



RANZCO

The Royal Australian
and New Zealand
College of Ophthalmologists

Gender Equality Policy

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Gender Equality

Gender equality means women and men have equal opportunities to realise their individual potential, to contribute to their country's economic and social development and to benefit equally from their participation in society.

Gender inequality restricts a country's economic growth. Removing inequalities gives societies a better chance to develop. When women and men have relative equality, economies grow faster, children's health improves and there is less corruption. Gender equality is an important human right.

While gains have been made, gender inequalities and inequities in health and education are still striking given that:

- Two-thirds of the 800 million people in the world who lack basic literacy skills are female
- Women hold an average of three per cent of seats in national parliaments in Pacific island countries, and an average of 19 per cent of seats in East Asia
- Half a million women die each year from complications during pregnancy - 99 per cent of them in developing countries
- Women and girls access eye care services less than men and boys.

Investments in women's and girls' education and health yield some of the highest returns of all development investments, including reduced rates of maternal mortality, better educated and healthier children and increased household incomes. Achieving gender equality extends beyond improving female health and education. It links to access to economic resources, participation and leadership in decision making, respect for the human rights of women, and an increased capacity to tackle gender inequalities. Strategies and targets need to engage women and girls more effectively, and the effectiveness of these strategies needs to be monitored. The AusAID website provides useful information on gender equality: http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/keyaid/gender.cfm.

RANZCO ensures that its governance structures (Board and Council), committee membership and executive management reflect considerations on gender equality. Consideration for key management and senior positions are based on relative ability, skills, experience and suitability for the position. However, where gender imbalances exist in the organisation and individuals' skills, experiences and suitability are comparable, additional weight will be given to gender balance.

RANZCO has identified that it can make a contribution to gender equality through its programmes. The project design process creates an opportunity to determine project strategy and inform a work plan whereby affirmative action for gender balance in a project is considered at the design stage. Monitoring and evaluation is undertaken on all RANZCO projects. This is a critical factor in developing an evidence base that demonstrates achievement of gender equality results and demonstrating the contribution that gender equality makes to poverty reduction and sustainable development.

Monitoring of disaggregated data collected through RANZCO projects allows for periodic review to identify and address areas of gender imbalance and inequities. Strategies to address these areas help redirect health promotion activities and awareness campaigns, selection and recruitment of human resources.