



Graduate Women
International (GWI)

Policy Position

Education for Indigenous Peoples

The issue

As illustrated in UNESCO's Global Monitoring Report, indigenous peoples have been identified as one of the groups lagging behind in school attendance and graduation levels.¹ In order to address the marginalisation and to combat the multiple, overlapping inequalities faced by indigenous peoples, states and stakeholders, including indigenous leaders, must implement practical policies and take concerted, coordinated action to address the existing structures of direct and indirect discrimination.

Barriers to accessing education:

- Living in remote or rural areas;
- Poverty; inability to pay transportation costs, fees or the purchase of materials;
- Linguistic challenges and shortage of qualified indigenous teachers;
- Absence of a core agreed curriculum that is culturally sensitive;
- Lack of adequate learning space;
- Inflexible timetables to allow parents and students to reach learning institutions;
- Lack of designated funding to help bridge the gap with mainstream schools;
- Jurisdictional problems as to who is ultimately responsible for indigenous education: the government or the indigenous leaders? This also leads to difficulties with accountability;
- Lack of political will of both central government and indigenous leaders to resolve the issue.

GWI's position

Governments should collaborate with indigenous leaders to provide designated educational funding, which is regularly adjusted for inflation and population increase, and work together to create a system of accountable, funded and quality education.

In order to address the main barriers to accessing successful indigenous education, GWI urges States and indigenous leaders to:

1. Monitor and report on the implementation of the terms of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People.² Specifically, focus should be on the implementation of Article 22, guaranteeing women and children freedom from all forms of violence, and Article 44, guaranteeing equal rights to men and women.

GWI recommendation:

- Document the gender and age disaggregated statistics of educational achievements to facilitate comparisons and better measure the gap including progress being made;

¹EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010, Chapter 3 Marginalisation
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001866/186606E.pdf>

² Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf



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- Record the gender and age disaggregated statistics of the qualifications of teachers to allow comparisons on the quality of teaching;
- Liaise with national human rights institutions to assist in the implementation of the Declaration and include mandated reports under human rights treaties;
- Co-operate with the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples including by issuing a standing invitation for a country visit; report on the actions taken on his recommendations.

2. Develop and share best practices in indigenous education, in collaboration with indigenous peoples.

GWI recommendation:

- Discuss best practices for indigenous education and share throughout the Ministry of Education and Faculties of Education;
- Set goals and benchmarks for the disadvantaged groups in order to measure progress in eliminating the achievement gap;
- Train a sufficient number of well-qualified indigenous and bilingual teachers to supply the indigenous areas;
- Create bilingual programs for early childhood education;
- Take concerted action to help indigenous students transition from indigenous schools to mainstream schools;
- Explore.

3. Ensure sufficient, designated funding to eliminate the gap in achievement for indigenous students.

GWI recommendation:

- Ensure early childhood education for indigenous peoples;
- Build and maintain a sufficient number of schools to avoid overcrowding;
- Develop a core approved curriculum which is culturally sensitive;
- Provide equipment, books and uniforms free of charge to those of limited financial means;
- Utilise information technology, mobile devices and radio programmes to supplement learning for indigenous children in remote areas;
- Provide special education resources for children in need of increased learning support;
- Emphasise skills development as an important component of education, especially in lower secondary school;
- Keep audited accounts to verify spending on education for indigenous peoples.