

Regional overview: South and West Asia



In a context of accelerated globalization, the years since the 2000 World Education Forum in Dakar have witnessed sustained economic growth in South and West Asia.¹ However, poverty remains widespread in many parts of the region and economic growth has often been accompanied by rising income inequality. Enrolment in the region increased significantly at all education levels between 1999 and 2005, particularly for girls. Yet many challenges remain. Overall, South and West Asia, like the Arab States and sub-Saharan Africa, still lags behind other regions in terms of distance from the EFA goals.

Important progress has been made with regard to early childhood care and education (ECCE), with enrolment increasing by two-thirds between 1999 and 2005. Similarly, progress towards universal primary education (UPE) has accelerated, though some 17 million primary school-age children were still out of school in 2005, of which two-thirds were girls. Over the past two decades, the region has experienced the world's most rapid rise in the adult literacy rate – by 25%. Nevertheless, South and West Asia is home to half the world's 774 million adults who lack basic literacy skills. The goal of eliminating gender disparities in both primary and secondary education was missed by most countries and remains one of the region's major challenges.

In reviewing progress since 2000, this regional overview summarizes findings in response to key questions addressed by the 2008 EFA Global Monitoring Report: What are the main EFA achievements and what challenges remain at this point, midway to the target date of 2015? Which countries are advancing fastest? Which are facing difficulties? Which policy initiatives are promoting access to education and improving its quality, especially for the most disadvantaged? Has the international community provided adequate support? The 2008 Report shows that, despite progress since 2000, South and West Asia still has a long way to go to achieve Education for All.

EFA progress and challenges

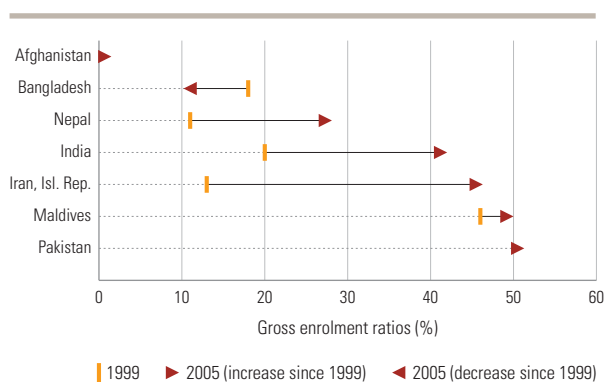
Early childhood care and education

- On average, 89 of every 1,000 children born in South and West Asia will not reach age 5. However, major efforts have been made to improve child well-being, with a decline in the under-5 mortality rate of 22% between 1995 and 2005. At country level, significant improvement occurred, with the rates declining by one-third or more in Bangladesh, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Maldives. There are large differences among countries in the under-5 mortality rate, which ranged from 16‰ in Sri Lanka to 237‰ in Afghanistan in 2005 (among the highest under-5 mortality rates in the world).
- Very few children below age 3 in South and West Asia have access to ECCE programmes that comprehensively address their health, nutrition and learning needs. Only four countries out of the seven with relevant data indicated that they had such programmes. They do not exist in Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal.
- There has been noticeable progress in pre-primary education since 1999, with an increase of fifteen percentage points in the region's gross enrolment ratio (GER), to 37% in 2005. This meant that about 36 million young children were enrolled in pre-primary education that year. All countries with data except Bangladesh showed increased participation in pre-primary education between 1999 and 2005, ranging from an increase of about four percentage points in the Maldives (to a GER of 49%) to a rise of thirty-three percentage points in the Islamic Republic of Iran (to a GER of 46%).
- Four of the countries with data (India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Maldives and Pakistan) had GERs in pre-primary education between 41% and 50% in 2005. Pre-primary enrolment is still limited in Afghanistan (1%) and Bangladesh (11%).

1. This is according to the EFA classification. See the table at the end for countries in the region.

- While gender disparities in pre-primary education are much less marked than at other levels of education, the need to enrol more girls remains a concern in some countries in the region, including Afghanistan, Nepal and Pakistan, which have gender parity indexes (GPIs) ranging from 0.80 to 0.91. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, by contrast, many more girls than boys are enrolled in pre-primary education. In addition to gender disparities, children enrolled at pre-primary level are more likely to come from more affluent households rather than from the poorest, even though children from disadvantaged groups or living in vulnerable settings stand to gain the most from early childhood programmes.
- The interaction between the child and the carer or teacher is the key determinant of the quality of ECCE programmes. Yet several countries in the region suffer from an acute shortage of pre-primary teachers. The regional average number of pupils per pre-primary teacher is forty, well above the average pre-primary pupil/teacher ratio (PTR) of 28:1 for all developing countries. The situation is particularly challenging in India and Pakistan, which each had pre-primary PTRs of 41:1 in 2005. Rapid increases in pre-primary enrolment, compared with those in numbers of teachers, have accentuated the high pre-primary PTRs in several countries in the region.

Figure 1: Changes in pre-primary education gross enrolment ratios, 1999 to 2005



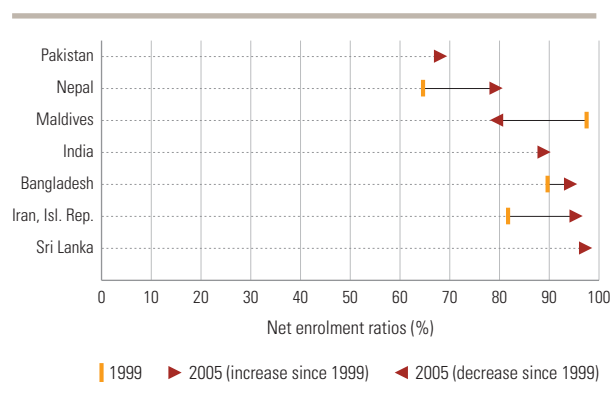
Universal primary education

- The number of new entrants into primary education grew by more than 9% between 1999 and 2005, to 44 million. However, demographic pressures will remain a challenge throughout the coming decade: the primary school-age population is expected to continue to increase substantially in some countries, with projected growth rates of 34% in Afghanistan and 11% in Pakistan, for example.
- The region has made good progress overall towards UPE since 1999. A significant increase in primary enrolment (by 35 million, or 22%) between 1999 and 2005 translated into a 9% increase in the primary net enrolment ratio (NER) to

86%. This was a somewhat more rapid increase than for all developing countries, and the region's primary education NER matched that of all developing countries in 2005.

- Participation in primary education varied substantially within South and West Asia. NERs in 2005 were 89% or above in Bangladesh, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Sri Lanka, and below 80% in the Maldives, Nepal and Pakistan (68%). Data on subnational geographic disparities in primary enrolment are available for only a few countries. In Nepal, for example, primary NERs are above 95% in the Western and Far Western regions, but below 60% in some districts of the Eastern and Central regions. Nor has progress in enrolment been uniform within countries: in Bangladesh and India, increased enrolment has been accompanied by greater geographic disparities.
- All countries with data reported increased primary NERs between 1999 and 2005, except Maldives, where the NER decreased by a worrying eighteen percentage points to 79%. The increases in primary NERs in the Islamic Republic of Iran and Nepal were particularly impressive: by thirteen and fourteen percentage points, respectively.

Figure 2: Changes in primary education net enrolment ratios, 1999 to 2005



- The region recorded some 17 million out-of-school children in 2005, a dramatic decline from 31 million in 1999. The share of girls shrank slightly but remained the world's highest at 66%. India and Pakistan accounted for about three-quarters of the region's out-of-school children. More than half the children not in school in (59%) have never been in school and may never enrol without additional incentives.
- While access to and participation in primary schooling have increased since 1999, slow progression through school and failure to complete the primary cycle remain major concerns in some countries. Although the median level of repeaters was at 5% in 2005, they accounted for more than 20% of total primary enrolment in Nepal. The repetition rate in grade 1 was also particularly high in this country (37% in 2005).

- Another challenge in South and West Asia is school retention: the median survival rate to the last grade of primary education was particularly low (79% in 2004). Survival rates to the last grade vary from 65% in Bangladesh to 88% in the Islamic Republic of Iran. They have improved considerably in India and Nepal, by seventeen and twenty percentage points, respectively, since 1999. Not all pupils who reach the last grade complete primary school. The most pronounced gaps between cohort completion rates and the survival rate to the last grade were found in Nepal and Pakistan.
- Despite overall progress towards UPE in recent years, all countries in the region with data need to adopt special strategies to reach and enrol girls and boys who are not in school, and to keep them there.

Post-primary education

- The expansion of primary education creates demand for post-primary education. In 2005, nearly 122 million students were enrolled in secondary education in the region, an increase of almost 25% since 1999. The average secondary education GER rose from 74% to 83%, with increased enrolment rates in most countries with data. Most notable were India and the Maldives, which had increases of twelve and thirty percentage points, respectively.
- Participation in secondary education varied greatly by country, with the highest GERs in the Islamic Republic of Iran (81%) and Sri Lanka (83%), and the lowest in Afghanistan (16%) and Pakistan (27%).
- The overall secondary GER masks disparities between the two levels of secondary education, with participation much higher in lower secondary (66% in 2005) than in upper secondary (41%). The gaps between the two levels were substantial (above thirty percentage points) in Bangladesh, Maldives and the Nepal.
- The demand for tertiary education is also growing in South and West Asia, with some 16 million students enrolled, an increase of 62% since 1999. Nevertheless, participation in higher education remains very limited, with a regional average GER of 11% in 2005; although this is up from 8% in 1999, it remains well below the 17% average for all developing countries.

Learning needs of young people and adults

- Non-formal education programmes and skills training for youth and adults are extremely diverse throughout the region and differ in terms of objectives, target groups, content, pedagogy, scale and the types of providers. At least seventeen different ministries and national bodies are involved in both Bangladesh and India, not to mention

non-government organizations (NGOs) and local communities with small-scale programmes about which few data are readily available.

- Large-scale literacy programmes – often extending to life skills (health, civic rights), livelihoods (income generation, farming) and/or equivalency education, and supported by international NGOs and bilateral and multilateral agencies – are common, especially in poor countries such as Afghanistan and Nepal.
- India has pursued a multi-tiered equivalency strategy to meet the learning needs of its youth and adults, including equivalencies to primary, secondary and tertiary education. Its National Institute of Open Schooling is among the largest distance learning systems in the world, with 249 centres for 'basic education', 917 vocational study centres and 1,807 academic study centres.
- Some programmes in India and Nepal focus on rural development and are run in cooperation with agriculture ministries. Non-formal education programmes are often linked with community development. They provide a wide range of structured learning activities determined by community needs. In Bangladesh, these usually include literacy classes, continuing education and skills training.

Adult literacy

- Literacy is a fundamental human right, a springboard not only for achieving EFA, but also for reducing poverty and broadening participation in society. Yet, with some 388 million adults who cannot read and write – 63% of them women – South and West Asia was home to half of the world's 774 million illiterate adults during the period 1995–2004. Continuing population growth meant the number of adults lacking basic literacy skills had declined only slightly (by 2%) since the previous period, 1985–1994. Over those two decades, the region's adult literacy rate rose by 25% – the most rapid pace of any region in the world – to reach 60% in 1999–2004; yet it remains well below the 77% average for all developing countries.
- All countries in the region with data improved their adult literacy rates substantially between 1985–1994 and 1994–2004. Increases were most impressive in the Islamic Republic of Iran and Nepal, each with rises of sixteen percentage points or more. Despite the overall positive trend, however, very low adult literacy rates, below 50%, still characterize some countries, including Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan. By contrast, the Maldives and Sri Lanka reported adult literacy rates in 1995–2004 of over 90%.
- Improved regional and global trends in adult literacy will depend on continuing reductions in illiteracy in countries still experiencing very low literacy levels and, most importantly,

on reducing the number of adult illiterates in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. India alone accounted for nearly 35% of the world's adult illiterates in 1995–2004.

- Women's literacy is of crucial importance in addressing wider issues of gender inequality. Despite progress in the past two decades, South and West Asia was still the region with the strongest gender disparities in adult literacy (GPI of 0.67 in 1995–2004). Striking gender disparities prevailed in Afghanistan, India, Nepal and Pakistan, where literacy rates for females were less than two-thirds of those for males. However, the situation has been improving in some countries, particularly India and Nepal, as well as Bangladesh. Besides gender, key correlates of illiteracy include poverty and place of residence. In general, illiteracy rates are highest in the countries with the greatest poverty. The link between poverty and illiteracy is also observed at household level, with the literacy rates of the poorest households substantially lower than those of the wealthiest.
- Achieving EFA implies paying strong attention to youth and adult literacy by providing a diverse range of literacy programmes. It also involves strong attention to the literate environment, particularly the availability and use of written materials and information and communications technology (ICT). All these encourage literacy acquisition, a reading culture, improved literacy retention and access to information.

Gender parity and equality

- Important progress has been made towards gender parity in both primary and secondary education in South and West Asia since 1999, with improved regional GPIs of GERs ranging from 0.82 to 0.93 in 2005 for primary education and from 0.74 to 0.83 for secondary education. However, most countries in the region missed the gender goal of eliminating gender disparities at both levels. Only Bangladesh and Sri Lanka had succeeded by 2005.
- Gender disparities in primary education stem first and foremost from disparities in enrolment in the first grade. The regional average GPI of the gross intake rate (GIR) was 0.92 in 2005, up from 0.83 in 1999. All countries with data in the region improved access for girls to primary education. Progress was particularly noteworthy in India, and in Nepal where the GPI of the GIR increased from 0.76 to 1.00 between 1999 and 2006. Significant gender disparities in access continue to affect girls in Afghanistan and Pakistan (GPIs of 0.70 and 0.81, respectively), while gender disparities at the expense of boys exist in the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Maldives.
- South and West Asia was the region that made the greatest progress towards gender parity in primary education GERs between 1999 and 2005, having started the period in the

worst situation of any region. The post-Dakar trend was even steeper than that registered between 1991 and 1999. Most of the countries moved towards gender parity, with the most impressive improvements in Afghanistan and Nepal. Bangladesh, the Maldives and Nepal have achieved or are close to achieving gender parity with GPIs between 0.95 and 1.03. By contrast, Afghanistan and Pakistan still faced major gender disparities in primary education in favour of boys, with GPIs of 0.59 and 0.76, respectively, in 2005. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, many more girls than boys were enrolled in primary school, with a GPI of 1.22.²

- Once girls have access to school, they often do better than boys. In all countries in the region with data on primary repetition, girls repeated less than boys. In Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan, girls were also more likely to reach the last grade of primary education than boys, while the reverse was true in India and, to a lesser extent, in the Islamic Republic of Iran.
- Gender disparities are more prevalent at secondary than at primary level in most countries, with disparities favouring boys in Afghanistan, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Nepal and Pakistan. In all countries with data, except the Maldives, gender disparities were reduced in secondary education. In the Maldives, where there were already more girls enrolled than boys in 1999, the situation of boys worsened, with an increase in the GPI of the secondary GER from 1.07 in 1999 to 1.14 in 2005.
- Since 1999, more women have participated in tertiary education, with the average GPI of the tertiary GER increasing from 0.63 to 0.74 in 2005. However, big gender disparities still favour men in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India and Nepal (GPIs below 0.70), while many more women than men are enrolled in tertiary institutions in the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Maldives.
- Narrowing the gender gap in education does not automatically translate into equality between women and men. Salary gaps and differential access to particular occupations and political representation are evidence of enduring gender inequality. Overall, gender equality remains elusive: sexual violence, insecure school environments and inadequate sanitation disproportionately affect girls' self-esteem, participation and retention. Improving school environments to target girls' needs can help increase demand for education among girls: in Bangladesh, for example, an 11% increase in female enrolment followed the introduction of a UNICEF school sanitation programme.
- The presence of female teachers can help assure girls' access in education. The share of women on the teaching staff varies by level of education, with female teachers

2. The high gender disparity in favour of girls in the Islamic Republic of Iran is due to the inclusion in primary enrolment data of literacy programmes for adults, where learners are mostly women.

over-represented in pre-primary education (the regional average was 93% in 2005), compared with primary (45%), secondary (36%) and tertiary education (33%).

- Textbooks, curricula and teacher attitudes continue to reinforce stereotypes on gender roles in society. For instance, however measured – in lines of text – proportions of named characters, mentions in titles or citations in indexes, girls and women are under-represented in textbooks and curricula. In India, more than half the illustrations in the average primary school English, Hindi, mathematics, science and social studies textbooks depict only males, and only 6% show just females.
- While globally the academic performance of boys and girls is converging, challenges regarding gender differences in learning outcomes remain in South and West Asia. For example, both the PIRLS and TIMSS assessments identify the Islamic Republic of Iran as one of the countries facing the greatest challenges in decreasing gender differences currently favouring girls in both language and science achievement.
- Women now represent the majority of students enrolled in tertiary education but they tend to be concentrated in traditionally 'feminine' fields. In most countries with data, they account for less than one-third of students in scientific subjects at tertiary level but over two-thirds in the humanities, social sciences and health-related disciplines.

Quality of education

Monitoring learning outcomes

- Since 2000, four countries (Bangladesh, India, the Maldives and Pakistan) out of the nine in South and West Asia have conducted at least one national learning assessment to monitor education quality, compared with one (India) during the previous period (1995–1999). National assessments tend to focus more on grades 4 to 6 than on grades 1 to 3 or 7 to 9, and are predominantly curriculum-based and subject-oriented. The Islamic Republic of Iran has participated in two international assessments (PIRLS and TIMSS) since 2000.

Learning achievement

- Results from national and international learning assessments indicate poor learning outcomes in the region. For example, the PIRLS 2001 assessment found that in the Islamic Republic of Iran, over 40% of grade 4 pupils read at or below the lowest level. Low learning achievement in this country is confirmed in another international assessment, TIMSS, in which 45% of grade 8 students did not reach the lowest benchmark in mathematics, while 23% failed to do so in science.

Figure 3: Changes in gender disparities in primary education gross enrolment ratios, 1999 to 2005

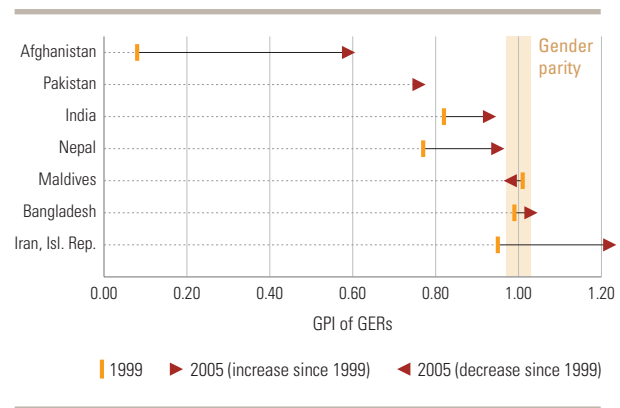
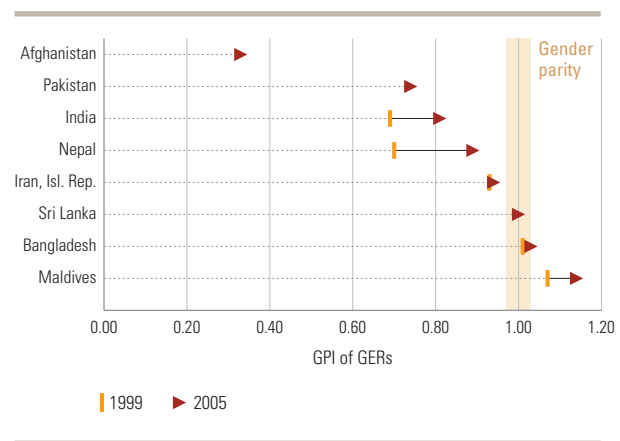


Figure 4: Changes in gender disparities in secondary education gross enrolment ratios, 1999 to 2005



Instructional time

- Worldwide, countries officially require an average of 700 annual hours of instruction in grades 1 and 2 and nearly 750 hours in grade 3. By grade 6 the average is 810 hours. South and West Asia is close to the global medians, but the actual number of instructional hours children receive is often less than officially required. In some countries, whole days are lost to teacher absenteeism, in-service teacher training, strikes, armed conflict and the use of schools as polling stations, military bases or examination sites.

School and learning environment

- Retention and learning are hampered when pupils attend school in dilapidated or overcrowded buildings or in noisy or unsafe environments. In conflict-ridden countries or areas hit by natural disaster, damage to education infrastructure may be acute, if often transitory. In Afghanistan, the burning and bombing of schools and the killing of teachers and students have severely affected education provision in some provinces. In 2006, Afghanistan's president stated that 100,000 children who had gone to school in 2003/04 were no longer attending.

Teachers

- Good-quality teaching and learning remains a major challenge for all countries in the region. Despite a 14% increase in the number of primary school teachers since 1999, to 4.9 million in 2005, South and West Asia was struggling with an average of 39 primary pupils per teacher in 2005 – considerably higher than the average of 28 for all developing countries. Teacher shortages were especially high in Afghanistan and Bangladesh, with PTRs of 83:1 and 51:1, respectively. While the regional average PTR declined at an annual rate of 2.4% during the 1990s, it increased by 1% per year between 1999 and 2005.
- In almost all countries with data, primary PTRs have declined since 1999, with the notable exception of Afghanistan. There the PTR increased by 130%, from 36:1 in 1999. The total primary teacher workforce rose by 96%, but this near doubling was not enough to meet the need generated by a 350% rise in enrolment, including the influx of girls previously excluded from school.
- National averages often mask large in-country disparities in the distribution of teachers. While data on geographic variations within countries are scarce, recent data indicate that they are wide in India and Nepal.
- The shortage of *trained* teachers is even more acute: the median percentage of trained primary school teachers was 64% in South and West Asia in 2005. The share of trained primary teachers varied greatly by country, from almost 100% in the Islamic Republic of Iran and Bhutan to less than 40% in Afghanistan and Nepal. As a consequence, the ratios of pupils to trained teachers were exceedingly high (above 100:1) in Afghanistan and Nepal, and high in Pakistan (45:1).

The Education for All Development Index

The EFA Development Index (EDI) is a composite measure of a country's situation with regard to attaining the EFA agenda. It was introduced in the 2003/4 *EFA Global Monitoring Report* and is updated annually. Ideally, it should include measures of all six EFA goals; currently, however, it focuses on the four most easily quantified: UPE, adult literacy, gender parity and equality, and education quality, each proxied by one relevant indicator.³

The EDI for 2005 could be calculated for six of the nine countries in the region. Among the results:

- No country in South and West Asia has either achieved all four of the most quantifiable EFA goals or is close to doing so.
- The Islamic Republic of Iran and the Maldives rank in an intermediate position, with an EDI value between 0.80 and 0.94. In the Maldives, the EDI value is pulled down by the total primary NER, which has declined since 1999 to reach less than 80% in 2005.
- Four countries, including three high population ones (Bangladesh, India and Pakistan), are far from achieving EFA as a whole, with EDI scores lower than 0.80. In Bangladesh and India, where the total primary NERs are close to 95% or above, the low adult literacy rates and survival rates to grade 5 strongly influence the EDI score. In Pakistan and Nepal, also included in this low EDI category, primary school participation is low, adult illiteracy and gender disparities and inequalities in education are pervasive, and education quality is poor, indicating the need for significant improvement across the EFA spectrum.
- Analysis of changes in the EDI between 1999 and 2005 is possible only for Bangladesh and Nepal. While the index rose by 2.3% in Bangladesh, progress was substantial in Nepal, where it increased by nearly 22%. Nepal's significant EDI improvement is due to progress on all four quantifiable EFA goals, particularly school participation and retention.

Table 1: Mean distance from the four EFA goals

EFA achieved (EDI between 0.98 and 1.00)	Close to EFA (EDI between 0.95 and 0.97)
None	None
Intermediate position (EDI between 0.80 and 0.94)	Far from EFA (EDI below 0.80)
Islamic Republic of Iran, Maldives	Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan

Comprehensive EFA policies and strategies in South and West Asia

As highlighted in the *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008*, increased participation, equity and quality in education can be promoted together, through a mix of universal and targeted measures that encompass all six EFA goals. Adequate financing and supportive institutional environments are also crucial elements for progress. A comprehensive approach is the hallmark of Education for All. A few examples of policies and strategies in South and West Asia are presented in Box 1.

3. UPE (goal 2) is proxied by total primary NER (includes children of primary school age who are enrolled in either primary or secondary education); adult literacy (goal 4) by the literacy rate of those aged 15 and above; gender parity and equality (goal 5) by the gender-specific EFA index, which is an average of the GPIs for primary and secondary GER and the adult literacy rate; and quality of education (goal 6) by the survival rate to grade 5. The EDI gives equal weight to the four proxy measures. Since each is expressed as a percentage, the EDI for a country ranges from 0% to 100% or, when expressed as a ratio, from 0 to 1, where 1 represents full achievement of EFA as summarized by the EDI.

Box 1: Examples of policies and strategies

Nutrition and health reinforce each other

School feeding programmes encourage parents to enrol their children in primary schools and to keep them there. The school feeding programme in Bangladesh, which has operated since 2002 in chronically food-insecure areas, has been evaluated and shown to be effective. In addition to increased enrolment and completion rates, improvements in achievement tests were recorded by children receiving fortified biscuits, after controlling for other factors. Participating children in grade 5 scored 15.7 percentage points overall above non-participants.

Addressing gender inequalities

Universal policies to encourage enrolment are not sufficient to reach marginalized children, including girls. Targeted measures to promote girls' enrolment in India include free textbooks for all girls up to grade 8, the installation of separate toilets for girls, bridging courses for out-of-school girls and recruitment of female teachers. A national programme launched in 2003 targets girls from disadvantaged groups and rural areas. Its holistic approach includes community mobilization, early childhood centres to release girls from caring for their siblings, free uniforms and learning materials, and gender sensitization training for teachers.

Non-formal education for working children

Working children are denied their childhood and their right to education is curtailed. In countries where the practice has not been eradicated, alternative modes of schooling have been introduced to meet working children's learning needs. Flexible schooling and curriculum can help balance the time for schooling with children's work schedules, allow the academic year to vary according to the work season and compensate for class time lost using independent modules or 'summer' school while adopting a curriculum that reflects children's interests, needs and socio-cultural realities. Such programmes are being developed in several countries, including Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan. In Bangladesh, a two-year bridging course has reached over 350,000 urban children working in the informal sector.

Cash transfer programmes targeting the poor

In an effort to offset economic barriers to education for poor households, some governments use conditional cash transfer programmes. In some countries they have also been instrumental in increasing transition rates from primary to secondary school. In Pakistan, the Female Secondary School Stipend to girls in fifteen poor districts was associated with an increase of 9% in girls' enrolment between 2003 and 2005. In Bangladesh, the Cash for Education programme targeting more than 5 million poor children was found to increase primary school enrolment among participants by almost 14%.

Financing Education for All

National financial commitments to EFA

- In half the countries in the region with data, the share of public education expenditure in GNP was below 3.6% in 2005, far from the median value of 4.7% for all developing countries. The percentage of GNP devoted to education varied greatly by country, with low shares in Bangladesh and Pakistan (both 2.4%) and a relatively high share in the Maldives (7.5%).
- While the share of public education expenditure in national income increased in Bangladesh, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Nepal, declines were reported in India and Pakistan. Despite the overall low performance in terms of increasing education's share in GNP between 1999 and 2005, public expenditure on education grew relatively quickly, at a median rate of 5.1% a year.
- The priority on education in government expenditure was relatively low in 2005 throughout the region, with education's share of total government expenditure below 15% in two-thirds of the countries with data. The Islamic Republic of Iran devoted 23% of total government expenditure to education in 2005. By contrast, the shares were more modest in India and Pakistan (both 11%). Since 1999, the shares had increased quite substantially in Nepal and the Islamic Republic of Iran, but fell in Bangladesh and India.

- Households account for a significant share of total expenditure at all levels of education. In India, the share of household spending in total expenditure on education is reported to have increased sevenfold between 1998 and 2003, to 27%. While some households can cover the expenses associated with school attendance, many poor households cannot.

Contribution of external aid to EFA

- External aid to education is an important source of finance for EFA in most countries in South and West Asia. Countries in the region received an annual average of US\$1.9 billion in aid to education over 2004 and 2005, of which US\$1.3 billion was allocated to the basic education levels.
- The share of South and West Asia in total aid to education increased significantly, from 12% to 20%, between 1999 and 2005. In 2004 and 2005 just four countries – Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India and Pakistan – received 17% of all aid to education. The predominance of South and West Asian countries in total aid to basic education was even more striking, with the share rising from 16% to 31% between 1999 and 2005. India alone received 11% of total aid to basic education in 2004–2005, a similar share to that received in 1999–2000. The shares of total aid going to basic education also increased substantially in Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan during the period.

Prospects for achieving EFA by 2015

For the three goals with explicit quantitative targets – goal 2 (UPE), goal 4 (reduction by half in the level of adult illiteracy) and goal 5 (elimination of gender disparities in primary and secondary education) – relevant education indicators were

projected to 2015 and 2025,⁴ extrapolating trends observed in each country between the early 1990s and 2005.⁵ Table 2 summarizes the findings of the projections.

4. Goal 4 was projected only for 2015.

5. The years vary for each indicator according to data availability.

Table 2: Prospects for achieving UPE, adult literacy and gender parity

UPE goal	
Goal already achieved (<i>total NER ≥ 97%</i>)	2 countries Bangladesh, Sri Lanka
UPE prospects	
(Projections made for thirty countries that have not yet achieved the goal, extrapolating trends between 1991 and 2005)	
High chance of achieving the goal by 2015 (<i>moving towards the goal, with steady progress</i>)	2 countries India, Islamic Republic of Iran
Low chance of achieving the goal by 2015 (<i>moving towards the goal with rapid progress, but further to go</i>)	1 country Pakistan
At risk of not achieving the goal by 2015 (<i>moving away from the goal or progress too slow</i>)	None
Serious risk of not achieving the goal by 2015 (<i>furthest to go, and moving away from the goal or progress too slow</i>)	1 country Maldives
Not included in the prospects analysis (<i>insufficient or no data</i>)	3 countries Afghanistan, Bhutan, Nepal
Adult literacy target	
Universal literacy achieved (<i>adult literacy rate ≥ 97%</i>)	None
Adult literacy prospects	
(Adult literacy rate projections made for seven countries that have not yet achieved the goal extrapolating trends between 1995 and 2004))	
High chance of achieving the target by 2015 (<i>moving towards the goal, with steady progress</i>)	1 country Maldives
Low chance of achieving the target by 2015 (<i>moving towards the goal with rapid progress, but further to go</i>)	2 countries Bangladesh, Nepal
At risk of not achieving the target by 2015 (<i>moving towards the goal, but progress too slow</i>)	2 countries Islamic Republic of Iran, Sri Lanka
Serious risk of not achieving the target by 2015 (<i>furthest to go and moving towards the goal, but progress too slow</i>)	2 countries India, Pakistan
Not included in the prospects analysis (<i>insufficient or no data</i>)	2 countries Afghanistan, Bhutan
Gender goal (parity in primary and secondary education)	
Achieved or likely to be achieved in 2005 (<i>GPIs between 0.97 and 1.03</i>)	2 countries Bangladesh, Sri Lanka
Gender parity prospects	
(Projections of GPI in primary and secondary education GERs were made for five countries, based on trends between 1991 and 2005)	
Gender parity goal likely to be achieved in 2015	1 country Maldives*
Gender parity goal likely to be achieved in 2025	None
Gender parity goal at risk of not being achieved in 2015 or in 2025	4 countries India, Islamic Republic of Iran, Nepal, Pakistan
Not included in the prospects analysis (<i>insufficient or no data</i>)	2 countries Afghanistan, Bhutan

Notes:

* Gender parity achieved in primary education, but not in secondary education.

In countries whose names are shown in blue, gender disparities at the expense of boys are observed in primary or secondary education.

For the EFA goals without explicit quantitative targets:

- *ECCE* has been receiving attention, but much remains to be done. Even without projections, it is evident on present trends that participation rates will remain relatively low until 2015 in most South and West Asian countries among children under 3, especially among the poor and disadvantaged, who stand to benefit the most from ECCE programmes.
- *Learning needs of young people and adults.* Most countries have yet to seriously address the challenging tasks that EFA goal 3 entails: meeting the diverse learning needs of young people and adults through organized programmes of education, training and the building of basic, life and livelihood skills. Given the understandable pressure to extend the cycle of basic education in schools and expand secondary education, there is a clear risk that the disparity between government commitments to formal and to non-formal schooling will be further accentuated in coming years.
- *Quality.* Despite the growing interest in quality issues, the accumulated evidence points to the prevalence of weak pupil performance, widespread learning disparities, high repetition and low survival and completion rates in several countries in the region. Disparities in learning outcomes, while narrowing between girls and boys in many contexts, remain significant in others, to the disadvantage of poor, rural, urban slum, indigenous and minority pupils. Some countries face serious shortages of teachers, indicating an urgent need to recruit new primary school teachers to replace those who will be leaving due to retirement, career change, illness or death. Overall, some 3.6 million new primary teachers will be needed in the region by 2015. While increasing the number of teachers is important, providing them with adequate training is also key to achieving universal access to and participation in quality education, and will require significant resources.

Abbreviations

ECCE: early childhood care and education. Programmes that, in addition to providing children with care, offer a structured and purposeful set of learning activities either in a formal institution (pre primary or ISCED 0) or as part of a non formal child development programme. ECCE programmes are normally designed for children from age 3 and include organized learning activities that constitute, on average, the equivalent of at least 2 hours per day and 100 days per year.

GPI: gender parity index. Ratio of female to male values (or male to female, in certain cases) of a given indicator. A GPI of 1 indicates parity between sexes; a GPI above or below 1 indicates a disparity in favour of one sex over the other.

GIR: gross intake rate. Total number of new entrants to a given grade of primary education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the population at the official school entrance age for that grade.

GER: gross enrolment ratio. Total enrolment in a specific level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the population in the official age group corresponding to this level of education. For the tertiary level, the population used is that of the five-year age group following on from the secondary school leaving age. The GER can exceed 100% due to late entry or/and repetition.

GNP: gross national product. Gross domestic product plus net receipts of income from abroad. As these receipts may be positive or negative, GNP may be greater or smaller than GDP. This latter indicator is the sum of gross value added by all resident producers in the economy, including distributive trades and transport, plus any product taxes and minus any subsidies not included in the value of the products.

NER: net enrolment ratio. Enrolment of the official age group for a given level of education, expressed as a percentage of the population in that age group.

PIRLS: Progress in Reading Literacy Study.

PTR: pupil/teacher ratio. Average number of pupils per teacher at a specific level of education, based on headcounts for both pupils and teachers.

TIMSS: Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study.

Table 3: South and West Asia, selected education indicators

Country or territory	Total population (thousands)	Compulsory education (age group)	EFA Development Index (EDI)	Adult literacy rate (15 and over)				Early childhood care and education				Primary education						Country or territory				
				1985–1994 ¹		1995–2004 ¹		Child survival and well-being		Pre-primary education		NER, total (%)		GPI of GER (F/M)		Out-of-school children ²	Survival rate to last grade (%), total		% of trained teachers, total	Pupil/teacher ratio ³		
				Total (%)	GPI (F/M)	Total (%)	GPI (F/M)	Under-5 mortality rate (%)	Moderate and severe stunting (%)	1999	2005	1999	2005	1999	2004		1999			2005		
				2005	2005	2005–2010	1996–2005 ¹	2005	2005	2005	2005	2005	2005	2005	2005	2005	2005		2005			
South and West Asia																					South and West Asia	
Afghanistan	29 863	7-12	...	...	...	28	0.29	237	54	...	0.7	...	...	0.08	0.59	...	...	...	36	36	83	Afghanistan
Bangladesh	141 822	6-10	0.759	35	0.58	47	0.76	65	43	18	11	89	94	0.99	1.03	399	65	<i>65</i>	48	56	51	Bangladesh
Bhutan	2 163	6-16	...	...	...	...	...	70	40	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	81	...	94	42	31	Bhutan
India	1 103 371	6-14	0.797	48	0.55	61	0.65	86	46	20	41	...	89	0.82	0.93	6 395	62	<i>79</i>	...	35	...	India
Iran, Islamic Republic of	69 515	6-10	0.883	66	0.76	82	0.87	32	15	13	46	82	95	0.95	1.22	307	...	88	100	27	19	Iran, Islamic Republic of
Maldives	329	6-12	0.910	96	1.00	96	1.00	42	25	46	49	97	79	1.01	0.98	13	...	...	64	24	20	Maldives
Nepal	27 133	6-10	0.734	33	0.35	49	0.56	73	51	<i>11</i>	27	65	79	0.77	0.95	702	58	79	31	39	40	Nepal
Pakistan	157 935	5-9	0.640	...	...	50	0.55	100	37	...	50	...	68	...	0.76	6 303	...	70	86	...	38	Pakistan
Sri Lanka	20 743	5-14	...	...	...	91	0.97	16	14	...	...	...	97	...	...	47	...	...	...	...	22	Sri Lanka
Sum				Weighted average				Weighted average		Weighted average		Weighted average				Sum	Median		Weighted average			
South and West Asia	1 552 874	...	...	48	0.57	60	0.67	89	...	22	37	77	86	0.82	0.93	17 092	...	79	64	37	39	South and West Asia
Developing countries	5 165 463	...	...	68	0.77	77	0.84	86	31	28	34	81	86	0.91	0.94	68 825	...	79	...	27	28	Developing countries
World	6 450 253	...	...	76	0.85	82	0.89	78	30	33	40	83	87	0.92	0.95	72 124	...	87	...	25	25	World

Table 3 (continued)

Country or territory	Secondary education								Tertiary education		Education finance			Country or territory
	GER in lower secondary		GER in upper secondary		GER in all of secondary				GER		Total public expenditure on education as % of GNP		Total aid to basic education (constant 2005 US\$ millions)	
	2005		2005		1999		2005		2005		1999	2005	2004–2005 annual average	
	Total (%)	GPI (F/M)	Total (%)	GPI (F/M)	Total (%)	GPI (F/M)	Total (%)	GPI (F/M)	Total (%)	GPI (F/M)				
South and West Asia														South and West Asia
Afghanistan	22	0.35	10	0.28	...	...	16	0.33	1	0.28	...	...	162	Afghanistan
Bangladesh	64	1.10	34	0.94	49	1.01	47	1.03	6	0.53	2.3	2.4	398	Bangladesh
Bhutan	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	Bhutan
India	75	0.85	46	0.76	46	0.69	59	0.81	11	0.70	4.0	3.8	482	India
Iran, Islamic Republic of	86	0.91	77	0.96	77	0.93	81	0.94	24	1.09	4.6	4.7	1	Iran, Islamic Republic of
Maldives	108	1.20	18	0.70	43	1.07	73	1.14	0.2	2.37	...	7.5	1	Maldives
Nepal	66	0.89	24	0.87	34	0.70	43	0.89	6	0.40	2.9	<i>3.4</i>	100	Nepal
Pakistan	33	0.73	11	0.83	...	...	27	0.74	5	0.88	2.6	2.4	169	Pakistan
Sri Lanka	95	1.04	70	0.96	...	...	83	1.00	...	...	...	...	24	Sri Lanka
Sum					Weighted average				Weighted average		Median		Sum	
South and West Asia	66	0.86	41	0.78	46	0.74	53	0.83	11	0.74	2.9	3.6	1 339	South and West Asia
Developing countries	75	0.93	46	0.92	53	0.88	60	0.93	17	0.91	4.4	4.7	3 940	Developing countries
World	79	0.94	53	0.94	60	0.91	66	0.94	24	1.05	4.5	4.9	4 373	World

Data underlined are for 2002. Data in italics are for 2003. Data in bold are for 2004. Data in bold are for 2006 or 2005 for survival rate to last grade.

1. Data are for the most recent year available during the period specified.

2. Data reflect the actual number of children not enrolled at all, derived from the age-specific enrolment ratios of primary school age children, which measure the proportion of those who are enrolled in either primary or secondary school (total primary NER).

3. Based on headcounts of pupils and teachers.

Source: EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008, statistical tables; UNESCO Institute for Statistics; CRS online database (OECD-DAC, 2007).

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