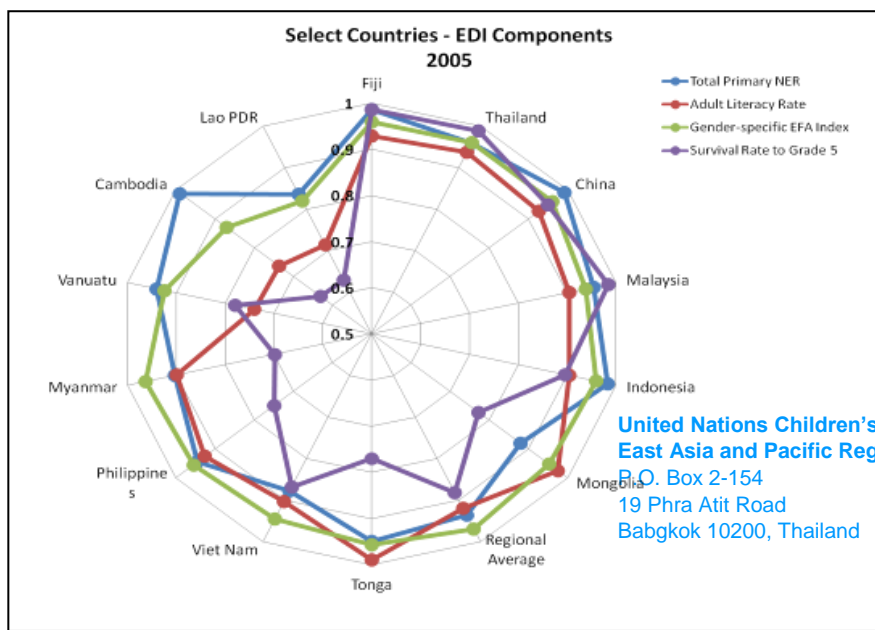


Updated April 2009

Regional facts on education

- In 1970, more than 50 million primary school-aged children in the region were not attending class. Today there are less than 7 million primary school-aged children out of school. (State of the World's Children Report, 2008)
- In East Asia, the primary net enrolment ratio decreased from 96 per cent in 1999 to 94 per cent in 2006. During the same period in the Pacific, the primary net enrolment ratio decreased from 90 per cent in 1999 to 84 per cent in 2006. Within the East Asia and Pacific region, there are tremendous differences between and within countries. For example, Lao PDR has a national net primary enrolment of 84 per cent (2006), although it varies within the country from a low of 67.2 per cent in one province up to 99.4 per cent in another province. (EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2009)
- While poverty is an underlying feature of families whose children are deprived of education, regionally, there are five core groups of children who are being denied their right to basic education: ethnic minorities, children in remote areas, migrant children, children of internally displaced people and children with disabilities.
- The Education Development Index (EDI) is used to depict quality of education in Asia-Pacific countries. As shown in the graphic below, the EDI data has been modified, based on data available under the Education For All Mid-Decade Assessment National Report, Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) Reports, UNESCO Institute of Statistics data centre and EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008, to reflect four indicators: primary net enrolment rate, adult literacy rate, survival rate to grade 5 and gender-specific EFA Index. The closer a country's index scoring is to the outside ring, the better its situation. While many countries may boast high primary net enrolment rates, low grade 5 survival or adult literacy rates draw into question the overall quality of classroom teaching and the education system.



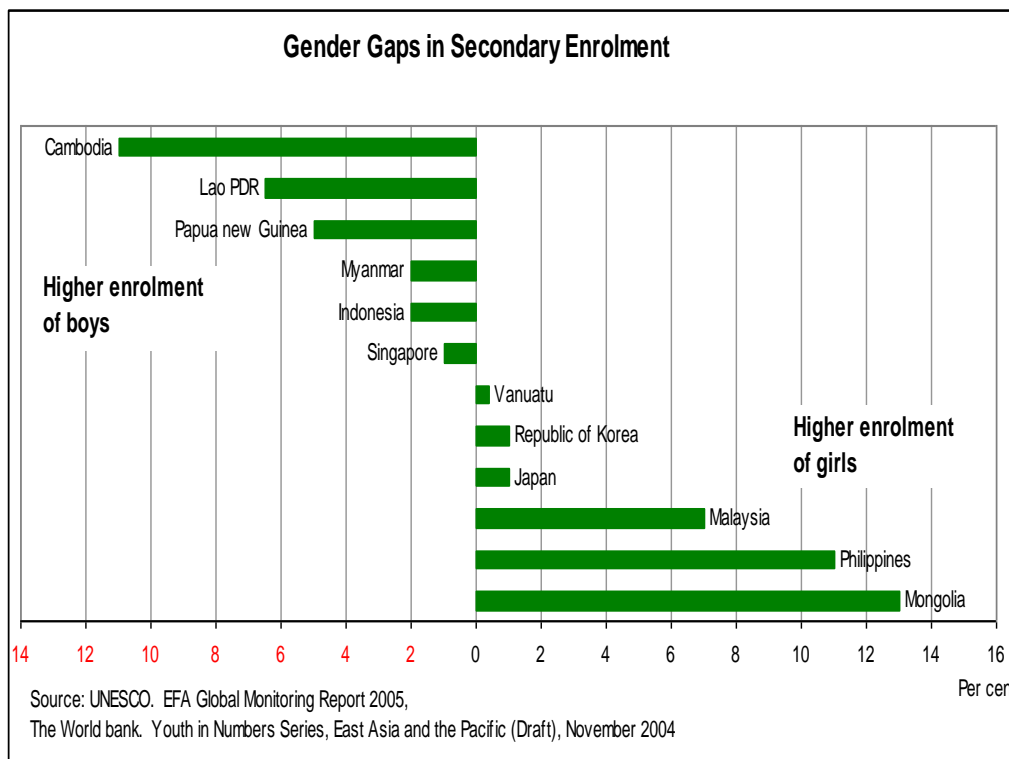
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- As a result of attempts towards the Universal Primary Education, the enrolment ratio for secondary education level is increasing. Although, the overall gross enrolment ratio for the East Asia and Pacific region rose from 65 per cent in 1999 to 75 per cent in 2006, East Asia has made significant progress increasing from 64 per cent in 1999 to 75 per cent in 2006, while the Pacific decreased, from 111 per cent to 107 per cent. However, more focus is needed on the children who enrol but do not attend school and on disparities between regions of a country.
- In most countries within the region, the enrolment gap between girls and boys in primary school is more pronounced in secondary school. Gender roles and gender stereotyping are also prominent in many secondary school systems and can be seen in the differing sports, clubs and extra-curricular activities that are available.

The gross enrolment ratio for secondary education reveals a mixed picture across countries in the region. Boys have higher enrolment than girls at the secondary level in Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Papua New Guinea and Myanmar, whereas girls in Vanuatu, Republic of Korea, Japan, Malaysia and Mongolia are enrolling at a higher rate.

Further disaggregation at the subnational level would allow a better understanding of the nature of disparities and where to target efforts to address them. For example, in Thailand, although the graph below indicates that lower proportions of girls are enrolled than boys overall, disaggregation by level reveals that more girls are enrolled than boys at the secondary and tertiary levels.



- School fees and the direct and indirect costs of schooling (books, uniform, transport) have a tremendous effect on enrolment and completion. Many children are not able to continue their education because their family lacks money to pay for those expenses.
- Ethnic minorities living in remote areas struggle with many obstacles to educating their children. The first difficulty is the language of instruction. If children struggle with basic comprehension, learning from a teacher with whom they cannot communicate and textbooks they cannot understand, they tend to drop out. Cambodia, China and Viet Nam are investing in bilingual programmes that allow ethnic minority children to commence pre-school in their mother tongue.
- The gross enrolment ratios at pre-primary level in the East Asia has increased from 40 per cent in 1999 to 45 per cent in 2006; in the Pacific, total enrolment significantly increased, from 400,000 students to 1 million (a 24 per cent increase), whereas in East Asia, total enrolment decreased from 37 million to 36 million. (Global Monitoring Report, 2009)
- Evidence from East Asia and the Pacific shows that children who are exposed to pre-school and organized early learning groups have higher completion and achievement rates and lower repetition and drop-out rates compared with children who have not benefited from these types of programmes.
- A diminishing national budget for pre-primary education in several countries is accompanied by increasing reliance on privatization. Increasingly, parents are expected to pay fees and tuition costs even in government pre-schools and child care centres and especially in countries in which pre-schools are being handed over to the private sector to manage.
- Even though access to primary education has increased significantly in most countries in the region, there are still serious concerns about the quality of education. Poor quality education often also contributes to drop-out rates because children are bored. Similarly, recognizing school's irrelevance, parents find better use for their children's time than sending them school.
- Among the most highly debated of all education inputs is whether a low pupil-teacher ratio (PTR, for the average number of pupils per teacher in a given school year) is important in achieving quality. A high PTR can signify an overstretched teaching staff, whereas a low PTR may mask high subnational disparity, with the vast number of teachers in urban centres in nonteaching roles. Most countries in the East Asia and Pacific region have a relatively low primary PTR; more countries average in the range of 10–30 pupils per teacher than in the 31–53 range. However, for countries such as Cambodia, the primary PTR exceeds 50:1. In Lao PDR, the PTR for primary education exceeds 40

students per teacher, even though the target for primary schools is 30:1. This indicates a need in Lao PDR to further invest in teacher recruiting, training and deployment.

- The number of trained teachers and the type of training in the region varies greatly. The lack of trained teachers in remote rural areas is common in many countries, where it is often difficult to recruit locally and where urban-based teachers often refuse to work elsewhere.
- Between 1995 and 2005, the number of school-age children fell in East Asia and the Pacific – and school-age population in East Asia and Pacific is expected to decline further between 2005 and 2015. Countries may not need to invest the same level of resources in school buildings and can instead invest more funds towards improving the quality of primary services and environment and expand access to secondary school. UNICEF advocates for countries to invest at least 6 per cent of gross national product in education to ensure the delivery of quality education.

