social, cultural, religious and traditional beliefs, practices, and customs and other socially constructed values that discriminate against girls and women from going to schools and enjoying educational opportunities.

- Maintain supportive programs and different forms of assistance to meet the education and training needs of girls and women, especially the under-served groups, in low-income backgrounds and in situations of armed conflict.
- Promote lifelong education for women and girls in different levels of literacy. Commit to the provision of fundamental education to those who have not completed primary education (Article 13.2 ICESCR)

Gender-based stereotyping of gender roles in education

Reference in BPFA

Strategic Objectives and Actions B.1 d,
 Strategic Objectives and Actions B.4 g, j,
 Reference in CEDAW - Part III, Article 10c,
 Reference in ICPD Program of Action - Chap 4 Par 19

By Government:

- Ensure the implementation of a gender sensitive educational system at all levels, and in all learning institutions, removing gender-based stereotyping in areas where it had existed and incorporating core messages of gender equality, human rights, peace, and women's leadership into the curriculum and teacher training.
- Enact and implement laws, regulations and policies protecting female students from sexual harassment and other forms of VAW in educational institutions.
- Enhance the capacity of women's colleges and universities to train young women for leadership roles through programs and funding support.
- Provide non discriminatory, gender-sensitive training for teachers from primary to post-graduate level

Sexuality and reproductive health information and education

References in BPFA
 Strategic Objectives and Actions B.1. Actions d,
 Strategic Objectives and Actions B.4. Action l,

References in CEDAW - Part III, Article 10 h
 References to ICPD Program of Action - Chap 7 Par 37 ; Chap 11 Par 9
 Reference in Dakar Framework of Action : Goal 3

By Government:

- Ensure that sexuality and reproductive health information and education, counseling and life skills are included in curriculum and programming at all levels of academic institutions.
- Support the creation of an enabling educational environment such as community-based training and teaching programs, peer education and youth-led programs where young women and girls are provided with knowledge, skills, and choices in matters affecting their sexuality, reproductive health, and life development.

Lack of resources and financial support for education reforms

References in BPFA

Strategic Objectives and Actions B.1. Actions d,
Strategic Objectives and Actions B.5. Actions a1,b2,

By Government:

- Appropriate bigger budget allocations to the educational sector to enhance the quality of its services and reforms.

Business and Vocational Training

Reference in BPFA

Strategic Objective B.1 Action 80e;
Strategic Objective B.3 Action 82 e, g, j,

By Government:

- Develop comprehensive vocational and business training programs for women particularly those in rural communities.
- Develop policies and programs to improve women's access to training in information technology
- Support the participation of women in non traditional occupations by ensuring the provision of a broad range of vocational and technical training opportunities

Educational Policy

No Reference in BPFA

By Government:

- Ensure that the retention rate and completion rate by sex in primary, secondary and tertiary education in the Millennium Development Goals are achieved to ensure gender equality.

By the UN system and international bodies:

- Mainstream gender equality in all the Millennium Development Goals by broadening the goals and indicators to reflect women's situations of inequality and find effective measures to address them.
- Ensure that free and compulsory primary education (Goal 1 of Dakar Framework) is included in the commitments set by Millennium Development Goal 2 and 3 to all governments and institutions.

Thematic Focal Point for
Women and Education and Training
Miriam College - Women and Gender Institute