

YMUNS | Position Paper

Delegation: Australia

Committee: UNICEF

Topic: Universal Education

Though overall education level has increased drastically over the past century, 21% of children around the world still do not have access to basic education, particularly in developing countries. It is important to note that a majority of these children are girls, who are often neglected by education systems because of poverty as well as cultural practices. Australia recognizes the need to focus on eliminating the different barriers to education that exist in all regions of the world. This entails addressing the topic of universal education from a structural, political, and cultural perspective.

Australia has remained committed to the mission of universal and inclusive education both within and outside of its borders. They have continuously prioritized access to education, especially for disadvantaged and vulnerable learners. This not only includes education for girls, but also for children from isolated or remote areas, lower socioeconomic backgrounds, and culturally diverse communities.¹ In order to address the difficulties these groups may face in engaging effectively with education, Australia has increased the accessibility of higher and vocational education as well as training. This is especially important as education can be a source of economic mobility for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Australia has also worked towards guaranteeing early childhood education and care by making it more affordable. Child Care Subsidy has been increased to 90% for the first child in care, significantly decreasing the financial burden of child care as well as education on families.²

Australia has also been actively involved in educational initiatives internationally, especially within the Indo-Pacific region, with the goal of achieving inclusive and quality education in all regions. Specifically, they have contributed to development investments for education for girls and other vulnerable groups.³ These investments have directly contributed to the establishment in educational institutions in relatively impoverished areas, or the increase in the quality of the education. Furthermore, Australia has directly contributed to cross-national

¹ "Australia's Assistance for Education." *Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade*, www.dfat.gov.au/development/topics/development-issues/education-health/education.

² "Australia's National Statement of Commitment to Transform Education." *Department of Education*, Australian Government, 28 Oct. 2022,

³ "Australia Gives More Children in Developing Countries a Better Education - Timor-Leste." *ReliefWeb*, 31 May 2007, reliefweb.int/report/timor-leste/australia-gives-more-children-developing-countries-better-education.

initiatives such as the Global Partnership for Education which promises international cooperation on these matters.

Universal education is an all-encompassing issue in that its causes and consequences are deeply rooted in social structures. In order to address this broad yet extensive issue, it is important to take a multifaceted approach. The first step would be to identify the specific barriers that exist to accessing education, as each country has a different circumstance that impacts educational opportunities. Next steps would include direct investments into educational development, particularly on early childhood care as research has shown that these can benefit the poorest and most marginalized students.⁴ To establish stability within the system, it is important to couple educational development with agendas for economic growth. In order to do this, solutions should seek to align education and skills with labor market needs. This would require market awareness and proper investment in relevant and high-quality education.⁵ Another important aspect would be creating resilient education systems that can not only recover from the recent COVID pandemic, but also overcome future challenges. As challenges to universal education are most prominent in developing countries, it is the duty of the international community, and particularly developed countries, to actively lead the process of creating equitable and inclusive education for all.

⁴ Harrington, Marilyn. "Universal Access to Early Childhood Education: A Quick Guide." *Home – Parliament of Australia*, 28 Nov. 2014, www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp1314/QG/ChildhoodEducatAccess.

⁵ "Australia's National Statement of Commitment to Transform Education." *Department of Education*, Australian Government, 28 Oct. 2022.

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