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ABBREVIATIONS

ANAR	Adjusted Net Attendance Rate
DOLISA	Department of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs
GSO	General Statistics Office
MOET	Ministry of Education and Training
OOSC	Out-of-school children
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific & Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
5DE	5 Dimensions of Exclusion

1. Overview

This report presents an analysis of the out-of-school children (OOSC) aged 5-14 in Dong Thap Province. OOSC are children who have never attended school or had attended but later dropped out.

The report was developed in parallel with the report *Out-of-school Children in Viet Nam: A country study*, which was prepared by the Ministry of Education & Training (MOET), with the support of UNICEF and related consultants. Dong Thap is among the eight provinces with an in-depth analysis of the OOSC profile. The eight provinces are Lao Cai, Dien Bien, Ninh Thuan, Kon Tum, Gia Lai, Ho Chi Minh City, Dong Thap and An Giang.

The report aims to highlight several key issues related to education disparity in Dong Thap through an analysis of the profile of out-of-school children aged 5-14 in Dong Thap and of those who were attending primary and lower secondary schools but were at risk of dropping out, and an analysis of the barriers and bottlenecks which limited their school attendance. The report expects to enhance understanding of OOSC, contribute to improved education planning and management, and support policy advocacy in order to remove and reduce barriers and realize the right to education of all children, with a particular focus on disadvantaged children.

The analysis is based on the 5 Dimensions of Exclusion (5DE) defined in the Global Initiative on Out-of-school Children launched by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Institute for Statistics (UIS) of the United Nations Educational, Scientific & Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

The 5 Dimensions of Exclusion include:

Dimension 1: Children of pre-primary school age who are not in pre-primary or primary school

Dimension 2: Children of primary school age who are not in primary or secondary school

Dimension 3: Children of lower secondary school age who are not in primary or secondary school

Dimension 4: Children who are in primary school but are at risk of dropping out

Dimension 5: Children who are in lower secondary school but are at risk of dropping out

The first three dimensions cover out-of-school children. Dimension of Exclusion 1 (DE1) focuses on five-year-old out-of-school children, DE2 focuses on out-of-school children of primary school age, and DE3 focuses on out-of-school children of lower secondary school age.

The remaining two dimensions address children who attend a primary or lower secondary school, irrespective of their age, but are at risk of dropping out.

The data used for the analysis was sourced from Viet Nam's 2009 Population and Housing Census (2009 Census). The sections on barriers and recommendations are based on consultations conducted in April 2013 with education managers from different units of the Department of Education and Training of Dong Thap Province, the Bureau of Education and Training of Hong Ngu District and representatives of teachers, students, parents and local authorities at Thuong Thoi Hau A Primary School and Thuong Phuoc 2 Lower Secondary School.

Remarks on the data and key considerations in the analysis:

- The 2009 Population and Housing Census enumerated all the Vietnamese regularly residing in the territory of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam at zero hour on 1 April 2009.
- As per the 2009 Population and Housing Census, respondents were only given credit for the full

years that they had completed by 1 April 2009 (a full year of age is 365 days). This calculation method is different than that used by the education sector, which calculates by deducting the year of birth from the current year. These different calculation methods resulted in a discrepancy in the data from the GSO and the education sector. To address this issue and ensure alignment with the schooling age calculation, age in this report was calculated based on the year of birth against 2008, meaning age was counted by deducting the year of birth as declared in the census. For example, the five-year-old children in this report were those who reported they were born in 2003 (2008 minus 2003 = five years), and the 14-year-old children were those who reported they were born in 1994 (2008 minus 1994). Therefore, the data in this report is comparable to the data used by the education sector for the 2008-2009 school year.

- The education-related questions as asked in the 2009 census included *Are you attending school* and *Did you drop out or did you never go to school?* and there were three response options: *attending school*, *attended but dropped out* and *never went to school*. The responses formed the basis for analyzing school attendance in this report.
- There were four questions in the 2009 census related to disability of the four major functions: vision, hearing, movement (walking) and cognition (learning or understanding). These questions were asked of members of the household who were aged five and over. Answers were based on self-evaluation and were placed into four categories: *No difficulty*, *A little difficulty*, *Very difficult* and *Unable*. A person was considered to have a disability if s/he was unable to do one or more of the four major functions and to have a partial disability if s/he reported having a little difficulty or that it was very difficult to perform any of the four functions. Those who reported having no difficulty doing any of the four functions were categorized as having no disability.
- Migration, as referred to in this report, follows the concept utilized in the 2009 Census, in which a migrant was interpreted as a person who moved from one district to another at least once during the five years before the 2009 Census. In Viet Nam people often move from a rural area to an urban area within a province or move from a rural province to a city outside their province.

However, there was a data limitation. There was no question regarding the purpose of the migration in the 2009 Census, which made it impossible to identify whether the migration was to look for a job in the city, for casual seasonal work or due to a natural disaster.

- As the 2009 Census does not have data on child labor, this chapter will not analyze the situation of working children.
- When analyzing based on specific disaggregations, weighted cell values less than 50 were omitted from the tables (i.e. the value was changed to zero) as the sample size was too small. All related cells were left blank. However, one must be cautious when making conclusions based on cells with weighted values that are only slightly higher than 50 observations.
- There are 54 ethnic groups in Viet Nam, among which the Kinh make up the majority of the population and all the other groups are considered to be ethnic minorities. This report analyses out-of-school children among the Kinh and key ethnic minority groups in Dong Thap such as the Chinese and the Khmer.

2. Characteristics of the children aged 5-14 in Dong Thap

According to the 2009 Census, the total number of children aged five in Dong Thap in 2008 (born in 2003), aged 6-10 in 2008 (of primary school age and born between 1998 and 2002) and aged 11-14 in 2008 (of lower secondary school age and born between 1994 and 1997) were 27,766, 126,599 and 121,299 respectively (see Table 1).

The ratio of male to female children in Dong Thap was about 52:48 for children aged 5-10 and

approximately 53:47 for children aged 11-14. This indicates an obvious gender imbalance in the school-age population.

Over 80% of the children aged 5-14 in Dong Thap lived in rural areas. Most of the children aged 5-14 in Dong Thap were Kinh. Other ethnic groups, mainly the Khmer and the Chinese, accounted for only 0.15% of the children in this age group. In Dong Thap less than 1.3% of the children had a disability or a partial disability, and the remaining children (nearly 99%) had no disabilities. Migrant children accounted for 2% of the total number of children.

Table 1: Distribution of the children aged 5-14 in Dong Thap

DONG THAP		Age in 2008		
		5	6 – 10	11 – 14
Total (person)		27,766	126,599	121,299
Age (person)	5	27,766		
	6		24,343	
	7		24,430	
	8		30,095	
	9		25,275	
	10		22,455	
	11			29,119
	12			30,966
	13			30,482
	14			30,732
Gender (%)	Male	52.34	51.73	52.84
	Female	47.66	48.27	47.16
Urban/Rural (%)	Urban	16.64	15.91	15.39
	Rural	83.36	84.09	84.61
Ethnicity (%)	Kinh	99.85	99.85	99.86
	Khmer	0.04	0.03	0.02
	Hoa	0.09	0.12	0.11
	Other	0.02	0.00	0.01
Disability (%)	Disabled	0.06	0.08	0.22
	Partially disabled	1.03	0.74	1.10
	Not disabled	98.91	99.18	98.68
Migrant (%)	Yes	1.94	1.16	1.00
	No	98.06	98.84	99.00

3. Out-of-school children (OOSC)

3.1. Out-of-school children aged five

OOSC aged five included five-year-old children who did not attend pre-primary school or primary school.

According to the 2009 Census, Dong Thap had 27,766 children aged five in 2008 (born in 2003), of whom 84.11% attended school and 15.89% did not. There were 4,412 OOSC aged five in Dong Thap. The percentage of five-year-old OOSC in Dong Thap was higher than the national average (12.19%) and ranked fifth of the eight provinces (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Children aged five in Dong Thap attending school and out of school

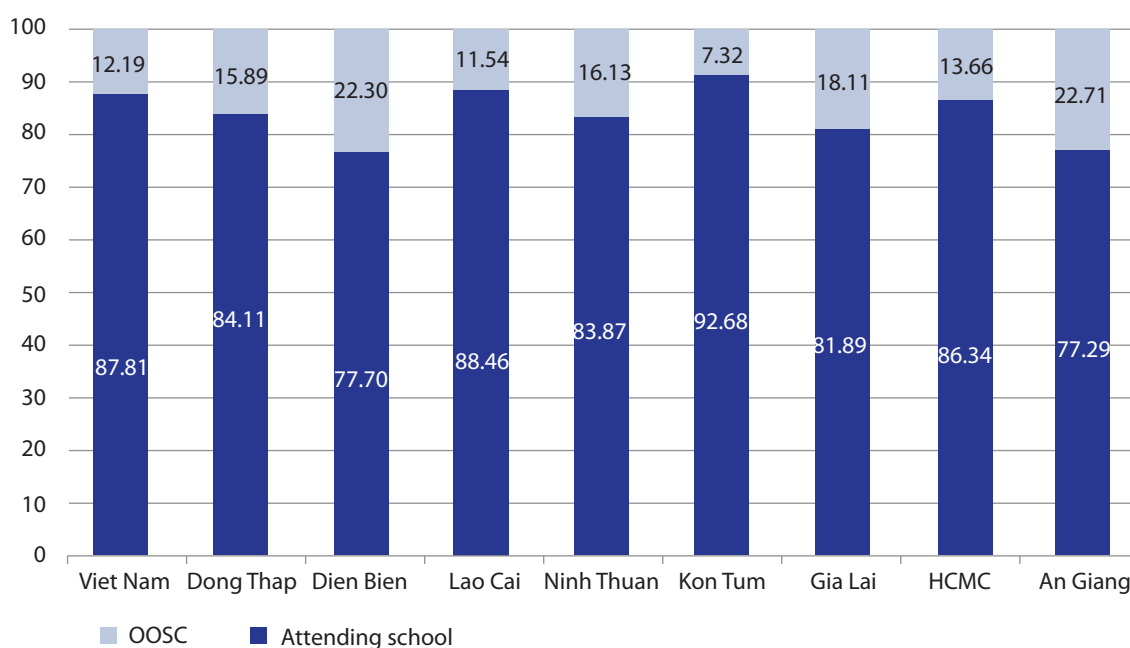
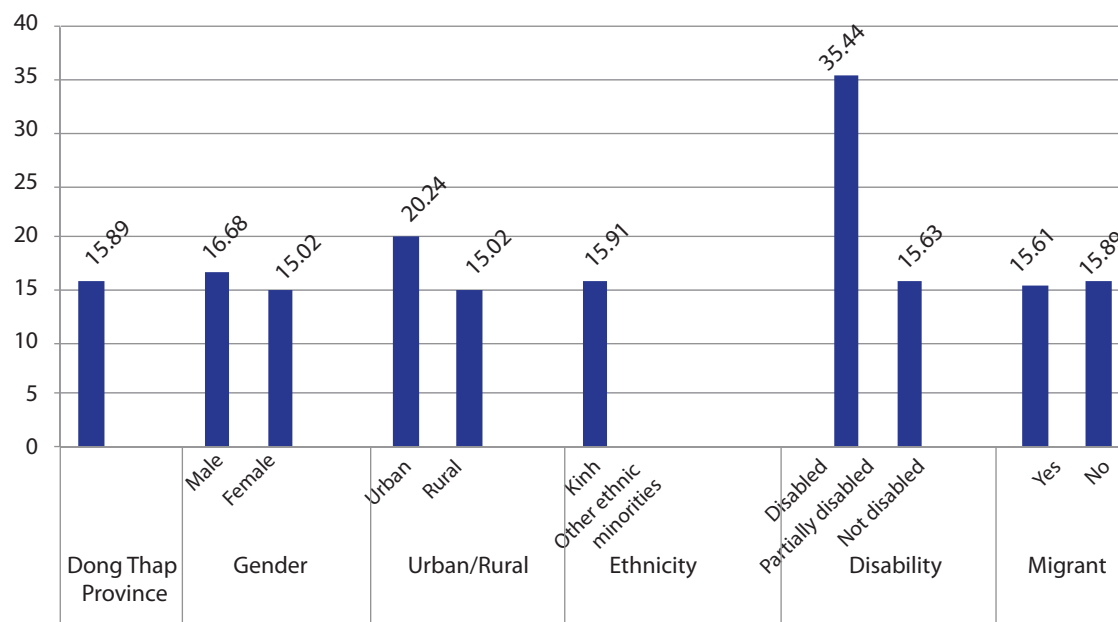


Figure 2 provides a graphical illustration of the percentage of OOSC aged five in Dong Thap classified by the children’s characteristics, including gender, residential area (urban or rural area), ethnic group, disability and migration status.

Figure 2: Percentage of OOSC aged five in Dong Thap classified by characteristics



The percentage of male OOSC aged five in Dong Thap was higher than that of female OOSC, 16.68% and 15.02% respectively. The percentage of OOSC aged five in rural areas was considerably lower than the percentage in the urban areas, 15.02% and 20.24% respectively.

The number of OOSC aged five among the ethnic minority groups and the number of disabled OOSC in Dong Thap was insufficient to conduct an analysis. The percentage of children aged five with partial disabilities who were out of school was double number of children aged five with no disabilities, 35.44% and 15.63% respectively.

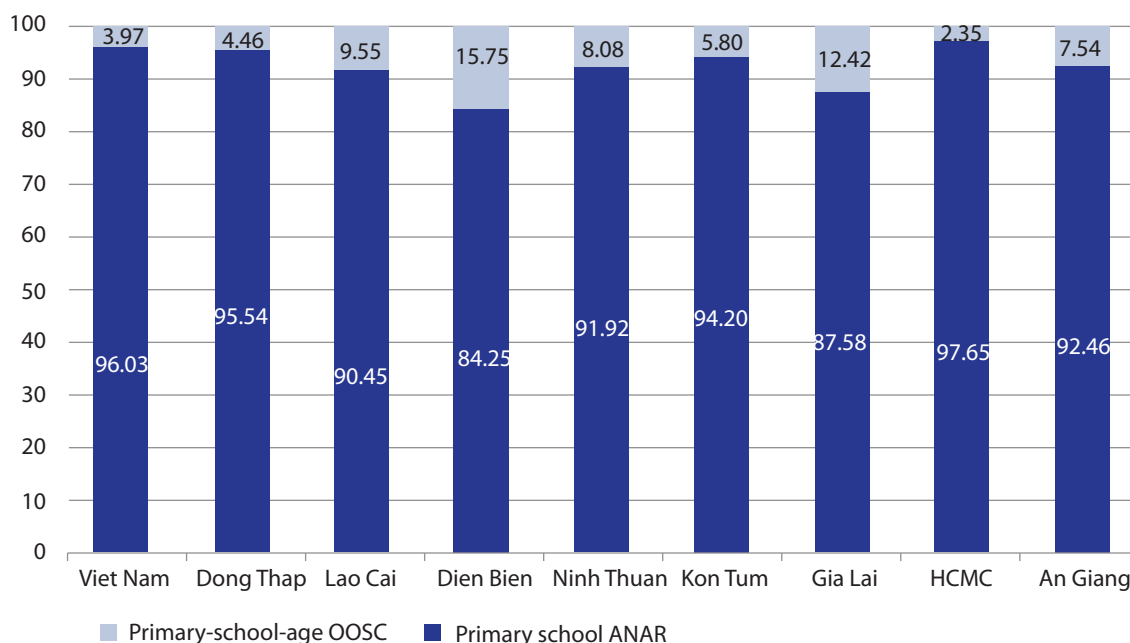
The percentage of OOSC aged five from migrant families was almost the same as the percentage of those from non-migrant families, 15.61 and 15.89% respectively.

3.2. Out-of-school children of primary school age

OOSC of primary school age were those aged 6-10 who were not attending primary or lower secondary school.

According to the 2009 Census, there were 126,599 children aged 6-10 in Dong Thap in 2008 (born between 1998 and 2002), of whom 95.54% attended primary or lower secondary school and 4.46% were out of school (see Figure 3). The percentage of OOSC in Dong Thap was 0.5% higher than the national average (3.97%) and ranked second of the eight provinces. Ho Chi Minh City ranked first (see Figure 3). There were 5,646 OOSC of primary school age.

Figure 3: Percentage of primary-school-age children in Dong Thap attending school and out of school



Note: The primary school ANAR indicates the percentage of primary-school-age children attending primary or lower secondary school.

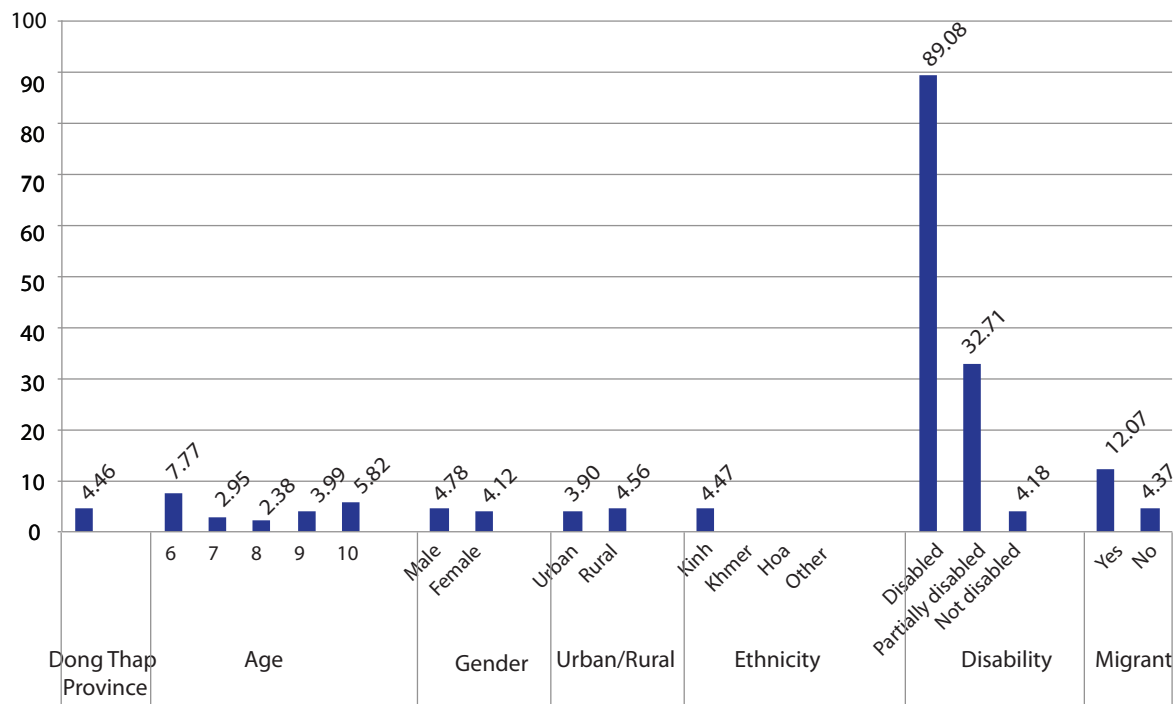
Figure 4 provides a graphical illustration of the percentage of primary-school-aged OOSC in Dong Thap classified by the children's characteristics, including age, gender, residential area (urban or rural area), ethnic group, disability and migration status.

The percentage of primary-school-age OOSC increased slightly with age, which means the number of dropouts in the final grade of primary school increased slightly.

The percentage of primary-school-age male OOSC was insignificantly higher than the percentage of female OOSC, 4.78% and 4.12% respectively. The percentage of primary-school-age OOSC in rural areas was a little higher than in urban areas, 4.56% and 3.90% respectively. There were more primary-school-age OOSC among the Kinh than among the Chinese, and the number of other ethnic minorities was insufficient to conduct an analysis.

89.08% of the children of primary school age with disabilities were out of school, and 32.71% of the children of primary school age with partial disabilities were out of school. That means one out of every three children of primary school age with partial disabilities did not attend school. The OOSC rate of primary-school-age children with no disabilities was 4.18%.

Figure 4: Percentage of primary-school-age OOSC in Dong Thap classified by selected characteristics

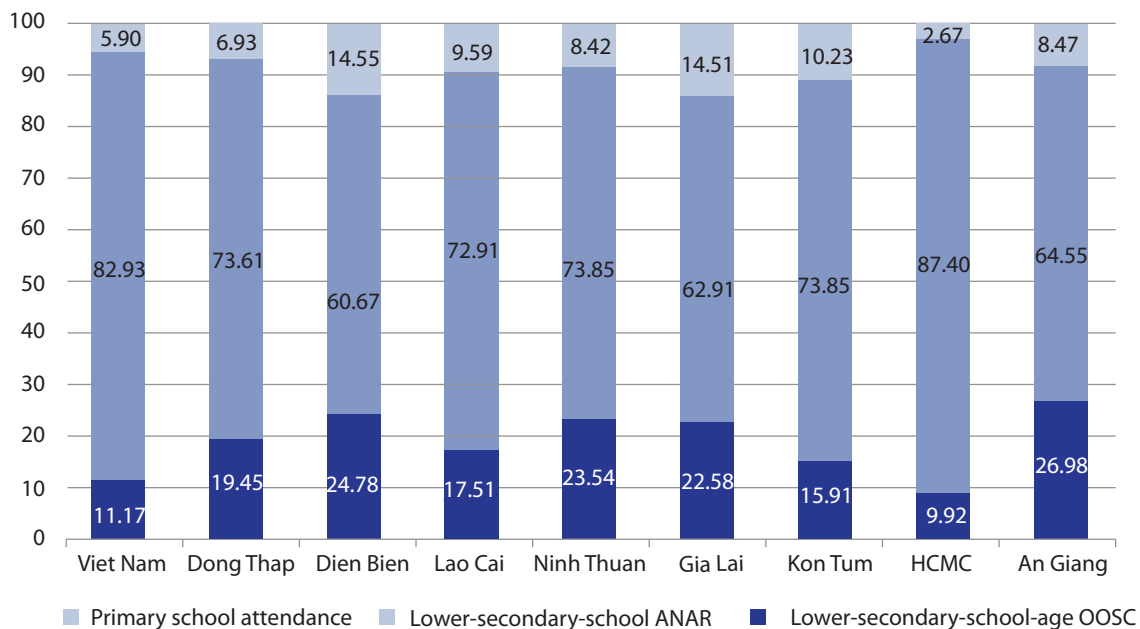


There were nearly three times more primary-school-age children from migrant families than from non-migrant families, 12.07% and 4.37% respectively.

3.3. Out-of-school children of lower secondary school age

OOSC of lower secondary school age were those aged 11-14 who were not attending lower or upper secondary school or primary school.

Figure 5: Percentage of lower-secondary-school-age children attending school and lower-secondary-school-age OOSC



Note: The lower secondary school ANAR indicates the percentage of children of lower secondary school age attending lower or upper secondary school.

According to the 2009 Census, in Dong Thap there were 121,299 children of lower secondary age in 2008 (born between 1994 and 1997), of whom 73.61% attended lower secondary or upper secondary school, 6.93% attended primary school and the remaining 19.45% were out of school. That means one out of every five children of lower secondary school age did not attend school (see Figure 5). The percentage of lower-secondary-school-age OOSC in Dong Thap was twice as high as the national average and ranked fifth of the eight provinces. There were 23,593 lower-secondary-school-age OOSC in Dong Thap.

At the time of the 2009 Census, there were 23 children of lower secondary school age in Dong Thap who were taking vocational training classes. This figure is a very small and had no effect on the percentage of lower-secondary-school-age OOSC.

Figure 6 provides a graphical illustration of the percentage of lower-secondary-school-age OOSC in Dong Thap classified by the children's characteristics, including age, gender, residential area (urban or rural area), ethnic group, disability and migration status.

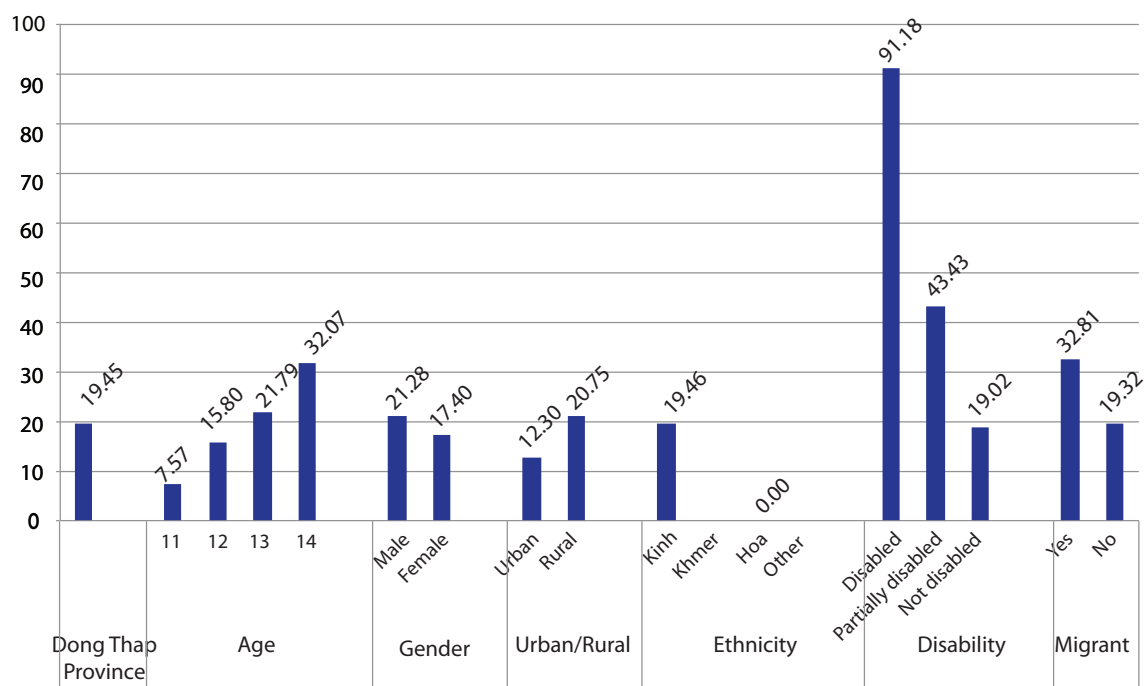
The percentage of lower-secondary-school-age OOSC in Dong Thap increased with age and at a faster rate compared to primary-school-age OOSC. This means the percentage of dropouts in the final grades of lower secondary school was greater than the percentage of dropouts in the final grades of primary school. 5.82% of the ten-year-olds and 32.07% of the 14-year-olds (five times as many) of lower secondary school age were out of school.

Among lower-secondary-school-age OOSC there were big differences in the percentage for males and females, in urban and rural areas, for those with disabilities and those with no disabilities, and for migrants and non-migrants.

The percentage of lower-secondary-school-age male OOSC was 1.2 times higher than the percentage of female OOSC, 21.28% and 17.40% respectively. In rural areas the percentage was 1.7 times higher than in urban areas, 20.75% and 12.30% respectively. Over 90% of the lower-secondary-school-age children with

disabilities did not attend school, and the percentage of those with partial disabilities who did not attend was two times greater than the percentage of those with no disabilities. The percentage of lower-secondary-school-age OOSC from migrant families was 1.5 times higher than the percentage of the OOSC from non-migrant families, 32.81% and 19.32% respectively.

Figure 6: Percentage of lower-secondary-school-age OOSC classified by characteristics



4. Children at risk of dropping out

Dimensions 4 and 5 cover children in school who are at risk of dropping out, in other words, the potential OOSC of tomorrow. A simple way to do this is to look at the children who have dropped out of school. Understanding the profiles of children who were at risk of dropping out and then dropped out provides insight into the profiles of children currently at risk.

A dropout is defined as a child who had attended school in a particular year but did not attend school the following year even though s/he was supposed to. Such a dropout can be referred to as a single-year dropout. However, school attendance data for two consecutive years is required to determine if that is the case.

The 2009 Census contained no such data, only the educational background of the OOSC, those who had left school, and the students who were overage for the grade they were in. Accordingly, this data was used to analyze children at risk of dropping out.

Included in this analysis were children of primary school age (6-10) and lower secondary school age (11-14) in 2008 who had previously attended school but had dropped out by the time of the 2009 Census.

4.1. Primary-school-age dropouts

As seen in Figure 7, the percentage of primary-school-age children who had dropped out of school in Dong Thap was 1.86%, the sixth highest of the eight selected provinces and 1.16 times higher than the national average.

Figure 7: Percentage of primary-school-age children who had dropped out of school in Dong Thap

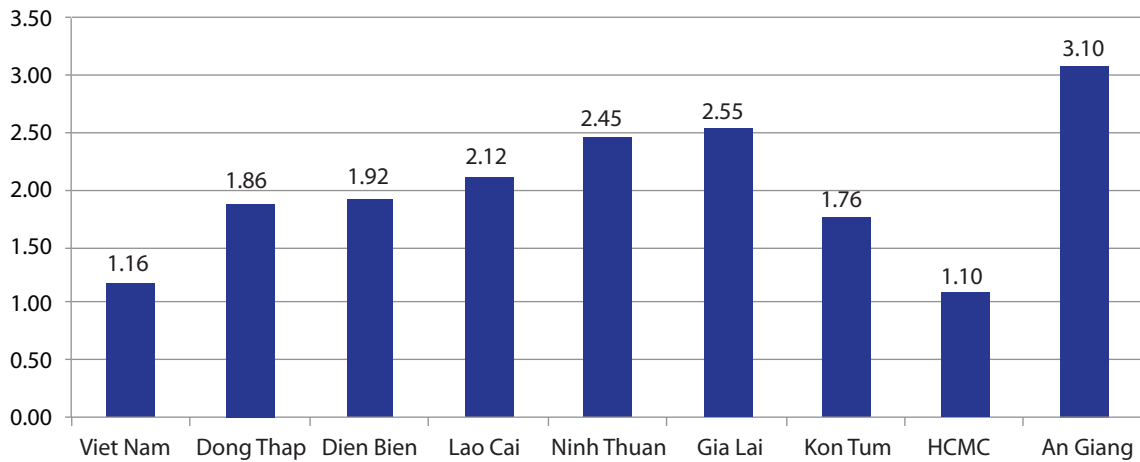
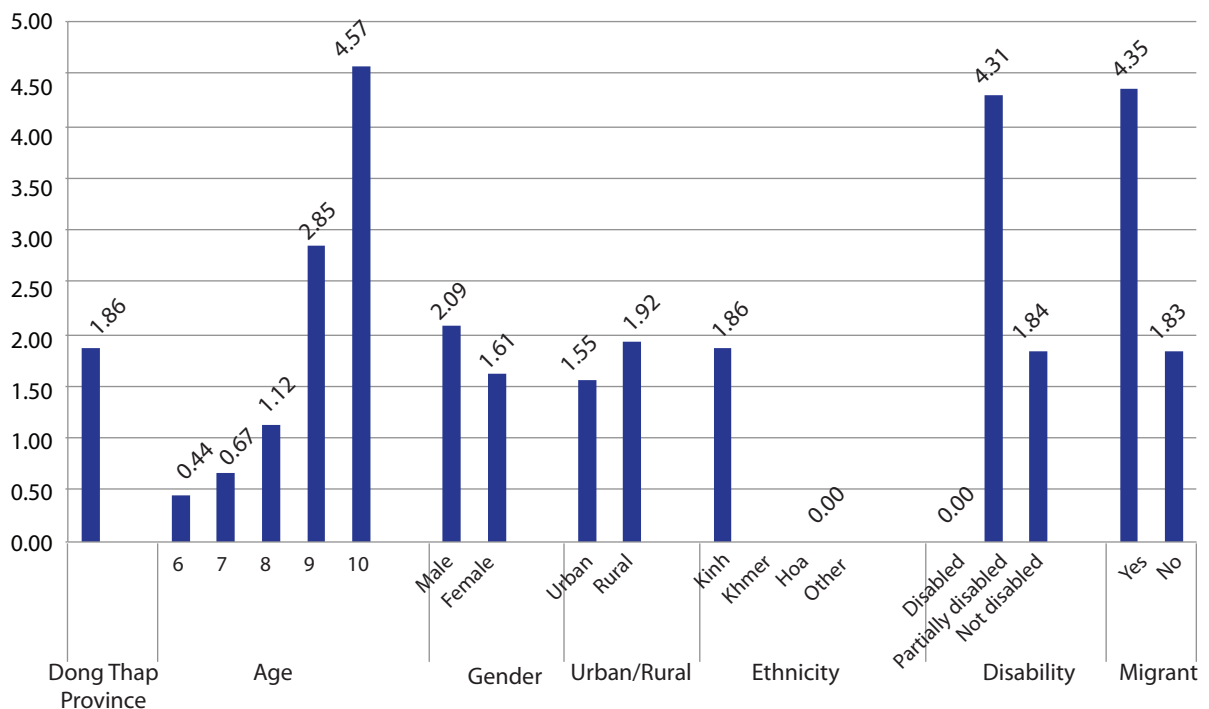


Figure 8 provides a graphical illustration of the data for the primary-school-age children who had dropped out of school in Dong Thap classified by the children's characteristics, including age, gender, residential area (urban or rural area), ethnic group, disability and migration status.

Figure 8: Percentage of primary-school-age children who had dropped out of school classified by characteristics



The percentage of primary-school-age children who had dropped out of school in Dong Thap increased with age. The dropout rate was highest in the final grades of primary school. 4.57% of the ten-year-olds had dropped out of school. The percentage of primary-school-age males who had dropped out of school was 1.3 times higher than that of females, 2.09% and 1.61% respectively.

The percentage of primary-school-age children who had dropped out of school in rural areas was 1.3 times higher than the percentage of those in urban areas, 1.92% and 1.55% respectively. The percentage

of primary-school-age children with disabilities who had dropped out of school was not recorded due to the small sample size. The number of children of primary school age with partial disabilities was double the number of those with no disabilities, and the percentage of primary-school-age migrant children who had dropped out of school was twice as high as that of non-migrants, 4.35% and 1.83% respectively.

4.2. Lower-secondary-school-age dropouts

Children reported in this section as having dropped out were children aged 11-14 who had attended school but were not going to school at the time of the 2009 Census.

According to Figure 9, the dropout rate in Dong Thap among lower-secondary-school-age children was 17.88%. This was about nine times higher than the dropout rate among primary-school-age children, the third highest of the eight selected provinces, and nearly twice as high as the national average.

Figure 9: Percentage of lower-secondary-school-age children who had dropped out of school

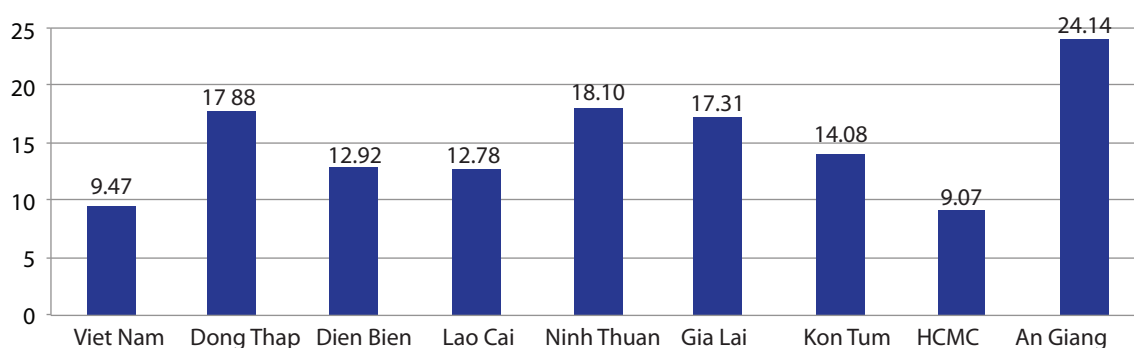
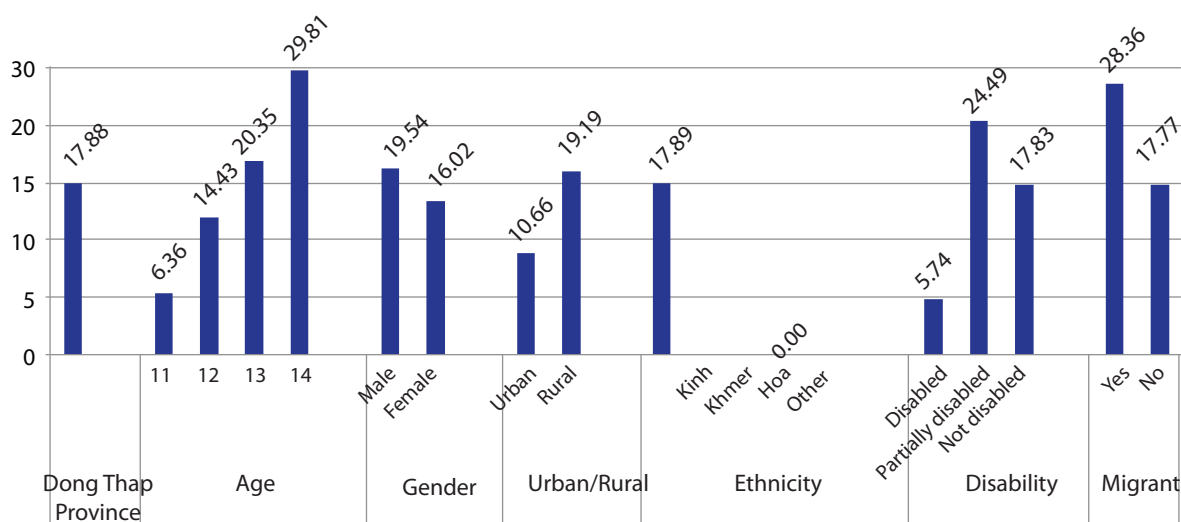


Figure 10 provides a graphical illustration of the data for the lower-secondary-school age children who had dropped out in Dong Thap classified by the children's characteristics, including age, residential area (urban or rural area), gender, ethnic group, disability and migration status.

Figure 10: Percentage of lower-secondary-school-age children who had dropped out of school classified by characteristics



Similar to the dropout rate of primary-school-age children, the dropout rate among lower secondary-school-age children increased with age (in the final grades) and to a greater extent. One out of every four lower-secondary-school-age children aged 14 (29.81%) had dropped out of school. The dropout rate among lower-secondary-school-age males was 1.2 times higher than the rate for females, and the dropout rate among lower-secondary-school-age children in rural areas was double the rate in urban areas. The lower percentage of dropouts among lower-secondary-school-age children with disabilities compared to those with no disabilities is attributed to the small sample size. The dropout rate of lower-secondary-school-age children with partial disabilities was higher than the rate of those with no disabilities. The percentage of dropouts among lower-secondary-school-age migrants was 1.6 times higher than among non-migrants, 28.36% and 17.77% respectively.

5. Overage school attendance

Overage was a reason for dropping out and it was a risk factor for potential OOSC. Being older than one's peers and having to repeat a class resulted in low self-esteem, difficulties in integrating with one's peers and becoming bored with schooling, which eventually led to permanently dropping out.

At the time of the 2009 Census, in Dong Thap 6.93% of the children of lower secondary school age (in 2008) were overage and were attending primary school. This rate was the seventh highest of the eight provinces and about 1.2 times higher than the national average (see Figure 11).

Figure 11: Percentage of lower-secondary-school-age children attending primary school

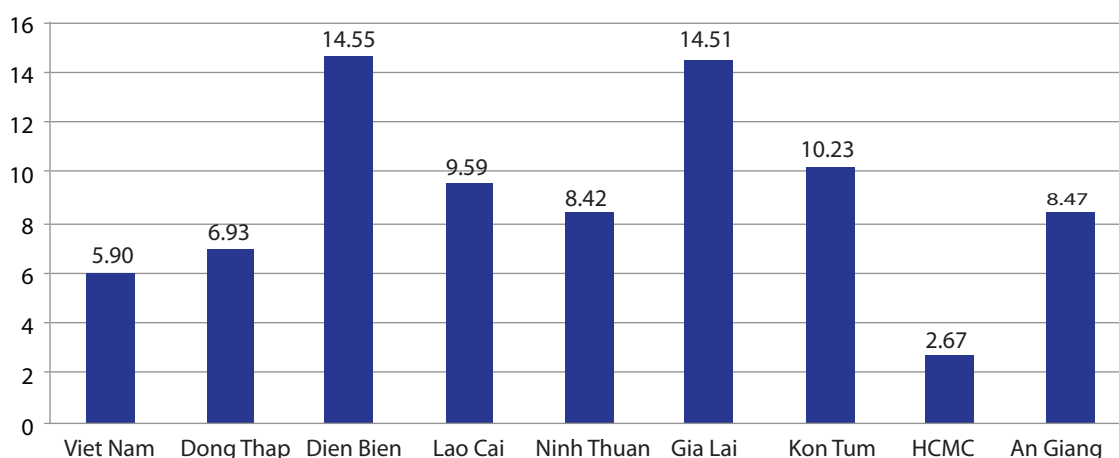
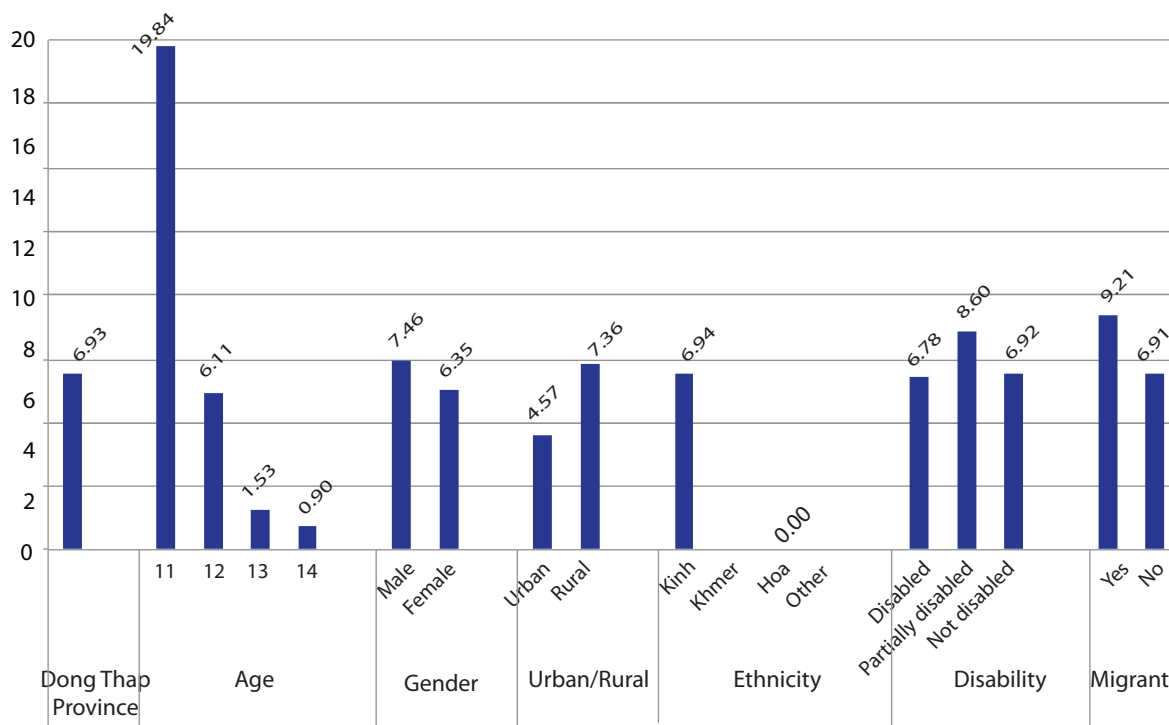


Figure 12 provides a graphical illustration of the data on lower-secondary-school-age children attending primary school in Dong Thap classified by the children's characteristics, including age, gender, residential area (urban or rural area), ethnic group, disability and migration status.

Figure 12: Percentage of lower-secondary-school-age children attending primary school classified by characteristics



The rate of overage attendance among lower-secondary-school-age children in Dong Thap decreased with age, 11-year-olds accounted for the highest percentage of overage children in primary school, followed by the 12-year-olds, 13-year-olds and 14-year-olds. 1.53% of the children aged 13 and 0.90% of the children aged 14 (the ages at which children are usually in the final grades of lower secondary school) still attended primary school (see Table 3). These 743 children were very likely to drop out.

There was little difference in the percentage of overage school attendance among males (7.46%) and females (6.36%) in Dong Thap. However, there were considerable differences in the rates for children in urban areas and those in rural areas, for children with partial disabilities and those with no disabilities, and for migrants and non-migrants.

The percentage of lower-secondary-school-age children attending primary school in rural areas was 1.6 times higher than the percentage in urban areas, 7.36% and 4.57% respectively; the rate for migrants was 1.3 times higher than the rate for non-migrants; and the rate for the children with partial disabilities was 1.2 times greater than the rate for those with no disabilities. There were not enough weighted cell values to analyze the children with disabilities.

6. Summary of the key findings from the 2009 Census

- At the time of the 2009 Census, the total number of children aged five in 2008 (born in 2003) in Dong Thap was 27,766, the number of children aged 6-10 in 2008 (of primary school age and born between 1998 and 2002) was 126,599, and the number of children aged 11-14 in 2008 (of lower secondary school age and born between 1994 and 1997) was 121,299.
- The total number OOSC in Dong Thap at the time of the 2009 Census was 33,651 and included:

- o 4,412 five-year-old OOSC, which accounted for 15.89% of the five-year-old children. The percentage of OOSC aged five in Dong Thap was higher than the national average (12.19%) and was the eighth highest of the eight provinces.
- o 5,646 primary-school-age OOSC, which accounted for 4.46% of the children of primary school age. The percentage of primary-school-age OOSC in Dong Thap was 0.5% higher than the national average (3.97%), and it was the second highest of the eight provinces.
- o 23,593 lower-secondary-school-age OOSC, which accounted for 19.45% of the children of lower secondary school age. The percentage of lower-secondary-school-age OOSC in Dong Thap was twice as high as the national average (11.17%), and it was second highest of the eight provinces.
- In Dong Thap the percentage of OOSC aged five was high, the percentage of OOSC of primary school age was considerably less, and the percentage of OOSC of lower secondary school age was high, even higher than the rate for five-year-old OOSC.
- The rate of OOSC in Dong Thap was higher for males than for females across all three age ranges, but the difference was considerable only at lower secondary schools.
- The percentage of five-year-old OOSC in rural areas in Dong Thap was considerably lower than in urban areas. However, the reverse was true among OOSC of primary and lower secondary school age. There were nearly twice as many OOSC of secondary school age in rural areas as in urban areas, but the difference was insignificant among OOSC of primary school age.
- The rate of OOSC among children with disabilities and with partial disabilities was far greater than that of the group with no disabilities across all three age ranges.
- There was a greater number of migrant than non-migrant OOSC in Dong Thap. The rate for OOSC of primary school age was higher than the rate for five-year-old OOSC, and the percentage of OOSC of lower secondary school age was greater than the percentage of primary-school-age OOSC.
- At primary and lower secondary schools the number of OOSC increased with age, and the increase was greatest among children of lower secondary school age. In the final grade of lower secondary school, the percentage of OOSC was the highest (32.07%), which means that one out of every three OOSC aged 14 did not attend school.
- The dropout rate of children of primary school age was the sixth highest and the dropout rate of children of lower secondary school age was third highest of the eight selected provinces, both higher than the national average. The dropout rate increased with age and was highest in the final grades at both primary and secondary schools. The percentage of lower-secondary-school-age dropouts was nine times higher than that of primary-school-age dropouts.
- Overage school attendance in Dong Thap decreased with age. However, 1.53% of the children aged 13 and 0.90% of the children aged 14 (the ages of children in the final grades of lower secondary school) still attended primary school. These 743 children were very likely to drop out.

7. Barriers and bottlenecks

This chapter studies the barriers and bottlenecks that can cause a child to be excluded from education. The barriers and bottlenecks may derive from the demand side concerning children and their parents and the supply side of education, which also involves other stakeholders such as communities with different cultural norms and practices and the agencies governing the socio-economic development processes at all levels.

Children and their parents

Economic barriers prevented children from attending school, and poor families could not afford to send their children to school. Those children had to work to help support their families, so they were tired at school and therefore had poor educational outcomes, which led to them become bored and drop out. Some children migrated to industrial parks in Ho Chi minh City or Binh Duong with their families, or they accompanied their parents when they did casual labor harvesting seasonal crops or went fishing, which led to them temporarily dropping out, and when they returned to school, they failed to catch up with the lessons and finally dropped out.

The percentage of OOSC aged five and of lower secondary school age was high and the percentage of primary-school-age OOSC was considerably lower because primary education was free and pre-primary and lower secondary education had to be paid for and a number of parents could not afford the cost of sending their children to pre-primary and lower secondary school. In addition, some parents did not recognize the importance of early childhood education for their children. They thought that it did not matter if children waited until they were six before starting first grade. Many parents and grandparents thought that better care could be given to five-year-old children if they were kept at home instead of being sent to a pre-primary school, since the class was often very crowded and had only two or three teachers to look after the children.

Cultural and social barriers also prevented children from attending school. Some children did not want to go to school due to their poor educational outcomes. Some did not go because they or their parents did not recognize the value of education, because they did not have a birth certificate, or because their parents did not encourage them to go to school. These parents and children lacked motivation to go to school. They thought an education would make no difference, or they only cared about the immediate benefits received from working. They may have been influenced by having seen many unemployed graduates or, in some localities, that having attended school did not result in better employment opportunities. Some children with disabilities had low self-esteem and therefore did not want to go to school, particularly when they had a disability other than mobility. There were cases of parents of children with disabilities who had low self-esteem and did not want to send their children to school. Early marriage and parental separation also had a considerable effect on OOSC-related issues, particularly in especially disadvantaged communes in the border areas.

Infrastructure and school facilities

There was a shortage of schools and classes at all levels and they were of poor quality, particularly in remote areas and at the pre-school level. There were no special facilities for children with disabilities.

Teachers

There was a shortage of pre-primary and primary school teachers for full-day schooling, there was a shortage of teachers for some subjects and there were more than enough teachers for others, the teaching methodology did not stimulate the students, and teachers did not invest enough in differentiated instruction, which ensures learning is tailored to different groups of children. Teachers were reluctant to teach disabled students because the individual attention such students need would have required a greater effort on the part of the teachers, which would have affected the learning achievement of the entire class. Teachers had limited qualifications and knowledge about inclusive education for children with disabilities, and they were not systematically trained in inclusive education.

Management

The percentage of OOSC in Dong Thap was relatively high at pre-primary schools, and particularly high at lower secondary schools, due to barriers related to management. The data on different age groups, particularly disadvantaged and disabled children, was limited since it focused only on those already enrolled. Only a low number of disabled children were enrolled in inclusive education. There was a difference in the graduation rates of rich and poor children. Upstream districts suffered from floods, so

schooling was disrupted during the flood season, and the supervision of schools was limited due to natural barriers such as a system of tangled rivers and trenches.

The pursuit of exaggerated achievements in grade transition and graduation at primary schools resulted in some of the lower-secondary-school students being underqualified for the grades they were in, which increased the dropout risk of these students. The management capacity of a number of educational officers was limited. In some areas, cooperation between schools and local party committees, local authorities and related organizations and/or unions at various levels was limited and insufficient to mobilize children to attend school.

Dropping out due to poor results at school was sometimes a result of the way the education sector was managed, the quality of education, the school environment and overloaded curricula. Teaching methodology was outdated, additional support was not provided in a timely manner to students who needed it, and the status of out-of-school children was not tracked and updated in a timely manner.

Inadequate measures had been taken by the schools to ensure an inclusive learning environment and combat the stigma against children with disabilities. Bullying and violence were a problem, and some of the principals had not paid due attention to the OOSC issue in their community.

Policies

There were issues in policy implementation regarding the exemption and reduction of school fees: complicated procedures, delayed certification of eligibility criteria for children in difficult circumstances, and the prolonging of the process, in some cases until the end of the school year. The use of geographical criteria to support disadvantaged students, i.e. defining economically-deprived areas and offering support to all the students in those areas, had triggered concerns because support was given to the households with no difficulties.

There were many policies and a group of children was sometimes covered by more than one; a policy was sometimes managed by more than the required number of agencies, posing a great challenge to integration; and changes in policy were not immediately implemented. Policies were implemented inconsistently and in an untimely manner, e.g. the health sector was slow to certify the type of disability students had, and students with disabilities needed this certificate in order to benefit from policy provisions. Projects not funded by the government (usually small-scale projects) were not implemented in an efficient, integrated and timely manner. There was a delay in enforcing the policy regarding full-day schooling due to a lack of accompanying policy mechanisms.

The education system

The education sector had not adequately supported pre-primary education for quite a long time. Therefore, students faced difficulties when they began first grade, and this was challenging for primary school teachers. As a result, an increased number of students had done poorly at school and dropped out.

Curricula were overloaded and teachers had to rush to cover all the material in the curriculum by the end of the year, and they did not have time to give individual attention to students with poor learning achievements. A restrictive educational environment limited the amount of time students had to play and have fun, which is necessary in order to reduce stress and stimulate learning.

Statistical data related to education was inadequate and outdated, and there was a shortage of disaggregated data on children (classified by gender, disability and migration status) in difficult circumstances, many of whom were out of school. The data collected for the universalization program, e.g. the data on children with disabilities, had not been widely used in planning. In addition, children with disabilities were not included in the group to be mobilized via the universalization program, and this made it difficult to determine the number of and track the out-of-school children with disabilities.

There was a discrepancy in the age group data provided by the education sector and that by the statistics unit, and this resulted in inconsistencies in the use and dissemination of statistical data. There was no agreed-upon way among the related departments to interpret some of the statistical data, e.g. the data on children with disabilities.

8. Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on consultations held at various levels in Dong Thap. They concern the demand and the supply side of education, and they cover policy aspects that address some of the above-mentioned barriers and bottlenecks in order to promote education equity in Dong Thap to ensure the right to education for OOSC.

Children and their parents

- Encourage parents to change their practices and way of thinking and send their children to school. A new approach to communication is required to enhance the effectiveness of communication initiatives, which have thus far been carried out with limited success, so that parents encourage their children to study, help them with their homework, follow-up on their children's progress, and collaborate with their teachers and school.

Teachers

- Ensure planning for teacher training in all subjects.
- Strengthen inclusive education training for teachers, with a focus on students with poor educational outcomes and students with disabilities.
- Strengthen cooperation between homeroom teachers and subject-based teachers to ensure timely additional support beyond regular class hours for students at risk of dropping out.

Schools

- Cooperate with local authorities and related departments, organizations and/or unions in order to update data in a timely manner, track children and accelerate their enrollment, starting with pre-school so as to prepare them well for first grade and the following grades. Provide support, e.g. lunch subsidies, learning materials and reduced tuition, to the families of disadvantaged children.
- Gradually facilitate an inclusive learning environment for children with disabilities to reduce the stigma and bias against these children. Provide funds to construct specialized schools for children with disabilities.
- Provide on-going financial investment to improve classrooms and teacher accommodation where needed, and other school facilities such as offices, laboratories and specialized classrooms, and high priority should be given to providing toilets and clean water.
- Address bullying and violence at schools.

Education management

- Provide direction for the efficient implementation of the plans issued by the provincial People's Committee to implement the Education Quality Improvement Project for Dong Thap Province for 2011-2015, with a focus on the Plan for Achieving Universal Pre-school Education for children aged five, which aims to enhance the quality of general education and elevate the standards for educational managers and teachers for the period 2011-2015.

- Strengthen investment in pre-school education so as to increase the enrollment rates of children of pre-school age; help children become interested in learning so as to reduce the dropout rate; and promote a public-private partnership in education so as to mobilize community support of and investment in education.
- Develop the programs for teacher training and give direction on how to enhance the quality of additional support beyond regular school hours for children with poor educational outcomes and children at risk of dropping out, with special attention to the first and final grades of an educational level.
- Give direction on how to enhance the quality of management and the collection of data on the disadvantaged groups, which serves as the basis for monitoring and accelerating access to school for out-of-school children. Propose to provincial authorities actions that address the low enrollment in Dong Thap so as to obtain support for holistic solutions. Integrate OOSC-related issues in sector planning and management in order to put forward specific measures to reduce barriers and the level of complexity of barriers and ensure the right to education for disadvantaged children who have never been to school or who have dropped out.

Policies

- Close the gaps concerning OOSC issues among the different geographical areas by applying contextual policies to each local area.
- Align the policy support for students pursuing continuing education with the support for those in the general education system to address the issue of low uptake at continuing education centers.
- Implement policies that support teachers who offer inclusive education for children with disabilities.

Education system

- Review and strengthen databases related to the universalization of education for use in statistical work and education planning and management, and consider integrating the collection of data on out-of-school children, with a focus on disadvantaged groups such as children with disabilities, children in rural areas and migrant children.
- Address discrepancies in the data on school age groups between the education sector and the statistics branch to ensure timely and accurate data collection for the tracking of out-of-school children.
- Promote differentiated teaching and a substantive and effective reduction of the curriculum load to help different groups of children learn effectively.
- Take measures to improve educational delivery and quality to resolve the effect of economic disparities on education and achieve education equity for all the children in Dong Thap.

9. Conclusions

- According to this research, compared to the other seven selected provinces, Dong Thap achieved average educational outcomes in general, but they were lower than the national average.
- Due to a relatively large number of OOSC, particularly five-year-old OOSC and OOSC of lower secondary school age (one out of six children aged five was out of school, and one out five primary-school-age children was out of school), Dong Thap faced difficulties universalizing pre-school and lower secondary education.

- Disparities were experienced primarily among children in rural areas, children with disabilities and those from migrant families, and this posed a great challenge to education equity in Dong Thap.
- Appropriate management and technical measures are required to address the high number of dropouts at lower secondary schools, especially in the final grade, and help these children return to school and graduate.
- In the broader context of multiple challenges in education in the Mekong River Delta, the challenge to change the perception, customs and culture of the parents and get them to encourage their children to attend school is great, but it is a policy priority. There was a relatively high dropout rate in various provinces, the lowest rates of graduation from upper secondary school and college, the lowest rates of children receiving vocational training, and lowest percentage of people with secondary or tertiary education nationwide (Source: *Education Monograph: Analysis of key indicators*, GSO, 2011).
- Analysis of the 2009 Census data shows that Dong Thap faced many challenges in the implementation of education equity and ensuring the right to education for all children. There were many children with disabilities who were out of school, who had dropped out, or who were at risk of dropping out. These disadvantaged children need to be prioritized in education planning, in budgeting and resource allocation for education, in education management and in the socio-economic development processes at all levels in Dong Thap.

ANNEX

Table 2: Children aged 5-14 in Dong Thap

Unit: Person

		Age 5	Age 6-10	Age 11-14
Total		27,766	126,599	121,299
Age	5	27,766		
	6		24,343	
	7		24,430	
	8		30,095	
	9		25,275	
	10		22,455	
	11			29,119
	12			30,966
	13			30,482
	14			30,732
Gender	Male	14,533	65,495	64,089
	Female	13,234	61,104	57,210
Urban/Rural area	Urban	4,621	20,143	18,665
	Rural	23,146	106,456	102,633
Ethnic group	Kinh	27,725	126,408	121,131
	Khmer	12*	38*	19*
	Chinese	25	148	139
	Other	5*	5*	10*
Disability status	Disabled	16*	105	267
	Partially disabled	287	937	1,332
	Not disabled	27,463	125,557	119,699
Migrant	Yes	539	1,470	1,212
	No	27,228	125,129	120,087

Note:

- Age in 2008
- * Indicates disaggregated groups with less than 50 weighted cell values

Table 3: Attendance rate of children aged 5-14 in Dong Thap

Unit: %

		Age 5 attending preschool or primary school	Primary school ANAR	Lower secondary school age attending primary school	Lower secondary school ANAR
Total		84.11	95.54	6.93	73.61
Age	5	84.11			
	6		92.23		
	7		97.05		
	8		97.62		
	9		96.01		
	10		94.18		
	11			19.84	72.59
	12			6.11	78.09
	13			1.53	76.68
	14			0.90	67.03
Gender	Male	83.32	95.22	7.46	71.26
	Female	84.98	95.88	6.35	76.25
Urban/Rural	Urban	79.76	96.10	4.57	83.13
	Rural	84.98	95.44	7.36	71.88
Ethnicity	Kinh	84.09	95.53	6.94	73.59
	Khmer	0	0	0	27.40
	Hoa	0	100.00	0	100.00
	Other	0	0	0	0
Disability	Disabled	0	10.92	6.78	2.04
	Partially disabled	64.56	67.29	8.60	47.97
	Not disabled	84.37	95.82	6.92	74.06
Migrant	Yes	84.39	87.93	9.21	57.98
	No	84.11	95.63	6.91	73.77

Note: Age in 2008

Table 4: Dropout rate by age in Dong Thap

Unit: %

Total		Primary school age	Lower secondary school age
		1.86	17.88
Age	6	0.44	
	7	0.67	
	8	1.12	
	9	2.85	
	10	4.57	
	11		6.36
	12		14.43
	13		20.35
Gender	Male	2.09	19.54
	Female	1.61	16.02
Urban/Rural	Urban	1.55	10.66
	Rural	1.92	19.19
Ethnicity	Kinh	1.86	17.89
	Khmer		
	Hoa	0	0
	Other		
Disability	Disabled	0	5.74
	Partially disabled	4.31	24.49
	Not disabled	1.84	17.83
Migrant	Yes	4.35	28.36
	No	1.83	17.77

Note: Age in 2008

Table 5: OOSC rate of 5-14 year-olds in Dong Thap

Unit: %

		Age 5	Age 6-10	Age 11-14
Total		15.89	4.46	19.45
Age	5	15.89		
	6		7.77	
	7		2.95	
	8		2.38	
	9		3.99	
	10		5.82	
	11			7.57
	12			15.80
	13			21.79
	14			32.07
Gender	Male	16.68	4.78	21.28
	Female	15.02	4.12	17.40
Urban/Rural	Urban	20.24	3.90	12.30
	Rural	15.02	4.56	20.75
Ethnicity	Kinh	15.91	4.47	19.46
	Khmer			
	Hoa		0	0
	Other			
Disability	Disabled		89.08	91.18
	Partially disabled	35.44	32.71	43.43
	Not disabled	15.63	4.18	19.02
Migrant	Yes	15.61	12.07	32.81
	No	15.89	4.37	19.32

Note: Age in 2008

Table 6: Household poverty rate in 2008

Order number	Province	%	Order number	Province	%
	Nationwide	13,4	32	Ben Tre	14,2
1	Lai Chau	53,7	33	Bac Lieu	13,9
2	Đien Bien	39,3	34	Thua Thien Hue	13,7
3	Ha Giang	37,6	35	Hau Giang	13,3
4	Bac Can	36,8	36	Ninh Binh	13
5	Son La	36,3	37	Ca Mau	12,7
6	Cao Bang	35,6	38	Ha Nam	11,6
7	Lao Cai	33,2	39	Vinh Phuc	11,3
8	Hoa Binh	28,6	40	Tien Giang	10,6
9	Kon Tum	26,7	41	Nam Dinh	10,6
10	Ha Tinh	26,5	42	An Giang	10,6
11	Quang Tri	25,9	43	Hung Yen	10,3
12	Thanh Hoa	24,9	44	Hai Duong	10,1
13	Gia Lai	23,7	45	Vinh Long	9,8
14	Đac Nong	23,3	46	Thai Binh	9,8
15	Nghe An	22,5	47	Kien Giang	9,3
16	Quang Binh	21,9	48	Binh Thuan	9,2
17	Đac Lac	21,3	49	Khanh Hoa	9,1
18	Tuyên Quang	20,6	50	Binh Phuoc	9,1
19	Yen Bai	20,4	51	An Giang	8,5
20	Quang Nam	19,6	52	Long An	7,7
21	Quang Ngai	19,5	53	Bac Ninh	7,5
22	Ninh Thuan	19,3	54	Can Tho	7
23	Lang Son	19,3	55	Ba Ria-Vung Tau	7
24	Tra Vinh	19	56	Ha Noi (new)	6,6
25	Soc Trang	17,9	57	Quang Ninh	6,4
26	Bac Giang	17,5	58	Hai Phong	6,3
27	Phu Tho	16,7	59	Tay Ninh	6
28	Thai Nguyen	16,5	60	Đong Nai	4,3
29	Phú Yên	16,3	61	Da Nang	3,5
30	Lam Đông	15,8	62	Ho Chi Minh City	0,5
31	Binh Định	14,2	63	Binh Duong	0,4

Source: General Statistics Office



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