



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



REGIONAL REPORT ON PROGRESS TOWARDS EDUCATION FOR ALL IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

- UNESCO Bangkok 2014 -

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Acronyms

ADB Asian Development Bank

AEC	ASEAN Economic Community
ANER	Adjusted net enrolment rate
ARNEC	Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASPBAE	Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education
ATC21S	Assessment and Teaching of 21 st -Century Skills
CECCD	Comprehensive Early Childhood Care and Development (Bangladesh)
CLC	Community learning centre
CSO	Civil society organization
DESD	Decade of Education for Sustainable Development
EAC	Education A Child
EAP UNGEI	East Asia and Pacific United Nations Girls' Education Initiative
ECCE	Early childhood care and education
ECD	Early childhood development
EFA	Education for All
EMIS	Education management information system
ERI-Net	Education Research Institutes Network in Asia-Pacific
ESD	Education for Sustainable Development
FLS	Flexible Learning Strategies
FTA	Free Trade Agreement
GAW	Global Action Week (EFA)
GDP	Gross domestic product
GEFI	Global Education First Initiative
GEM	Global EFA Meeting
GER	Gross enrolment ratio
GMR	Global Monitoring Report
GPE	Global Partnerships for Education
GPI	Gender Parity Index
ILD	International Literacy Day
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMLD	International Mother Language Day
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
IWD	International Women's Day
JFIT	Japanese Funds-in-Trust
KDI	Korean Development Institute
KEDI	Korean Education Development Institute
KICCE	Korea Institute of Child Care and Education
KICE	Korea Institute for Curriculum and Evaluation
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MEXT	Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (Japan)
MOU	Memorandum of understanding
NEQMAP	Network on Education Quality Monitoring in Asia-Pacific
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NQF	National qualifications framework
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OOSC	out-of-school children
OOSCI	Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children
OSF	Open Society Foundation
PEDF	Pacific Education Development Framework

PHES	Pacific Heads of Education System
PICs	Pacific Island Countries
PIFS	Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
RTE	Right to Education (India)
SEAMEO	Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
TPP	Trans-Pacific Partnership
TWG on EFA	Thematic Working Group on EFA
TVET	Technical and vocational education and training
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNGEI	United Nations Girls' Education Initiative
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNICEF EAPRO	UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office
UNICEF ROSA	UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia
UPE	Universal primary education
WTD	World Teachers' Day

Acknowledgements

UNESCO is organizing the 2014 Global Education for All Meeting (GEM) from 12-14 May 2014 in Muscat, Sultanate of Oman to critically review the progress towards six EFA goals and discuss the post-2015 education agenda. Each region is expected to present its regional progress towards Education for All at the Meeting. To this end, UNESCO Bangkok has prepared this *2014 Regional Report on Progress towards Education for All in Asia and the Pacific*. This report uses data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS). It has also benefitted from studies and reports published by several development partners including the Asian Development Bank (ADB), International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), World Bank and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

The report was internally prepared by UNESCO Bangkok's staff members. We wish to record our sincere appreciation to the contributions of those staff members who were involved in preparing this report. We also wish to express our gratitude to UNESCO National Commissions and UNESCO Field Offices in Asia Pacific for sharing required inputs for this report.

Executive Summary

This report aims to provide an overview of the current status of Education for All (EFA) in the Asia-Pacific, a diverse, yet dynamic region going through rapid changes and facing subsequent development challenges. The region as a whole has achieved appreciable economic growth and its share of world's gross domestic product (GDP) continues to increase. However, income disparities within and across countries are widening. While some countries are struggling to address huge youth bulges and unemployment, an increasing number of countries are facing the challenges of aging societies compounded by increased migration and mobility of population. Despite new technologies are increasingly shaping the lives of millions of people, the digital divide between the haves and have-nots is yet to narrow. Frequent natural disasters and conflicts have been particularly jeopardizing the lives of already vulnerable groups of population in the region.

The diversity of the Asia-Pacific region is noticeably reflected in the diversity of EFA outcomes. As 2015 approaches, the region has seen remarkable progress towards EFA goals, in particular on Goal 2 universal primary education (UPE); however, current data and trends point to the bitter reality that Education for All goals will not be met in the region. Marked disparities remain among sub-regions, countries, and within countries. Therefore, it is time to report and reflect upon the progress made in education development in the region, as well as discuss the educational considerations that deserve further attention so that an effective educational course for Asia and the Pacific may be charted for the post-2015 agenda.

The report takes stock of the progress made towards each of the six EFA goals, as well as identifies the challenges and obstacles that still remain (as of March 2014).

EFA Goal 1: Early Childhood Care and Education.

Progress continues in the region regarding early childhood care and education (ECCE), as many countries have been instituting and promoting holistic childhood care (education, health, and well-being) programmes. However, universal participation in pre-primary education remains a distant goal, and many countries are yet to develop sustainable ECCE programmes and/or initiatives.

EFA Goal 2: Universal primary education

If the current trend is maintained, the Asia-Pacific region will be on track to achieve the goal of universal participation in primary education by 2015. **Despite great strides towards UPE, many children remain out of school.** Enrolment figures also exhibit overall improvements towards gender equity in the region, though gender disparity still remains a concern in many countries, especially in South Asia.

EFA Goal 3: Youth and adult skills

The difficulty of setting targets or indicators to measure this goal has somewhat led to it receiving less attention than other EFA goals. Overall, gross enrolment ratios in lower secondary and secondary education have increased across the region since 2000. As regards the participation in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) programmes, there is no evidence that it has increased as significantly in the Asia-Pacific region as elsewhere in the world.

EFA Goal 4: Improving adult literacy

Adult literacy is the EFA goal that exhibits the least improvement when compared to other EFA goals. South and West Asia hold the largest percentage of illiterate adults in the region at 82%, while East Asia and the Pacific account for 18% of the region's illiterate adults.

EFA Goal 5: Eliminating gender disparity and achieving gender equality in education

Gender disparities in primary and secondary education have lessened, yet gender equality has not yet been reached. The Gender Parity Index (GPI) in the Asia-Pacific region has improved since 2000; however there still remain vast disparities within countries, on accounts of geographical location, socio-economic backgrounds and ethno-linguistic groupings, which merit increased focus and attention in the future. So, too, though gender parity may be obtained in primary education, gender parity in secondary education remains a concern, especially in some sub-regions.

EFA Goal 6: Quality Education

The Asia-Pacific region has seen steady progress in enrolment and participation, gender parity, and literacy; however there is growing concern about the quality of learning at different levels of education programmes. There is very little evidence to suggest quality in education has overall improved in the Asia-Pacific region. Indicators such as instruction time, pupil-teacher ratio, and the availability of technology and textbooks are useful, but not sufficient to assess education quality. The status of education and training of teachers varies among countries.

In the face of mixed results in achieving the EFA goals, many countries in the region continue to remain committed to EFA, and this commitment is further highlighted in their active engagement in the "Big Push" initiative (November 2012) to accelerate EFA progress, which has been demonstrated by adoption of legislative measures, additional EFA advocacy, building additional partnerships and mobilizing resources.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Bangkok, in partnership with the UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office and the Regional Office for South Asia (EAPRO and ROSA) and EFA partners in the region, is currently supporting countries in the preparation of National EFA 2015 Reviews. A historic number of countries (40 or more) are engaged in reviewing and analyzing their national progress towards EFA and beyond, which includes both developed and developing countries.

UNESCO Bangkok led the regional discussion on the post-2015 education agenda by hosting a series of regional high-level expert meetings and regional thematic consultations on education. The consultations so far have pointed the future direction of the post-2015 education agenda to be shaped more holistically and anchored in a lifelong and sector-wide perspective, addressing access, equity and quality for all – children, youth and adults - at all levels of education from ECCE to higher education and adult learning across formal, non-formal and informal modalities.

UNESCO Bangkok will organize the Asia-Pacific Regional Education Conference from 6 to 8 August 2014 bringing together education ministers and high-level officials from countries in order to discuss issues, challenges and future priorities for education on the basis of the national EFA reviews and develop regional recommendations for the international framework for action to be adopted at the World Education Forum in Incheon in 2015.

REGIONAL REPORT ON PROGRESS TOWARDS EDUCATION FOR ALL IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

1. Introduction

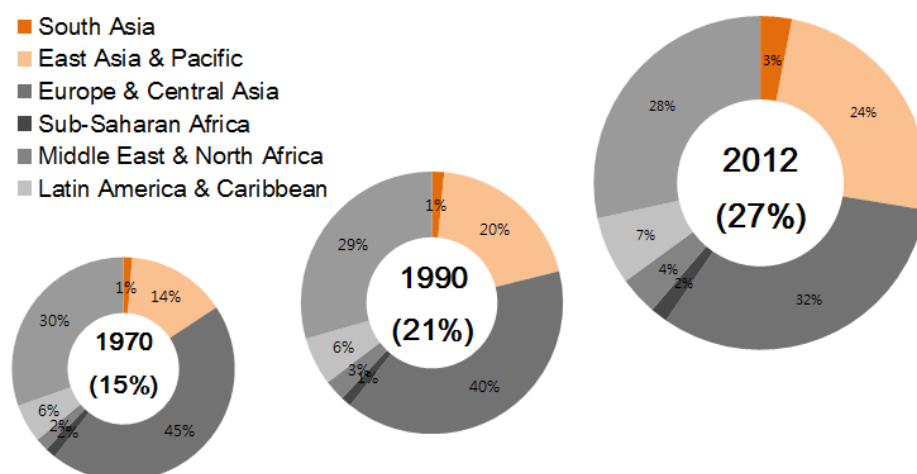
The Asia-Pacific region spans a vast geographical area, stretching northward to Mongolia, southward to New Zealand, eastward to the island states of Oceania, and westward to Iran. Countries range in area and population from among the largest and most populous in the world to smaller and more sparsely populated island nations. The region is home to more than 4.3 billion people, which constitutes 60% of the world's population (ESCAP, 2013). Hence, development gains in Asia-Pacific will continue to have a significant impact on the global development outlook.

While Asia and the Pacific shares a number of issues, challenges and opportunities with other regions, it is characterized by distinctive development features, some of which are briefly presented in the following paragraphs.

1.1. Changing economic landscape

The Asia-Pacific region as a whole has made impressive gains in global economic development over the last forty decades, and further gains are expected. In 1970, the Asia-Pacific region constituted 20% of the world's GDP, and in 2010, its share increased to 31%. This dynamic economic growth is not expected to subside, as the region's role as an engine for global economic growth continues to mature and expand (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: % world GDP by sub-region (constant 2005 USD), 1970, 1990, and 2012



Source: World Bank Databank, Available at <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/variables/election/selectvariables.aspx?source=world-development-indicators#> (accessed on 10 February, 2014)

The labour market landscape is also changing significantly in the Asia-Pacific region, as shown in Table 1. Employment rates in the agriculture sector shrank most in East Asia in the world between 2000 and 2012, with other sub-regions of Asia-Pacific also recording major reductions in this sector. At the same time, employment in both service and industry sectors is growing far more than in other regions of the world. These developments exhibit a rapid change in respective economic structures, and consequently they have direct impacts on the human resources required for different labour needs.

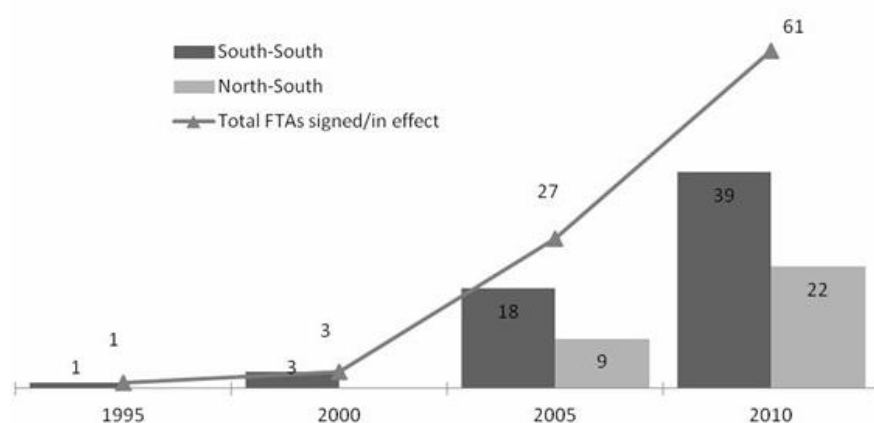
Table 1: Share of employment by sector (%)

Both sexes	Agriculture				Industry				Services			
	2000	2007	2011	2012*	2000	2007	2011	2012*	2000	2007	2011	2012*
World	40.5	35.5	33.3	33.5	20.4	22.1	22.6	22.5	39.1	42.4	44.1	44.0
Developed Economies and European Union	5.5	3.9	3.6	3.5	27.3	25.1	22.5	22.6	67.3	70.9	73.8	73.9
Central and South-Eastern Europe (non-EU) and CIS	25.2	18.8	19.8	18.8	25.2	26.3	24.6	27.1	49.6	54.9	55.5	54.1
East Asia	47.7	38.9	33.4	33.7	23.4	27.2	29.8	29.2	28.9	33.9	36.8	37.1
South-East Asia and the Pacific	49.6	44.2	40.8	41.5	16.4	18.3	19.0	19.0	34.0	37.6	40.2	39.6
South Asia	59.5	53.1	51.0	50.8	15.6	19.5	21.0	21.0	24.9	27.4	28.1	28.1
Latin America and the Caribbean	20.3	17.0	15.8	15.7	21.6	22.5	21.7	21.7	58.0	60.4	62.4	62.6
Middle East	22.4	19.1	16.5	16.4	24.3	26.1	26.4	26.4	53.3	54.8	57.1	57.2
North Africa	32.4	30.9	27.2	29.8	19.5	21.1	24.0	22.4	48.1	48.0	48.9	47.8
Sub-Saharan Africa	66.4	63.1	61.8	62.0	7.9	8.5	8.7	8.7	25.7	28.4	29.5	29.3

Source: ILO (2013, p140), Global Employment Trends 2013. Available at http://www.ilo.org/global/research/global-reports/global-employment-trends/2013/WCMS_202326/lang-en/index.htm

The changing economic and employment structures are accompanied with a move towards regional integration in the Asia-Pacific, which is becoming more economically interconnected within the region as well as with the global market. The number of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) has skyrocketed since 2000, which was led by FTAs among developing countries (Figure 2). This trend is expected to continue as ASEAN moves towards its economic integration (ASEAN Economic Community, AEC) in 2015. Other major trade agreements such as ASEAN+6 FTAs and Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) are also being discussed.

Figure 2: Growth of Asian FTAs (signed and in effect) 1995–2010



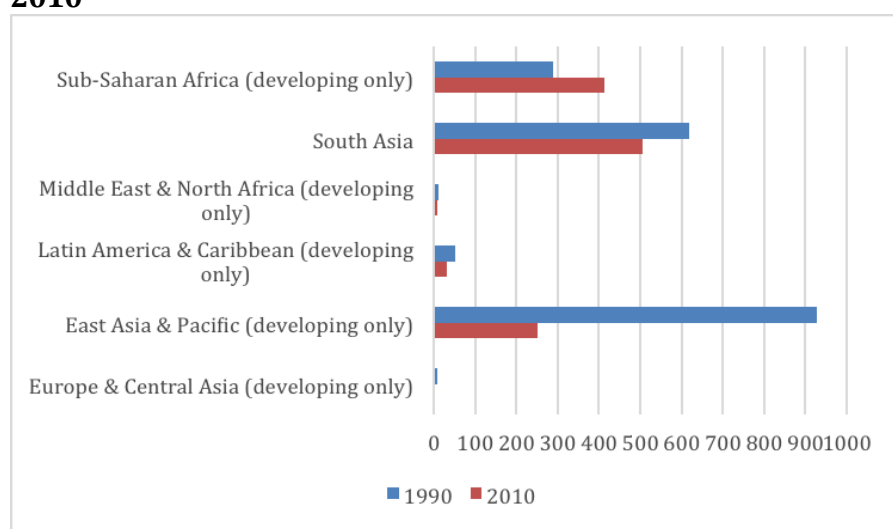
Source: Wignaraja and Lazaro, 2010, p8.

Such economic integration brings multiple opportunities for countries. At the same time, there will be heightened competition among countries, and the disparities among and within countries may widen. Education is the key to preparing young people to integrate and succeed in such an environment.

1.2. Persisting disparities within and across countries

The Asia-Pacific region is characterized by diversity in all aspects—landscape, society, history, culture, religion and ethnicity. There are over 3,500 languages spoken across the region. However, broad social characteristics of the region can help provide a context to the concomitant strengths, issues and challenges surrounding economic, social and educational development.

Figure 3: Number of poor at \$1.25 a day (PPP) (millions), 2010



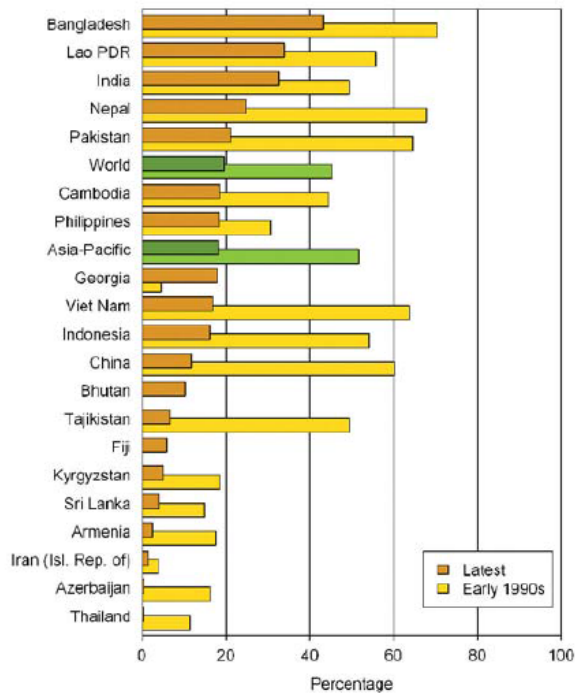
Source: World Bank Databank (<http://povertydata.worldbank.org/poverty/home/>) accessed on 9 Feb 2014

Despite the promising track record of economic performance in the region as a whole, the situation within and across countries exhibits mixed results; from a region¹ that recorded the highest prevalence of extreme poverty in the world in 1990, the progress has been appreciable (Figure 3), yet disparities among countries and across sub-regions are vast. While most of the countries made improvement in reducing poverty since early 1990s, in some countries a significant percentage of the population is still under poverty line (Figure 4). The disparities in living standards and social and economic opportunities are also significant (ADB, 2010).

In addition, as countries move to knowledge-based, innovation-rich and creative economies, learning becomes central to improving individual economic well-being. For the poor with limited opportunity to receiving quality education and developing the skills and competencies required, there is a risk of them being denied access to more knowledge-based job markets, eventually leading to their exclusion and further exacerbating their poverty.

¹¹ The Asia-Pacific region in this report includes South Asia and East Asia & Pacific sub regions.

Figure 4: Population in Poverty: percentage of population living in poverty



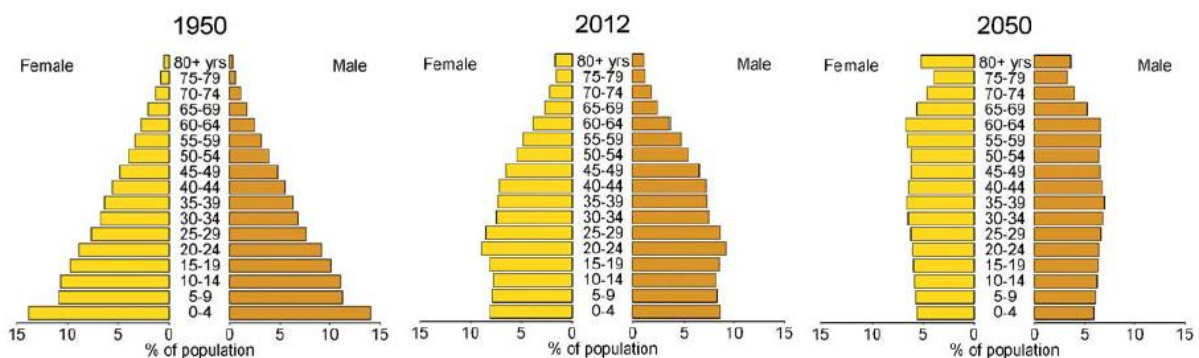
2005

Source: UNESCAP, Statistical Yearbook for Asia and the Pacific 2013 (2013, p110), Available at <http://www.unescap.org/stat/data/syb2013/ESCAP-syb2013.pdf>

1.3. Changing demographic patterns

While the region holds a large share of the world's youth population, estimated at 60% (UN Youth, 2013), it is expected the region will soon lose its "demographic bonus" (Figure 5) and shift towards ageing society. At the same time, the youth of the Asia-Pacific region are confronted with a host of significant challenges that hinder their capacity to contribute to development. There are 69 million young people who are illiterate in the Asia-Pacific region alone (UNESCO, 2012) and young people between the ages of 15 and 24 account for almost half of the region's unemployed. Unless the current youth population in the region significantly improves their skills for work and life, the region will face the risk of having an ageing society with insufficient and inexperienced human resources. Thus, there are concerns regarding the creation and further development of an educated workforce that meets the evolving economic, social and demographic needs of respective societies.

Figure 5: Population pyramid of the Asian and Pacific region in 1950, 2012 and 2050



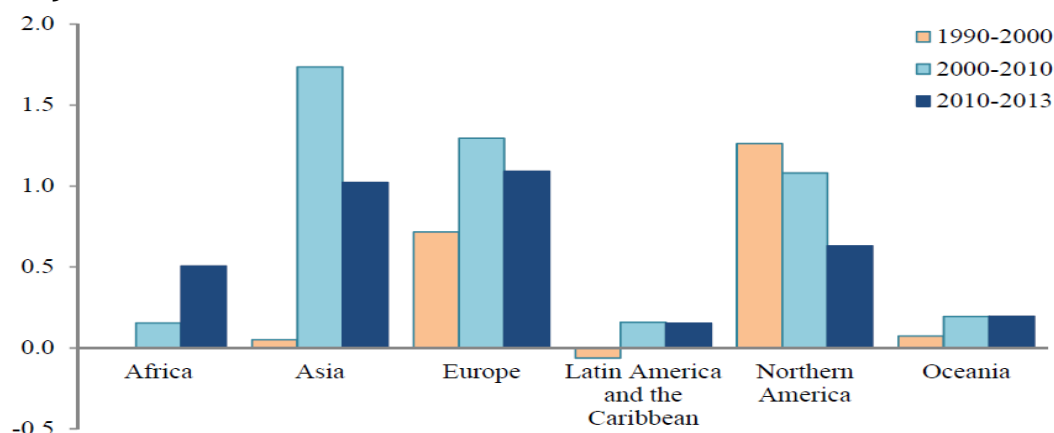
Source: UNESCAP, Statistical Yearbook for Asia and the Pacific 2013 (2013, p1), Available at <http://www.unescap.org/stat/data/syb2013/ESCAP-syb2013.pdf>

Moreover, the population of the Asia-Pacific region is becoming highly mobile, as migration to and from the region, as well as within the region and within countries, continues to increase (Figure 6). This has resulted in the rise of diverse and multicultural communities even in the societies that are once believed to be homogenous. This trend is expected to continue as more universities in the region welcome foreign students, and regional and sub-regional integration progresses (e.g., ASEAN Economic Community). The growing mobility of labour across borders has benefited countries and labour markets, as well as the migrants themselves, although the extent of these benefits varies.

At the same time, it should be noted that migration also brings about negative consequences such as a “brain drain,” characterized by highly skilled workers leaving their home countries, and “brain waste”, characterized by educated and skilled migrants from developing countries being able to only find unskilled jobs in developed countries. Therefore, governments and business leaders are encouraged to plan and seek to provide labour markets that effectively meet the needs of an educated population—consisting of citizens and migrants—so as to prevent the “brain drain” or “brain waste” phenomena. In addition, in an increasingly multicultural environment, protecting the basic rights of migrant workers and their accompanying children, including their schooling will become a major challenge to address.

Another noticeable demographic pattern of the region is its rapid urbanization, especially in East and Northeast Asia (UNESCAP, 2013). More than half of the mega-cities (13 out of 22) are in Asia-Pacific and this trend will likely continue. This rapid urbanization brings new opportunities and challenges for inclusive and sustainable development.

Figure 6: Average annual change in the number of international migrants by major areas (millions)

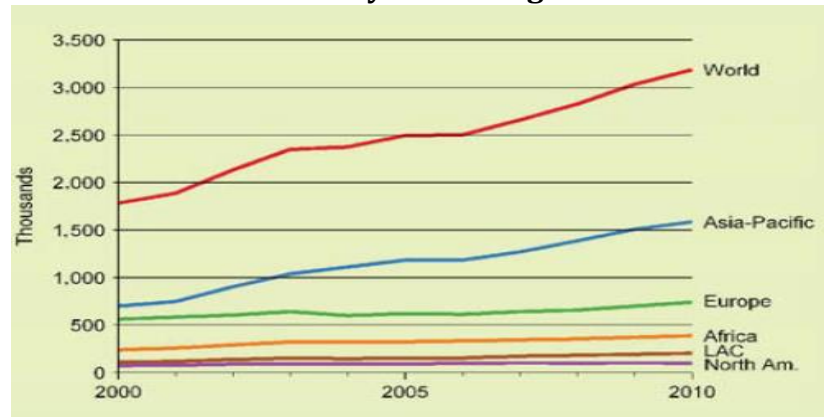


Source: UN population, International migration reports (2013, p4), Available at http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/migration/migrationreport2013/Full_Document_final.pdf

1.4. Rapid technological advancements

From rather a humble beginning in 2005, the region is catching up with more developed regions in terms of access to and use of new technologies. For example, access to the internet (ITU, 2013) has drastically changed how people search for, obtain, and analyse information as well as the way of communication. However, there is still a wide digital divide and disparities in access to information between the haves and the have-nots.

Figure 7: Mobility of international students: Total number of international students by source region

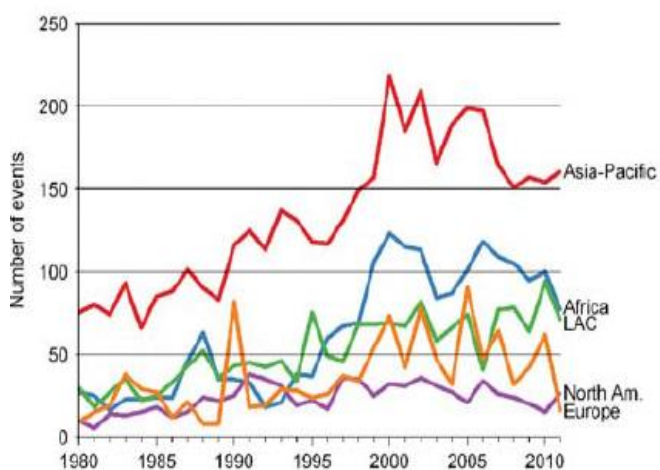


Source: UNESCAP, Statistical Yearbook for Asia and the Pacific 2013 (2013, p80), Available at <http://www.unescap.org/stat/data/syb2013/ESCAP-syb2013.pdf>

1.5. Incessant disasters and conflicts

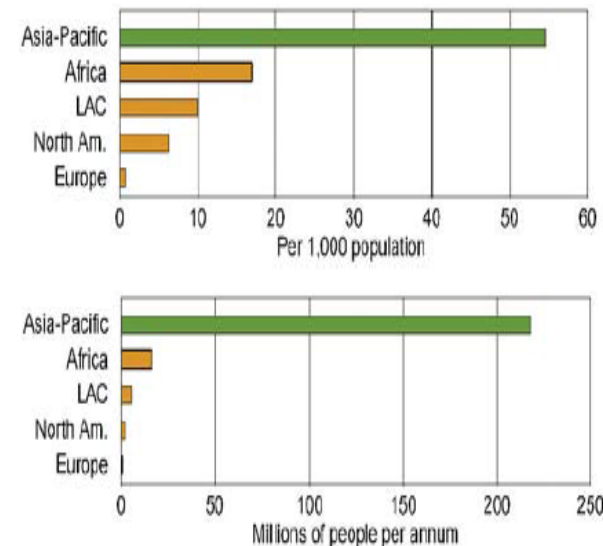
Natural disasters are occurring with increasing frequency, especially since 1995 (see Figure 8). The Asia-Pacific region, in particular, experienced significantly more natural disasters compared to any other region in the world from 1980 to 2010, exerting catastrophic impacts on efforts for poverty reduction and sustainable development, especially in the least developed countries. In terms of the number of people affected by natural disasters (per 1000 population), the Asia-Pacific exceeds other regions by a significant margin (Figure 9). Thus, it has been, and will continue to be a challenge for education sectors in the region to prepare students for and build resilient societies through disaster risk reduction education, as well as build resilient education sectors so that disruption to learning can be kept to a minimum once hit by a disaster (education in emergencies).

Figure 8: Number of natural disasters, 1980-2010



Source: UNESCAP, Statistical Yearbook for Asia and the Pacific 2013 (2013, p207), Available at <http://www.unescap.org/stat/data/syb2013/ESCAP-syb2013.pdf>

Figure 9: Number of people affected by natural disasters



Source: UNESCAP, Statistical Yearbook for Asia and the Pacific 2013 (2013, p207), Available at <http://www.unescap.org/stat/data/syb2013/ESCAP-syb2013.pdf>

Armed conflicts in the region have undermined economic growth, reinforced poverty, displaced populations and diverted resources from productive investment in classrooms into unproductive military spending (UNESCO 2011). In Afghanistan and Pakistan, girls' education has been repeatedly jeopardized. In many post-conflict countries progress towards the achievement of EFA has been slower than in other countries.

This report aims to provide an overview of the current status of Education for All (EFA) in the Asia-Pacific region. After this introduction which presents some select key factors in the Asia-Pacific region that have important implications for education development in the region. Chapter 2 outlines the progress towards achieving the 6 EFA Goals as well as remaining challenges. In Chapter 3, the "Big Push" Initiative aiming at addressing the remaining and emerging challenges of EFA and accelerating the progress is presented. Chapter 4 provides an overview of the status of National EFA 2015 Review. Chapter 6 then presents the process towards developing the post-2015 education agenda, including analyses of the issues and challenges as well as proposed priority areas.

2. Progress towards the EFA goals

2.1. EFA Goal 1: Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)

Education, health care, adequate nutrition, and protection are all required to promote development and learning during early childhood—the time at which the foundations are laid for development in later years. The region has made tangible progress in terms of promoting a more holistic concept of ECCE that encompasses the education, health and wellbeing of young children. Several countries including Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Lao PDR and Thailand are moving towards integrated and coordinated early childhood services. However, while some countries have established new laws and legislative frameworks for the provision of ECCE, compulsory attendance at the pre-school level is far from being reality (UNESCO Bangkok and UNICEF, 2012a).

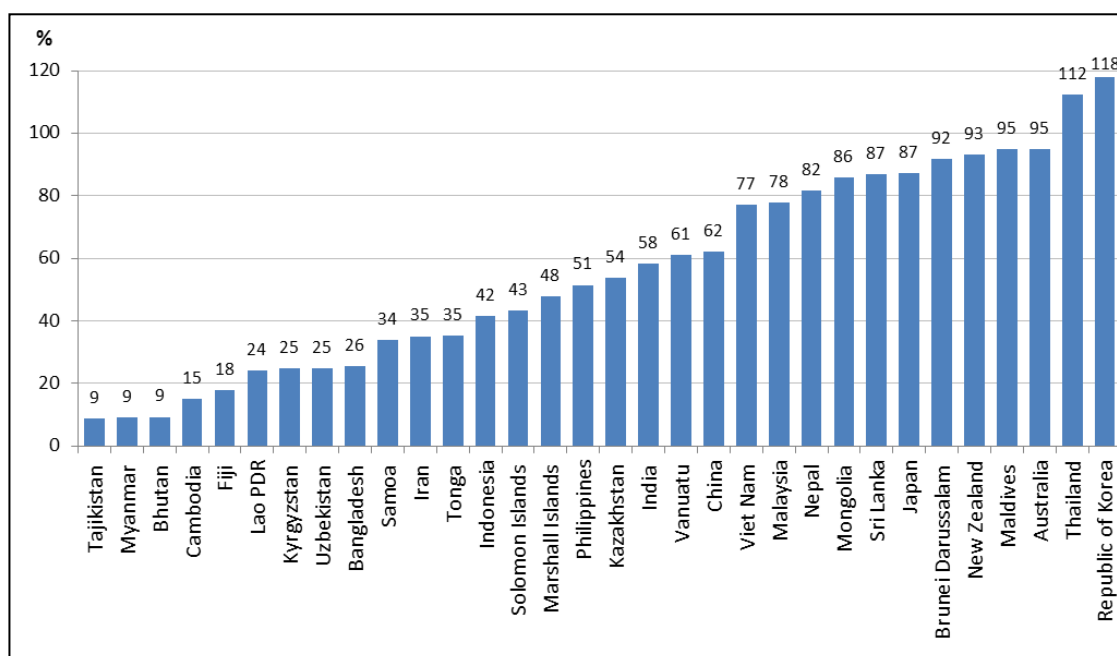
Access to pre-primary education in the Asia-Pacific region has been increasing steadily since 2000, with variations at the sub-regional level. East Asia and the Pacific, as well as South and West Asia have posted the most rapid improvement in access to pre-primary education in the world since 2005, including increases in enrolment of 19 and 14 percentage points respectively² during the six-year period (Statistical Annex).

Regional averages conceal the variation in performance at the country level. In Figure 1, distinct disparities between countries become visible. Some countries, including Japan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, the Republic of Korea and Thailand, boast gross enrolment ratios of over 80%. Conversely, a number of countries are faced with much lower enrolment ratios, including Bhutan, Cambodia, Fiji, Myanmar and Tajikistan, where less than 20% of children are exposed to ECCE programmes.

Another indicator commonly used to measure progress against Goal 1 is the percentage of new entrants into primary schooling who have ECCE experience. However, data for this measure are sparse; out of 48 Asia-Pacific countries and territories, only 22 have any data for the last 10 years.

² Increases in enrolment are measured here as increases in the gross enrolment ratio which is calculated as the number of children enrolled in pre-primary education regardless of age, divided by the population in the relevant official age group, and multiply by 100. If children younger or older than the official age group are enrolled, this ratio can be larger than 100.

Figure 12: Pre-primary gross enrolment ratios in selected Asia-Pacific countries, 2011



Source: Statistical annex, UIS, February 2014.

First proposed in Jomtien in 1990, the core idea behind EFA Goal 1 was originally a vague objective of expanding childhood care,³ yet it has evolved over the years into a clear commitment to both the mental and physical development of children. The choice of the phrase “Early Childhood Care and Education” acknowledges that physical development (“care”) is a prerequisite for learning.

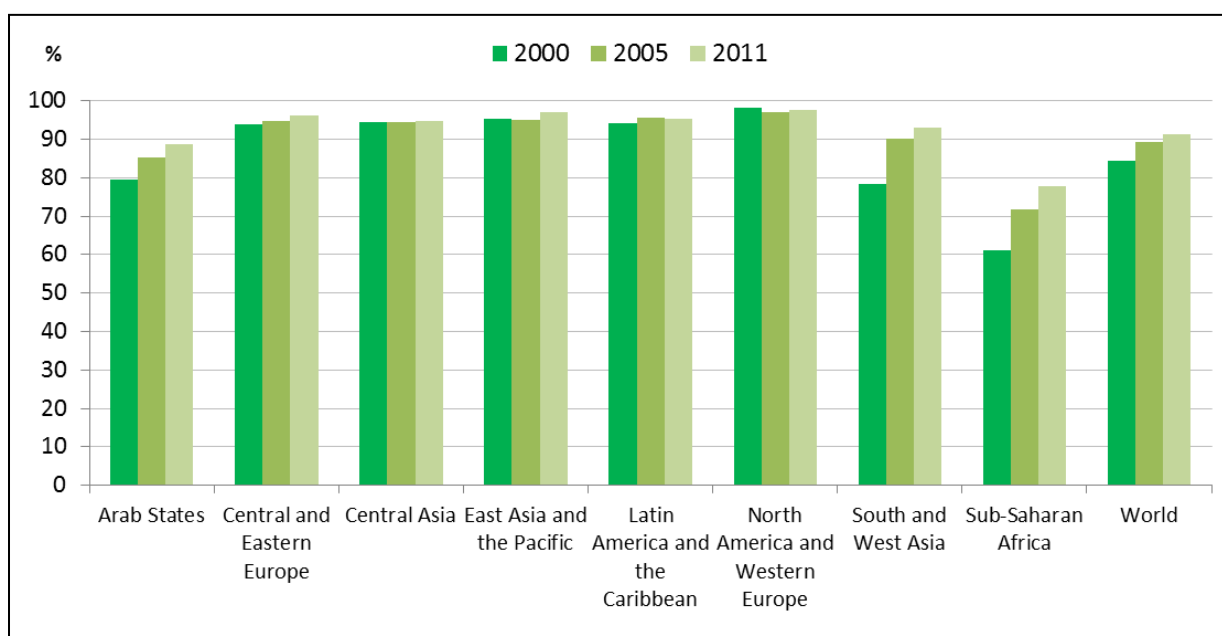
It is often difficult to operationalize the holistic concept of ECCE without effective multi-sectoral coordination and improved governance of the public and private provision of ECCE. Cognizant of this, countries such as Bangladesh, Lao PDR, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines and Thailand have taken steps to institutionalise the delivery of ECCE by establishing multi-sectoral coordination mechanisms at the national level. Most countries in the region now recognize the importance of national standards and nationally guided frameworks in advancing the quality of ECCE programming.

2.2. EFA Goal 2: Universal primary education

Asia-Pacific is the world’s largest region in terms of its share of primary enrolment. The region accounts for 55% of the global total in 2011 (UNESCO, 2014a). The Asia-Pacific region is on track to achieve the goal of universal participation in primary education by 2015. However, different forms of disparities persist at the sub-regional level and targeted efforts to address disadvantaged children in the region will go a long way in determining whether the goal of universal primary education can be achieved.

³ UNESCO, *World Declaration on Education for All*, 1990.

Figure 13: Adjusted net enrolment rates by sub-region, 2000-2011



Source: Statistical annex, UIS, February 2014.

2.2.1. Out-of-school children

Despite great strides towards UPE, many children remain out of school. Considering the adjusted net enrolment rate (ANER) which is the proportion of children of primary school age enrolled in primary or secondary education and the difference (1-ANER) can be a proxy measure to calculate the number of the out-of-school children. Figure 2 shows Central Asia, East Asia and the Pacific, as well as South and West Asia have all reached an ANER of over 90%. Out of three sub-regions, South and West Asia stand out as a success story; since 2000, the ANER has risen by 15 percentage points. Growth in Central Asia, East Asia and the Pacific, however, has been much slower, with the ANER increasing by only 1 and 2 percentage points in the last ten years.

Enrolment stagnation reflects a sombre reality for many countries: efforts to provide access to the majority of school-aged children have been successful, but reaching the most disadvantaged children has proven to be much more difficult. Providing access for 98% or even 95% of the population is not sufficient, all children, i.e. 100%, must be enrolled in, and given the opportunity to complete basic education if this second EFA goal is to be achieved (UNESCO, 2011).

As of 2011, over 57 million primary school-aged children remained out-of-school children (OOSC) worldwide (UNESCO, 2014b), and the Asia-Pacific's share was 31% of the global number. Especially in large countries, figures of just 1% or 2% of primary school aged children conceal a significant number—millions—of young individuals. Of the E-9 high population countries, five (Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia and Pakistan) are located in the Asia-Pacific region. Despite their recent success in bringing children to school, the number of out-of-school children in these countries remains very high, and marginalized groups are overrepresented (Box 1). Therefore, in order to successfully reach the unreached, leaders need to directly address the needs of remaining out-of-school groups and the barriers they face. Alongside

UNICEF Regional Offices, UNESCO Bangkok promotes alternative learning schools, which provide intensive literacy and numeracy classes for underprivileged children who are out of school and/or missed starting school at the standard age(s).

Box 1: Profiles of out-of-school children in India

Even though India has an impressive ANER of 99% in 2011 (Statistical Annex), many children are left without access to education. The 2014 South Asia Regional Study report of the Out-of-School Children Initiative indicates that some 7.8* million primary school-aged children (aged 6–10) do not attend school, which is equivalent to half of the population in Cambodia.

Gender and socio-economic status pose barriers to school access.

Looking at the Indian population of students as a whole, male children outnumber female. This relationship is reversed within the sub-population of OOSC; females make up the majority of children not attending school. Poor children are similarly disadvantaged, 73% of out-of-school children aged 6–10 years in urban areas and 45% in rural areas come from low-income households.

Note: * One of the OOSC estimates for India.

Source: UIS and UNICEF, 2014.

2.2.2. Education outcomes

In the Asia-Pacific region, ten countries have already achieved universal participation in primary education (99% or more), and 9 countries are very likely to achieve the goal by 2015 (97% and 98% in 2011) (Statistical annex). With the majority of children enrolling in primary school, the regional focus has shifted to the second facet of EFA Goal 2: ensuring that children complete their education.

At the same time, the region has seen a shift in attention towards addressing low levels of student learning. Evidence reveals that increased schooling is not accompanied by improved student learning (GMR 2013). In the Asia-Pacific, the educational discourse is changing from access to quality and learning. Countries are also taking an increasing interest in assessing student learning through classroom assessment, national assessment of student learning or participation in international assessments.

Survival rate to the last grade of primary level increased between 2000 and 2011. However, in some countries (e.g., Bangladesh, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan and Solomon Islands), a sizable number of children face a great challenge of reaching the last grade of the primary cycle, let alone continuing on to secondary.

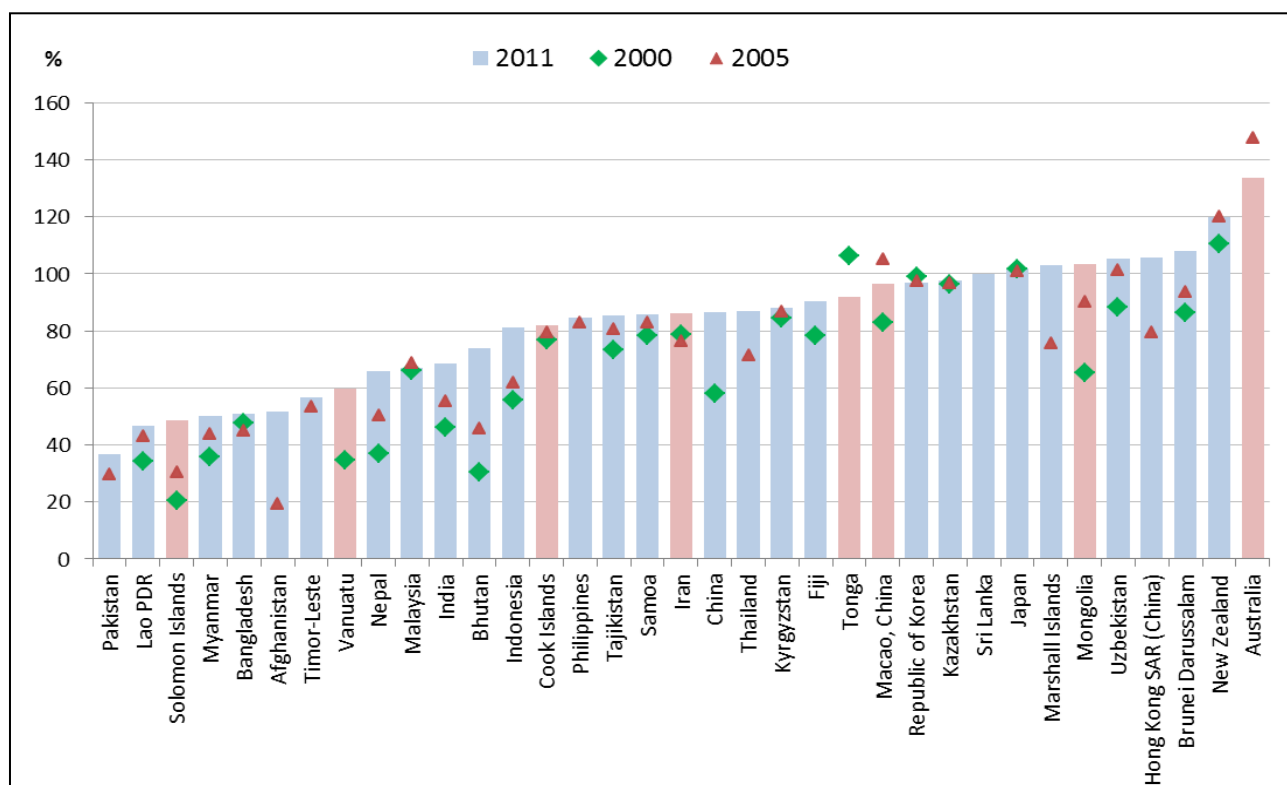
2.3. EFA Goal 3: Youth and Adult Skills

The 2003 Global Monitoring Report (GMR) focused on the difficult-to-define concept of ‘life skills.’ However, in the following year, the GMR changed direction, focusing instead on the equally vague phrase: “learning needs of young people and adults” (UNESCO Bangkok, 2011). The 2012 GMR report described a “framework for various pathways to skills – including foundation, transferable, and technical and vocational skills – as a way of improving monitoring efforts” (UNESCO, 2014b, p. 9). However, the report also recognised that “the

international community is still a long way from measuring the acquisition of skills systematically” (idem). This lack of a clear definition and the ensuing difficulty of setting targets or indicators to measure Goal 3, has partly led to it receiving less attention than other EFA goals. However, the core principles of Goal 3 are fundamental to the Education for All agenda, and the framework proposed in 2012, “emphasizes the crucial importance of foundation skills, including literacy and numeracy, which are essential for meeting daily needs, succeeding in the world of work and acquiring transferable skills and technical and vocational skills” (UNESCO 2014a, p. 63).

While these foundation skills can be acquired in non-formal and informal settings, the most important pathways for acquiring these skills is still through the completion of lower secondary school. Gross enrolment ratios in secondary education have increased across the region since 2000: East Asia and the Pacific exhibited a jump in gross enrolment ratio (GER) from 63% in 2000, to 80% in 2011; the gross enrolment ratio in South and West Asia rose from 46% to 60% over the same time period. Individual countries have made corresponding strides: Bhutan, Nepal and Solomon Islands more than doubled their ratios of enrolment over the 11 years between 2000 and 2011. Fiji, India and Vanuatu, among others, also recorded marked increases in enrolment. Figure 5 displays the change in secondary enrolment from 2000 to 2011 for selected Asia-Pacific countries and territories.

Figure 14: Gross enrolment ratios in secondary education by country, 2000, 2005 and 2011



Source: Statistical annex, UIS, February 2014.

2.3.1. Community Learning Centres (CLCs)

A second clause in the Dakar Framework for Action (2000) extended outline of EFA Goal 3 states: “young people, especially adolescent girls, face risks and threats that limit learning

opportunities” (p. 16). Since 1998, UNESCO Bangkok has been promoting community learning centres (CLC) to directly address these challenges. CLCs aim to entrench learning opportunities in community life by exploiting local resources and delegating responsibilities to local managers. According to available data, as of 2009, CLC programmes have been introduced in more than 24 Asia-Pacific countries.

CLCs design and implement programmes such as literacy, life skills training, basic education equivalency, income generation training, ECCE, as well as drug and disease awareness campaigns. Because rapid expansion of the number of CLCs can come at the cost of maintaining or improving quality, a set of standards and a system for quality assurance need to be developed in many countries (UNESCO Bangkok, 2012). UNESCO Bangkok annually organizes a CLC regional conference with more than 25 countries participating and exchanging innovative approaches and methodologies.

2.3.2. Technical and vocational education and training (TVET)

The final element of Goal 3, as described in the Dakar Framework, is a declaration that: “[a]ll young people should be given the opportunity for on-going education. For those who drop out of school or leave school without acquiring the literacy, numeracy and life skills they need, there must be a range of options for continuing their learning. Such opportunities should be both meaningful and relevant to their environment and needs, help them become active agents in shaping their future and develop useful work-related skills” (UNESCO, 2000, p. 16). This aspect of the goal can be measured based on the information of the number of the youth and adults continuing to learn relevant skills and competencies for life and work outside of regular educational institutions. However, in the absence of reliable data, participation in formal technical and vocational education and training (TVET) programmes is often used as a proxy indicator.

Since 2000 however, there is no evidence that participation in TVET programmes has increased as significantly in the Asia-Pacific region as elsewhere in the world. Countries may have focused on strengthening TVET programme standards, quality assurance and relevance, rather than increasing enrolment in this subsector. Another reason may be that TVET still remains less popular than general education streams in the region. Notwithstanding this trend, it is observed that the “vocalization” of secondary education is attracting growing interest in an increasing number of education systems.⁴

2.3.3. Standards and Qualifications

A growing number of countries in the region have either established, or are in the process of establishing some form of national qualifications framework (NQF) as a means of ensuring the consistency and equivalence of academic and vocational qualification systems. The NQF development in the Asia-Pacific has been spearheaded by Australia and New Zealand since the 1990s, and more countries in the region have since introduced qualifications that are related to competency standards.

⁴ Vocationalized secondary education can also include more cohesive ways of delivering TVETs such as providing both general and vocational streams in the same school premises, allowing students to easily switch streams without the necessity of transferring to another school).

Another important initiative is the ASEAN Regional Qualifications Reference Framework, which is being discussed for development to meet the need for governments to establish common and transparent regional references that can support student and labour mobility and facilitate the integration of national and international labour markets.

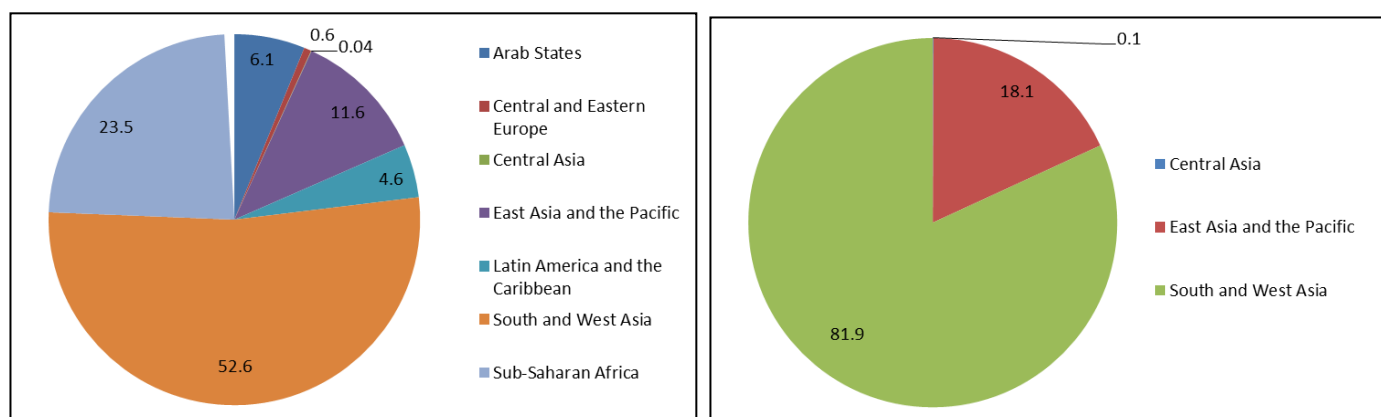
UNESCO Bangkok has also produced the publication *School-to-Work Transition Information Bases*⁵ with a view to promote robust information systems to guide policymakers, planners and managers in making their TVET systems more responsive to the demands of students and employment markets.

2.4. EFA Goal 4: Improving Adult Literacy

Literacy is a foundation of lifelong learning. In 2011, more than a decade since the promulgation of the EFA Dakar Framework for Action (2000), there still remained 774 million adults in the world who could not read and write. Almost two-thirds of illiterate adults are women. There was a mere 2 percentage point improvement in the level of adult literacy rate in the world between 2000 to 2011 which is too slow and too little in achieving the 50% improvement of the adult literacy rate in the world.

Out of 774 million illiterate adults, the distribution of illiterate adults by region shows that 64% (497 million) live in the Asia-Pacific region, with more than 52% illiterate adults living in South and West Asia and 11.6% living in East Asia and the Pacific. Sub-Saharan Africa has 23.5% of the world's illiterate adults in 2011 (Figure 5).

Figure 15: Distribution of illiterate adults by regions, 2011



Source: Statistical Annex.

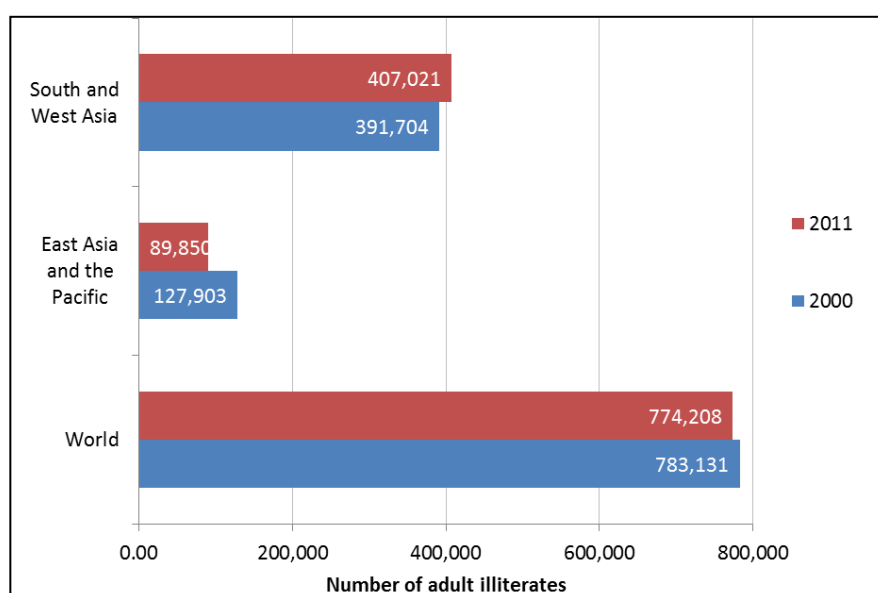
Out of 497 million illiterate adults in the Asia-Pacific region in 2011, 82% illiterate adults live in South and West Asia, and 18% live in East Asia and the Pacific (Figure 15).

⁵ <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002166/216661e.pdf>

2.4.1. Regional progress towards achieving the goal

The regional averages of adult literacy rates by sub-regions reveal that Central Asia has already achieved the goal of literacy while East Asia and the Pacific are on track in achieving the goal with an overall literacy rate of 95%. However, progress in South and West Asia is far from being achieved, and this sub-region constitutes as one of the main contributors to the high illiteracy statistics in the region. The literacy rate in South and West Asia rose by only 4 percentage points between 2000 and 2011 to reach 63% in 2011. This rate should be at least 80% by 2015 if the region is to achieve the 50% improvement in literacy level (Statistical Annex).

Figure 16: Adult literacy rates and number of adult illiterates, 2000 and 2011



Source: Statistical Annex.

As mentioned previously, globally, the number of illiterate adults has decreased by only about 9 million between 2000 and 2011, and the Asia-Pacific region saw 23 million less illiterate adults between 2000 and 2011. The East Asia and the Pacific sub-region alone was able to reduce its illiterate adult population by 38 million between 2000 and 2011. However, in the South and West Asia sub-region, instead of decreasing, the number of illiterate adults has been increasing. In 2011, the sub-region had 15 million more illiterate adults compared to 2000 (Figure 6). The region has observed 13 million more adult illiterate women during the same period (Statistical Annex).

Central Asia has already achieved gender parity with a GPI of 1. East Asia and the Pacific have a GPI of 0.95 in 2011, which can be considered as a good sign of achieving the literacy levels for both sexes. The GPI of South and West Asia is very low even in 2011 at only 0.70 indicating that women are much disadvantaged (Statistical Annex).

2.4.2. Country progress towards achieving the goal

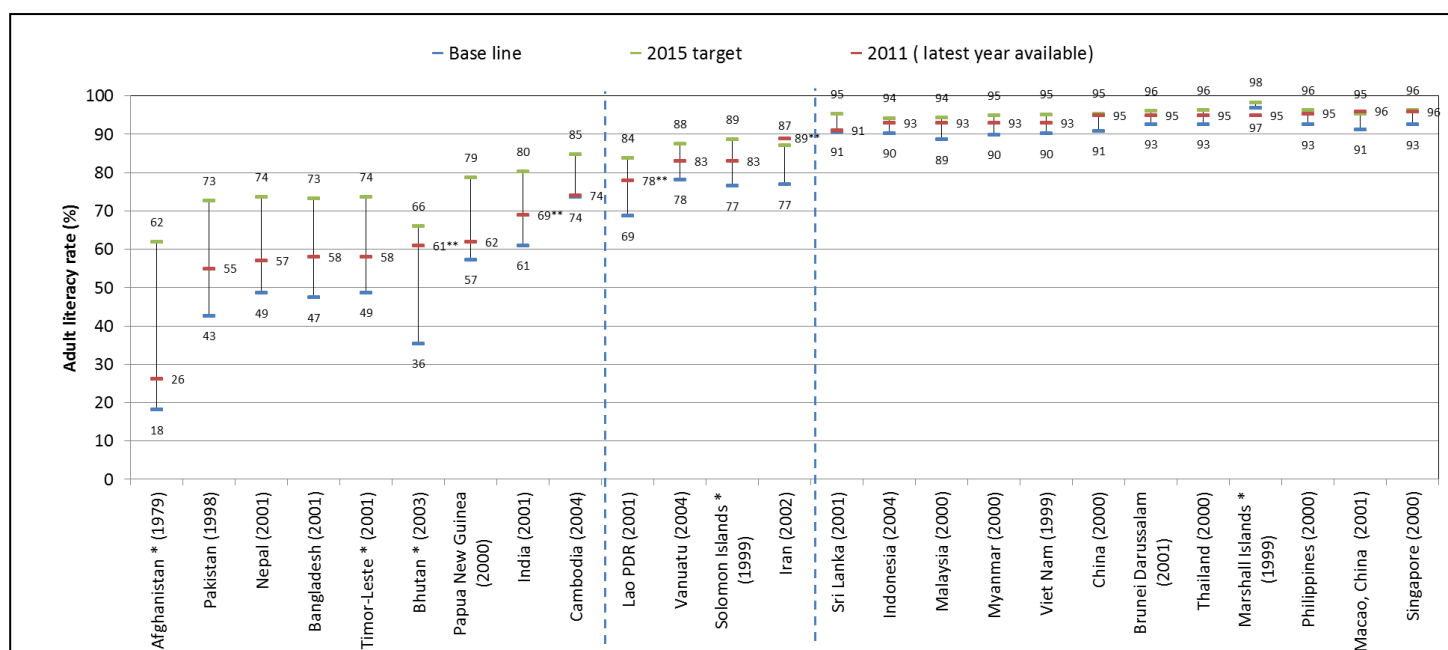
Figure 7 illustrates progress towards the EFA literacy goal in selected Asia-Pacific countries. Based on their current level of achievement, one can cluster countries in three groups according to their adult literacy rates: (1) high (90%-100%); (2) medium (78%-89%); and (3) low (<78%).

The first group contains twelve countries that exhibited an adult literacy rate greater than 90% in 2011. Of these countries, nine are very close to achieving EFA Goal 4; the remaining three countries—Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand—have made great progress, yet need to scale up literacy efforts if they are to reach the EFA goal by 2015.

The second group contains four countries whose literacy rate is between 78% and 89%. Among them, the Islamic Republic of Iran has already achieved this EFA goal, but the country needs to keep maintaining the progress to sustain the literacy level. Lao PDR, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu need to speed up literacy initiatives in the coming years to achieve the goal. Looking at the population size in the countries, there is a possibility that these countries might be able to achieve the goal, if extra focus is given to the issue.

The third group includes nine countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste. These countries exhibit low literacy rates and very little recent progress, except for Bhutan. Among the countries, many are also facing the problem of low enrolment and high dropout rates in primary education, which will make it difficult for them to overcome a very low base literacy level in the near future. Countries at risk of missing the EFA adult literacy goal must identify breakthrough solutions to overcoming the obstacles preventing individuals from achieving literacy.

Figure 17: Progress towards EFA literacy goal in selected Asian and Pacific countries, 2011



Sources: End of Decade Note on EFA Goal 4, UNESCO Bangkok and UNICEF, 2012b and UIS Data Center accessed in February 2014.

Notes: * Data collected by UIS-AIMS (see Annex 3 of the End of decade notes on EFA goal 4 (UNESCO Bangkok and UNICEF, 2012b). ** 2011 UIS projections used (UIS database).

National-level analysis shows that gender represents a significant barrier to literacy in Asia-Pacific countries. Disparities in adult literacy rates range from 1 percentage point in favour of women in Mongolia, to over 29 percentage points in favour of men in Pakistan. Along with Pakistan, Nepal has a gender gap greater than 24 percentage points in favour of men (Statistical Annex).

To promote literacy in a sustained manner, appropriate national policies, strong political commitment and funding are essential. In view of this, the region has seen a greater drive towards the development of national policies and strategies that link literacy with poverty-reduction and other development initiatives such as skills training and income generation. Both LIFE and UNLD have contributed significantly to the promotion of political commitment and policy development for literacy. Consequently, literacy programmes in the region have taken diverse, flexible and needs-based characteristics. Locally adapted initiatives are being implemented, as can be seen in some countries, such as mother-tongue based literacy initiatives under implementation to reach the marginalized ethnic minority populations.

2.5. EFA Goal 5: Eliminating gender disparity and achieving gender equality in education

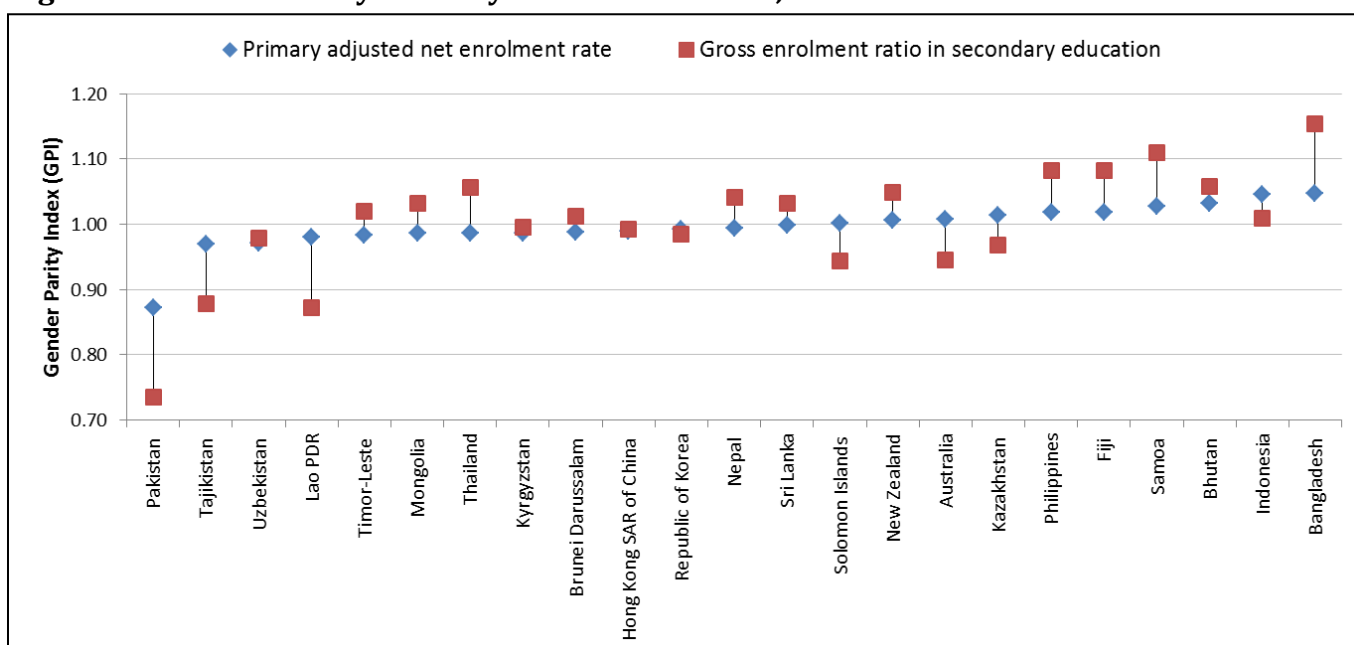
Gender parity, which aims to provide equal access to education for boys and girls, is the key pre-condition for achieving gender equality in education, the fifth goal of EFA. The region has seen mixed results on this goal. In East Asia and the Pacific region, the Gender Parity Index (GPI), which calculates the ratio of female-to-male indicators, was 0.99 in 2000 for the primary adjusted net enrolment rate and was 0.95 for the gross enrolment ratio for secondary

education. This number increased to 1.00 and 1.03 in 2011 for primary and secondary education respectively, implying a successful achievement of gender parity (Statistical annex).

In South and West Asia, the GPI for the primary adjusted net enrolment rate increased from 0.84 in 2000 to 0.97 in 2011. For the gross enrolment ratio, the increase was also important, from a GPI of 0.76 in 2000 to 0.92 in 2011, but gender parity in this sub-region is still not achieved at the secondary level (Statistical Annex).

Successful achievement of gender parity at the regional level masks disparities within countries. Furthermore, parity in enrolment at the national level does not necessarily mean that no disparities exist at the provincial and local levels. Out of the 23 countries/territories with data available for both levels of education, parity has been achieved in only eighth of them (Brunei Darussalam, Hong Kong (SAR of China), Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka and Timor-Leste). In primary education, most of the countries (21 out of 23) have reached gender parity. Girls are under-represented in one country (Pakistan), while boys are under-represented in two countries (Bangladesh and Indonesia). At the secondary level due to drop-out rates and issues with transition, only ten countries/territories have reached gender parity. For the other countries/territories, in eight of them, boys were under-represented and in five countries girls were under-represented (figure 8).

Figure 18: Gender Parity Index by level of education, 2011



Source: Statistical annex, UIS, February 2014.

Gender equality goes beyond simply providing equal access to education for students of both genders. A country may almost reach equal enrolment figures between genders, but more steps need to be taken in order to address social inequalities within the classroom. The differential treatment of boys and girls shown by teachers can affect student-learning outcomes (UNESCO Bangkok and UNICEF, 2012c).

To encourage gender equality in the classroom, it is important to eliminate gender disparities in teaching and leadership positions in the education system. Teaching in pre-primary and

primary education is highly feminized, while male teachers often make up a higher percentage of the teaching force at the secondary level. Such is the case in few countries in the region, where females make up more than 90% of the pre-primary teaching staff, half of the primary teaching staff and less than half of the secondary teaching staff (UNESCO, 2014a).

The importance of achieving gender equality stretches far beyond the classroom. Education, alongside a range of societal factors, is the foundation for obtaining a career. As long as gender disparities and biases occur in education, they will continue to exist in employment as well (UNESCO Bangkok, 2013). As of 2012, women in the Asia-Pacific region were more likely than men to be unemployed, women's participation rate in the labour market was smaller and their chance of working in vulnerable employment was greater than for males (ILO, 2014). Studies reveal that women tend to face more vulnerable employment circumstances, have higher rates of part-time work, and receive lower wages (even in comparable roles) (UNGEI, 2012). In the developing world (including in the Asia-Pacific region), women are also believed to constitute the majority of the informal labour market, which comes with attendant implications for labour standards and access to social protections linked to employment status (UNESCAP, 2010a).

Although more women than men move on to tertiary education, in 2008, less than 20% of graduates in engineering, manufacturing and construction throughout East Asia and the Pacific were female (UNICEF, 2009). An effort to alter gendered perceptions of skills and professions among all people involved in the education system is contingent upon eliminating gender stereotyping and questioning normative gender roles. Through this process, gender equality in education can become a means for achieving gender equality through education.

A myriad of factors underlie unemployment and gendered perceptions of skills and professions. Among them are inadequate job and skills training programmes for girls and women. Girls and young women are often not accessing programmes (e.g. skills training, apprenticeships) that can equip them with employable skills, and it is important to understand why (UNGEI, 2012). Similarly, the different career interests and choices of girls/women compared with boys/men merit deeper analysis to assess how education systems and structures may be influencing these choices. It is also important to examine the disparities in learning achievement between boys and girls (OECD, 2014). In the PISA 2012 reading assessment (15-year olds), girls outperformed boys in every participating country by an average of 38 PISA score points (OECD, 2013).

At the same time, boys tend to outperform girls in mathematics by an average of 11 PISA score points in the PISA 2012 mathematics assessment (OECD, 2013). PISA 2012 also reveals that girls have low level of confidence in their own abilities to perform in mathematics, even when they do perform well. "The gender gap in mathematics performance has remained stable in most countries since 2003, as has the gender gap in mathematics self-beliefs. In the short term, changing these mind sets may require making mathematics more interesting to girls, identifying and eliminating gender stereotypes in textbooks, promoting female role models, and using learning materials that appeal to girls" (OECD, 2014, p.8). These differing patterns of achievement may also play a role in perpetuating gender inequality in society as a whole.

2.6. EFA Goal 6: Quality Education

The Asia-Pacific region has seen great progress in enrolment and participation, gender parity, and literacy; there is growing concern about the quality of learning at different levels of education programmes. There is very little evidence to suggest quality in education has improved in the Asia-Pacific region. This is due in part to the ambiguity of EFA goal six: **“improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all”**.

However, what is evident is the growing interest around the world in the issue of learning and in specific areas such as measurement of learning outcomes and learning of 21st century skills. Increasingly, governments in the region are focusing their attention on the learning that happens, or does not happen, in the classroom and in schools.

Although instruction time, pupil-teacher ratio, and availability of technology and textbooks are useful indicators of education quality, teachers are the most important tool in helping students succeed. The ability of certain countries in the region to recruit, train, and retain teachers has proven to be challenging. Simply obtaining a suitable number of teachers by 2015 remains a large concern in some countries throughout the region (see Box 2), and maintaining the quality of current and future teachers presents an additional problem.

Box 2: Millions of teachers missing at the primary level

Globally, an extra 1.6 million teachers will be needed in classrooms to achieve universal primary education (UPE) by 2015, and this number will rise to 3.3 million by 2030, according to new projections developed by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) to better inform planning and policymaking. Teachers play a critical role in enabling students to achieve good learning outcomes within effective education systems. While their ability to positively shape a child’s learning experience depends on a myriad of factors, the first step towards good learning outcomes is to ensure that there are enough teachers in classrooms. This is the purpose of UIS projections, which do not indicate what *will* happen but rather what governments *should* make happen in order to provide every child with a primary education.

Table 2: Number of teachers needed to achieve UPE, by regions

Region	No. of primary teachers in 2011 ('000)	New teaching posts needed to achieve UPE			
		By 2015	By 2020	By 2035	By 2030
Central Asia	340	26	68	64	45
East Asia and the Pacific	10,378	57	52	65	90
South and West Asia	5000	130	187	187	196
World	28,870	1,577	2,381	2,886	3,335

Note: The figures do not include teachers needed to fill vacancies due to attrition.

Sources: UIS eAtlas Projecting Teacher Demand and calculation using the UIS data centre.

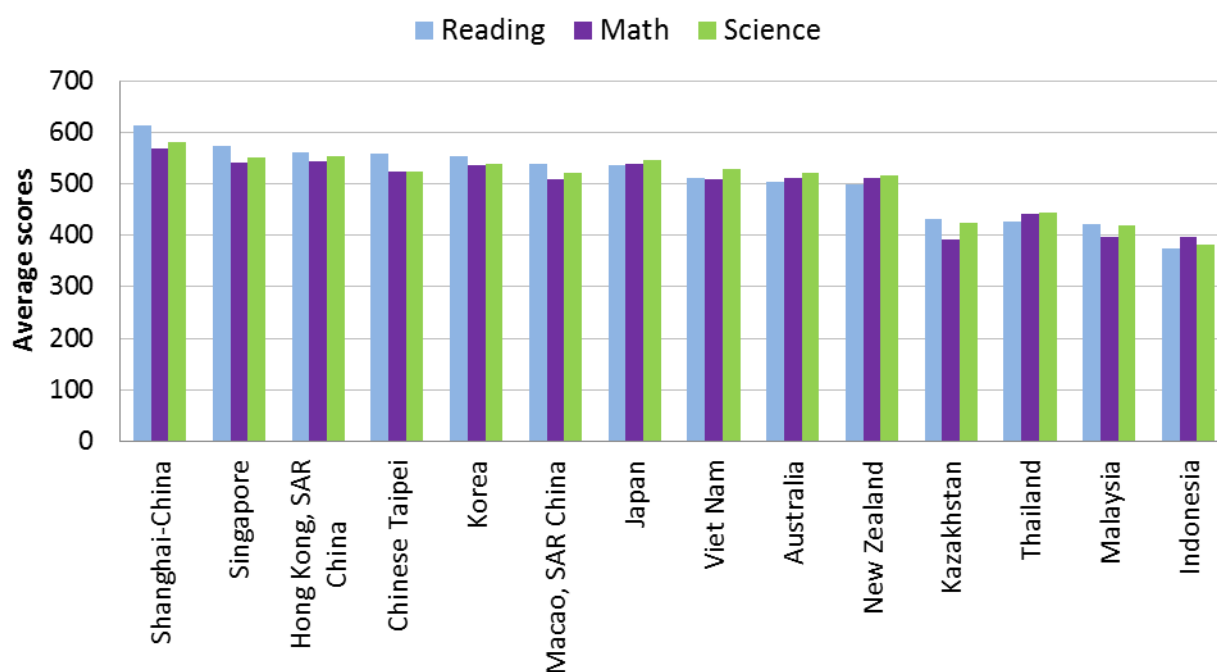
Minimum education and training qualifications to become a teacher vary between countries in the region, as well as between levels of education. Enforcement of these standards, however, is a universal issue that needs to be addressed in several countries. The change in proportion of trained teachers from 2000 to 2011 has been modest, with only Cambodia, Fiji, Mongolia, Myanmar, Uzbekistan and Viet Nam having 98% or more primary teachers trained. However,

most of the countries in South and West Asia still have problems with the sizeable proportion of untrained teachers, as only 58%, 82% and 84% of teachers are trained in respectively Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Pakistan in 2011 for the primary level (Statistical Annex).

The increase in the number of countries from the Asia-Pacific participating in large-scale international assessments, such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) in recent years is evidence of the interest and commitment to monitor the quality of schools. In 2012, 14 countries participated in PISA from the region, while 13 countries did so in TIMSS in 2011.

Learning outcomes are quantified in order to measure the success of teachers and other factors affecting students' performance in the classroom. Figure 9 displays the performance of children in the 2012 PISA from fourteen Asia-Pacific countries in reading, mathematics and science.

Figure 19: 15-year olds' achievement in PISA Reading, Mathematics and Science test



Note: OECD refers to Taiwan Province of China as Chinese Taipei.

Source: OECD, Programme for International Student Assessment 2012 Database.

In 2012, the OECD average PISA mean scores for mathematics, reading and science were 594, 496 and 501 respectively. As shown in Figure 9, as in 2009, Shanghai (China) scored the highest in the world by a wide margin. Singapore, Hong Kong (SAR of China), Chinese Taipei, Republic of Korea, Japan, Australia, New Zealand and Viet Nam also returned favourable results with well above the OECD average. However, Kazakhstan, Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia all scored well below the OECD average in all three subjects. Stagnating improvement in learning outcomes for developing countries is a major concern.

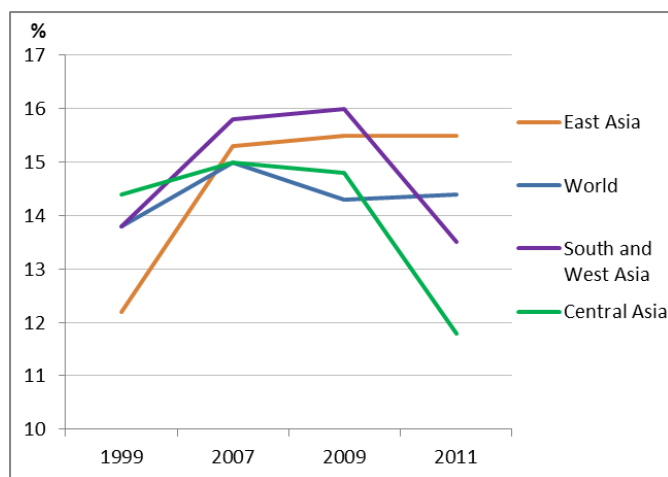
Essential life skills, especially new and emerging skills and competencies needed for students to be work-ready and future-ready, are not firmly established in formal education systems. Currently, only certain Member States such as Japan and Singapore have begun integrating the teaching of such skills in the national curriculum through such reforms as the *ikiru chikara* (Zest for Living) and the 21st-century competencies framework respectively. In recent years, research interest has grown in regard to empowering students through skills including collaboration, communication, ICT literacy, and social and cultural competencies, as well as measuring the learning of these skills. This includes work done by the Assessment and Teaching of 21st-Century Skills (ATC21S), headquartered in Australia, and the Korea Institute for Curriculum and Evaluation (KICE).

UNESCO Bangkok recognizes the impact of general development trends on educational quality and proactively addresses relevant issues. This can be illustrated by a series of UNESCO-KEDI regional policy seminars, where policy-makers and researchers came together to discuss various issues related to quality of teaching and learning and its implications for education policy-making. The increasing focus on research on promoting the transversal competencies aka 21st century skills through UNESCO Bangkok’s Education Research Institutes Network in the Asia -Pacific (ERI-Net) is an illustration of such recognition. Furthermore, UNESCO established in 2013 the Network on Education Quality Monitoring in the Asia-Pacific (NEQMAP) in order to facilitate collaborative research, exchange of expertise and experiences as well as capacity development in support of stronger alignment between curricula, pedagogies and assessment.

Over the years, political commitments to the EFA movement have increased substantially across countries, with governments recognizing the critical role of education in their socio-economic development, social cohesion and national prosperity. Between 1999 and 2009, public expenditure in education has been increasing. However, from 2009, there is a sharp decrease in education expenditure for Central Asia and South West Asia. East Asia was able to keep the expenditure at the same level showing little impact of the economic crisis on its education sector.

Table 2: Total public expenditure on education as % of total government expenditure

	1999	2007	2009	2011
World	13.8	15	14.3	14.4
Arab States	...	20.5	18	16
Central and Eastern Europe	12.6	12.9	12.1	11.3
Latin America and the Caribbean	14	14	13.8	14.4
North America and Western Europe	13.2	12.5	12.9	18.1
East Asia	12.2	15.3	15.5	15.5
Central Asia	14.4	15	14.8	11.8
South and West Asia	13.8	15.8	16	13.5



Sources: GMR 2009, 2011 and 2013/14 (for years 1999 and 2011).

3. “Big Push”

3.1. Big Push Initiative

EFA progress in the Asia Pacific region shows that many countries are likely off track in achieving the EFA goals by 2015. Hence, UNESCO Bangkok and UNESCO field offices in region in collaboration with other development partners, especially UNICEF and bilateral agencies, took action to accelerate the progress for the achievement of Education for All (EFA) in response to the “Big Push” initiative as called upon by the Global EFA Meeting (GEM) in 2012.

As an initial step to advocate for the “Big Push” in Asia-Pacific, UNESCO Bangkok organized the 13th Regional Meeting of National EFA Coordinators: Big Push in February 2013, which was attended by senior policy makers and education officials from 26 countries and partners from non-governmental organizations, international development organizations, universities and civil society.

The meeting produced a key outcomes and follow-up actions document endorsed by participants. This document stressed the region's commitment to the Big Push, and it recognized the importance of the National EFA 2015 Reviews.

3.1.1. Legislative reforms

Many countries in the region have introduced legislative measures to ensure children’s right to basic education. These measures have to a great extent, contributed to the “Big Push”, reinforcing the commitments made by governments to provide quality education for all.

Legislative reforms took place particularly in Pakistan, with the enactment of Article 25-A in the Constitution of Pakistan (2011), entitled “The Right to Free and Compulsory Education in Pakistan.” In addition, “The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act” (RTE) is the Indian legislation under Article 21-A of the Indian Constitution, which makes education a fundamental right of every child. Therefore, free and compulsory education is to be provided to all children between the ages of 6 and 14. RTE came into effect on 1 April 2010. Likewise, in Bangladesh, the Comprehensive Early Childhood Care and Development (CECCD) Policy was approved by the Cabinet on 4 November 2013. The Education Act in Bangladesh is currently undergoing the process of approval.

3.1.2. Advocacy

UNESCO and UNICEF offices in Asia-Pacific as well as education development partners continued to raise awareness on the plight of the marginalized groups in education and have alerted policy makers that based on current trends, the six EFA goals will not be met by 2015. To ensure a collective stance, development partners in the region harnessed the power of partnerships at the regional and national levels, working together to provide technical support to countries, mobilize resources, produce advocacy materials and publications, and celebrate and raise awareness of educational issues. A number of these issues were marked by

international days, including International Literacy Day (ILD), International Mother Language Day (IMLD) and International Women's Day (IWD).

As the EFA Secretariat and co-chair of the regional Thematic Working Group on EFA (TWG on EFA), UNESCO Bangkok organized meetings with EFA partners in the region, including UN agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and academia. The TWG on EFA meetings provided opportunities for partners to discuss on-going EFA activities and areas of collaboration, particularly concerning the continued need to work on the unfinished agenda and group's support to countries that are undertaking the national EFA 2015 reviews.

Additionally, to promote gender equality, UNESCO Bangkok and the East Asia and Pacific United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (EAP UNGEI) working group have joined hands together with UN and national and international development agencies in advocating for girls' education and gender equality in education. Other activities connected with the Big Push included the production of an advocacy video as part of the 2013 Global Action Week (GAW), which highlights the important role of teachers and the need for teacher policy reforms and better governance.

At the country level, UNESCO Almaty (covering Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan) strengthened advocacy and awareness raising for EFA through sharing experiences; discussing educational priorities; translating UNESCO EFA documents into national languages and disseminating these UNESCO EFA documents and materials in the Central Asian region; and creating open environments for acceptance of interventions by national educational authorities through advocacy events and activities (e.g., EFA Week, Literacy Decade, ESD Decade).

There are numerous examples of organized advocacy work at the country level. In Cambodia, the UNESCO Phnom Penh office, together with Government of Cambodia and development partners organized a range of advocacy activities, including the following: the celebration of World Teachers' Day (WTD) 2013; the premiere Screening of *Girl Rising* in Cambodia (premiered 11 October 2013); events at the subnational level; awareness campaigns on radio and TV talk shows regarding the importance of having well-qualified teachers; Global Action Week 2013 (GAW), which is part of the GCE campaign focusing on the theme of teachers.

Likewise, in Pakistan UNESCO Islamabad in cooperation with the Government of Pakistan and development partners developed and disseminated advocacy materials, provided technical assistance and prepared education sector policy analysis at the national and provincial levels. The office also organized national and provincial level meetings among relevant stakeholders. Additionally, CSOs and media persons were equipped with the knowledge and skills to highlight the challenges and issues of education in the country.

In Pakistan, EFA Forums were established at the provincial and district levels. The provincial governments developed education sector plans for the acceleration of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and EFA targets.

3.1.3. Analytical Work

UNESCO's offices in the Asia-Pacific have been conducting analytical work in cooperation with Member States and national and international organizations to build a knowledge base on topics such as gender, non-formal education, data and educational indicators, pedagogy, and literacy.

To accelerate efforts towards universal primary education by 2015, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics and UNICEF launched the Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children (OOSCI) to reduce the number of out-of-school children and address disparities in access and attendance. The initiative aims to improve data and analysis on the issue of out-of-school children to develop comprehensive profiles of these children and to identify the multiple deprivations and disparities they face in relation to education. In Asia-Pacific, Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan and Timor-Leste are engaged in the initiative.

In support of the "Big Push", UNESCO Bangkok has produced five country case studies documenting promising initiatives that have contributed towards progress made in the EFA goals. These case studies are part of the "Accelerating EFA in Asia and the Pacific" extra-budgetary Japanese Funds-in-Trust (JFIT) project and focus on promising practices in Bangladesh (pre-primary education and school learning improvement plan), Cambodia (early grade reading), India (Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan), Indonesia (literacy) and the Philippines (Pushcart classrooms – non-formal education). These case studies will be widely shared among countries in the region in 2014.

Development partners have been supporting countries to build their capacities in undertaking education system monitoring and evaluation. In this context, a regional workshop on the monitoring and evaluation framework for the Pacific Education Development Framework was organized in Fiji from 31 July to 2 August 2013 by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) with financial support from Australian Agency for International Development and UNESCO. Many Permanent-Secretaries of Education participated in the meeting together with the persons in charge of the education management information system (EMIS) and monitoring and evaluation. The UIS was responsible for the first session, which included a presentation of the National EFA 2015 Review process. In addition, a consultation meeting of the Pacific Heads of Education Systems (PHES) was held on 23-24 October 2013 in Tonga to discuss the challenges and emerging issues of common concern in the Pacific.

3.1.4. Partnerships and Resource Mobilization

Much of UNESCO's work in the region has been successful due to its strong partnership with a range of stakeholders. In this spirit, UNESCO offices in Asia-Pacific established and strengthened existing partnerships with public, private and INGO sectors, which has led to the mobilization of resources and implementation of EFA-related activities.

In Asia-Pacific, the following countries are partners of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), which is the only multilateral partnership dedicated to getting all children into school for a quality education: Afghanistan, Bhutan, Cambodia, Kyrgyz Republic, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Tajikistan, Timor-Leste, Uzbekistan and Viet Nam. UNESCO has been supporting these GPE developing country partners in their work to develop robust education sector plans, to ensure that more children are enrolled in school and receive good

quality education, to promote girls' education, and/or to improve the overall quality of education and learning outcomes.

In September 2012, the UN Secretary-General launched the Global Education First Initiative (GEFI), which focuses on three priorities: put every child in school; improve quality of learning; and foster global citizenship. To stimulate support and visibility for the Initiative among governments, Champion Countries for GEFI have been appointed. In Asia-Pacific, Australia, Bangladesh, and China are Champion Countries. As an education initiative launched by the highest level with the same priorities as EFA, GEFI has reinforced the importance of our work in EFA and the urgency to accelerate progress in EFA. At a high level meeting organized by Thai Ministry of Education in Bangkok in 2013, UNESCO presented key messages of GEFI and how countries could benefit from it.

While many countries in the region have achieved gender parity in education, there are countries that still lag behind. The Malala Fund for Girls' Right to Education was established by UNESCO and Pakistan, with a memorandum of understanding (MOU) signed by the parties on 10 December 2012. A Framework Funds-in-Trust Agreement was signed on 6 February 2014 between the Government of Pakistan and the Director-General of UNESCO establishing the overarching programme "Support to national capacity building to realize girls' right to education in Pakistan". UNESCO is supporting Pakistan in developing a girls' education programme to be funded within the Malala Fund.

On March 29, 2015, the UN Special Envoy on Global Education, Gordon Brown announced the international community will contribute USD 1 billion to Pakistan over the next four years to aid universal education efforts in the country. Brown also announced the 21-month goal to have as many students as possible in school by December 2015. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif announced a countrywide literacy campaign and its related incentives aimed at securing enrolment, and he emphasized the government's commitment to increasing allocated funds for education to 4% of GDP in order to achieve the EFA targets by 2018.

The Asia Pacific region hosts five members (Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, and Pakistan) of the E-9 initiative, a consortium of most populous countries. E-9 countries have made significant socioeconomic progress. This is reflected in their EFA indicators in recent years as they have been able to bring millions of children to schools. However, challenges remain because the E-9 countries continue to be home to millions of out-of-school children and adolescents and illiterate adults. It is recognized that global progress on EFA will very much depend on the success demonstrated by the E-9 countries. UNESCO has been closely working with these countries to promote EFA. These countries have been vigorously pursuing the 'Big Push' agenda by introducing new legislative measures, targeted interventions, public-private initiatives and increased funding to education. In recent years, the E-9 cooperation is centered on teachers and inclusive education and is very much linked to the quality agenda. In this context, the Ministerial Review meeting that was held in New Delhi November 2012 took stock of the progress towards Education for All goals in E-9 countries and decided their cooperation in the area of inclusive, relevant and quality education for all. The meeting agreed to work together on issues such as curriculum reform, strategies for inclusive schools, professional development of teachers, use of ICTs, and assessment of learning outcomes. Pakistan will host the next Ministerial Review Meeting in 2014.

A number of Flexible Learning Strategies (FLS) exist in Asia and the Pacific, and the common characteristics of these programmes include (1) Intensive quality teaching; (2) The ability to reach the unreached; (3) Flexibility; (4) Equivalency to formal education; and (5) Lifelong learning. UNESCO Bangkok has been advocating the promotion of FLS as a strategy for accelerating EFA goals. A regional network on FLS has been established for joint advocacy and resource mobilization bringing together national, regional and international partners. A set of advocacy materials, consisting of the 12-page "Flexible Learning Strategies" brochure and three short advocacy video clips have been developed to introduce exemplary cases of flexible learning strategies and explain how they function.

In November 2012, UNESCO and UNICEF held a Regional Meeting on Alternative Learning/Schooling Programmes for Primary Education to Reach the Unreached in Bangkok, Thailand in order to discuss the alternative pathways to providing education. The meeting brought together mid- to high-level government officials, NGO representatives and experts from 23 countries in the Asia-Pacific region to share strategies that have been effective in reaching out-of-school children in their respective countries.

The Regional Consultation Meeting on Flexible Learning Strategies for Out-of-School Children in Thailand was held on 29-30 November, 2013 in Chiang Rai. The meeting was organized by UNESCO Bangkok in collaboration with the UNICEF Country Office for Thailand and the Chiang Rai Provincial Office of the Non-Formal and Informal Education, Ministry of Education of Thailand. This was the first opportunity for many participants to network and create partnerships, as well as broaden their knowledge of FLS. Following the meeting, a regional network was formed to discuss concrete action plans and implement joint activities at the provincial level.

UNESCO Bangkok has prepared a proposal for Educate A Child (EAC), a new global initiative launched by Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser of Qatar. In line with the initiative, the proposal aims to cover nine Southeast Asian countries (Philippines, Thailand, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Viet Nam, Indonesia, Myanmar, Malaysia and Timor-Leste) that continue to face challenges in reaching and providing education to out-of-school children. The main goal of the project is to enhance countries' institutional capacity and education systems to provide learning opportunities for OOSC regardless of citizenship. The project will carry out research work (situation, legislation policies, curriculum, delivery mechanism, programmes, budget, monitoring and evaluation, etc.) to inform and support regional policy advocacy (ASEAN Declaration), regional capacity development, Flexible Learning Strategies (networking, FLS action plans to expand/improve) and capacity development on FLS.

National consultation meetings have been organized in several countries in the region (e.g., Myanmar, Lao PDR, Timor Leste) to discuss the potential use of flexible learning strategies in reaching the unreached and to mobilize funds for FLS programmes.

UNESCO, UNICEF, and the Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood (ARNEC), the Korea Institute of Child Care and Education (KICCE) and the Korea Development Institute (KDI) organized the Asia-Pacific Regional Policy Forum on Early Childhood Care and Education: "Are children ready to learn? Are schools ready for children?" from 10 to 12 September 2013 in Seoul, Republic of Korea. This event was supported by the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) and the Open Society Foundation (OSF). The Forum provided a platform for high-level policy-makers of Asia-Pacific

countries to share knowledge and discuss strategies for improving young children's "readiness to learn," from both children's and schools' perspectives, with special attention to the promotion of equity. The event not only provided the impetus for accelerating the region's quantitative and qualitative progress toward EFA Goal 1, but it also brought fresh perspectives on capacity development, policy formulation, good practice, partnerships and research, which will inform the post-2015 development agenda.

4. Overview of the Status of National EFA 2015 Reviews in the Asia-Pacific

4.1. Preparations for the EFA 2015 Review

4.1.1. Regional/National level engagement with countries

UNESCO Bangkok and UNESCO field offices are providing support to countries to conduct their national EFA 2015 reviews and to prepare the national EFA reports. To initiate the review process, UNESCO Bangkok and UNESCO field offices circulated the guidelines to countries and partners and requested countries designate EFA 2015 Review focal points.

In the key outcomes and follow-up actions document endorsed by participants at the 13th Regional Meeting of National EFA Coordinators, country participants requested UNESCO Bangkok to provide technical assistance in support of the national EFA 2015 reviews. In response, UNESCO Bangkok, with financial support from the Republic of Korea and UNICEF, organized a technical workshop on the National EFA 2015 Reviews, on 20-22 November 2013 in Bangkok. This technical workshop included 120 participants from 31 countries, who represented NGOs and UNICEF, respectively. Furthermore, UNESCO set up an EFA help desk for the reviews, in order to provide technical assistance to countries online and in-person.

4.1.2. Status of National EFA 2015 Reviews in countries

As of February 2014, 37 Member States have confirmed their participation in the National EFA 2015 Reviews and are preparing national EFA reports. Among the countries that have confirmed their participation in the reviews are five OECD countries (Australia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Singapore and New Zealand) and five E-9 countries (China, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia and Pakistan). A panel of reviewers for the national EFA reports has been established, which will provide feedback to countries on the first draft of the national EFA report. This panel consists of representatives from UNESCO, UNICEF, UNESCAP, and NGOs, including Action Aid, Plan International, ASPBAE and E-Net Philippines. UNESCO has developed (and disseminated) guidelines for reviewing the reports.

Countries in the Pacific region have committed to reporting their progress against EFA in their National EFA 2015 Reviews. Underlying this commitment is an effective partnership between development organisations in the region that supports countries to evaluate and report their progress against the EFA goals. The National EFA 2015 Reviews sit within a broader work

program of education evaluation in the region both at the national level through national education monitoring and evaluation plans and at the regional level through the Pacific Education Development Framework (PEDF). For many of the Pacific Island Countries (PICs) that have indicated a commitment to this review process, this will be the first time that their progress against the EFA Goals has been reported as part of a global EFA reporting process. The Reviews in the Pacific are likely to document many of the constraints to progress against the EFA goals that PICs have in common such as government resource constraints; reliance on overseas development assistance for funding of fixed, and sometimes recurring costs of education; and the difficulties associated with geographical isolation and small populations.

The UIS in cooperation with UNESCO Apia, has been actively involved in supporting PICs in the preparation of their National EFA 2015 Reviews, both through the provision of bilateral support as well as through cooperative activities with other partners in the region. Activities worth noting include:

- Working with the Pacific Island Forum Secretariat to identify the overlap between the EFA goals and indicators, and the PEDF Monitoring and Evaluation Framework to reduce the reporting burden on PICs
- Hosting a two-day technical workshop on education data and statistics for PICs to give EFA Review teams the opportunity to work directly with UIS-AIMS and UNESCO Apia colleagues on the education data and statistics required for the EFA Reviews. The Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) also attended the workshop and provided support.
- Partnering with SPC to co-fund a four-day workshop on education data and statistics to build education statistical capacity in PICs.
- Providing technical assistance to EFA Review teams through the UNESCO Bangkok Helpdesk.

Eight PICs also attended the Regional Technical Workshop: National EFA 2015 Reviews in Asia-Pacific (Bangkok, November 2013) which is an indicator of the commitment this region has so far demonstrated to the EFA Review process.

To facilitate the feedback process and the finalization of the national EFA reports, UNESCO Bangkok, in collaboration with UNICEF EAPRO ROSA, will organize a follow-up Regional Technical Feedback Workshop on the National EFA 2015 Reviews in the Asia-Pacific on 29-30 April 2014.

4.2. Civil Society Participation

Civil Society Organization (CSO) participation is a key aspect of Education for All. UNESCO recognizes that civil society organizations play major roles as education service providers, innovators, and informed critics and advocates. Therefore, active participation of, and partnerships with CSOs has been encouraged and supported through conferences, workshops, and stakeholder meetings.

CSO participation was encouraged in EFA-related discussions on the national and regional levels, including the three day technical workshop, “National EFA 2015 Reviews in Asia-Pacific” held in November 2013 and two day regional technical workshop held on 29-30 April 2014.

CSO participation was also highlighted in a two day Round Table Conference in India entitled, "RTE: Challenges in implementation and Education for All: By 2015 'Big Push'" in September 2013. CSOs were represented among the 70 participants who came together to discuss the status of Education for All goals and the implementation of the Right to Education (RTE) Act in India. During this conference, discussions were held amongst relevant stakeholders, and recommendations were made on the policy, implementation, and advocacy levels regarding EFA.

CSOs in the region have undertaken EFA reviews from their perspective. The Asia Pacific South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE), for instance, is coordinating EFA reviews in 14 countries in Asia-Pacific where it has its coalitions. Alongside, ASPBAE has also initiated the discussions on the post-2015 education agenda from a CSO perspective. ASPBAE will subsequently prepare a regional synthesis report.

4.3. Preparation of Regional EFA Report

The deadline to submit the final national EFA 2015 review report to UNESCO is June 2014. The national EFA reports will be synthesized in the form of a regional EFA review report, which will feed into the discussion of the post-2015 education agenda.

UNESCO Bangkok plans to organize the Asia-Pacific Regional Education Conference in August 2014. The tentative dates proposed for the conference are 6 to 8 August.

5. Post-2015 Agenda

UNESCO Bangkok, in its role as the Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau for Education, has been actively leading and promoting region-wide reflections and debates on education in the post-2015 agenda. This process has been organized in particular through a series of events to stimulate regional dialogues and discussions on education beyond 2015. This part of the report gives an update on this process and summarizes the outcomes of the discussions that have taken place thus far in Asia and the Pacific.

5.1. Updates on the regional process

Since 2012, three regional high-level expert meetings and a regional thematic consultation on education in the post-2015 development agenda were organized in the Asia-Pacific region by UNESCO and its partners. Other regional, sub-regional, and national consultations were also held and focused on specific themes in education, such as education for sustainable development (ESD) and early childhood development (ECD). Furthermore, the National EFA Reviews currently underway by member states integrate the questions concerning the process and progress of education beyond 2015.

The following highlights selected regional and sub-regional events that took place in Asia and the Pacific since 2012. These events sought to contribute to the debates on education in the post-2015 agenda.

5.1.1. Regional high-level expert meetings on education beyond 2015

Three regional high-level expert meetings were held in Bangkok, Thailand from 2012 to 2013 to discuss the agenda for education beyond 2015. Approximately 50 to 60 experts from across the Asia-Pacific region participated in each meeting, and these experts represented respective ministries of education; universities; research institutions; think tanks; UN agencies; international and regional organizations; non-governmental and civil society organizations; and the private sector.

The first meeting. “Towards EFA 2015 and Beyond – Shaping a New Vision of Education” was organized from 9 to 10 May 2012, with the support of the Korean National Commission for UNESCO, as well as UNICEF regional offices. The meeting took stock of the region’s progress made under the EFA agenda; identified remaining challenges; examined current debates around the broader UN development and education agenda beyond 2015; and discussed emerging development trends in various areas, such as economy, demography, society, culture, technology and environment, and their implications for education.

The second meeting. “Beyond 2015 – Rethinking Learning in a Changing World” was held from 26 to 28 November 2012, with the support of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan. The participants came from diverse fields of expertise including education, neuroscience, the learning sciences, economics and technology, and they engaged in a multi-disciplinary dialogue on learning in school and beyond. They discussed different learning methodologies, which considered how individuals might learn better, and how people might continue to learn in a changing world. Prior to this expert meeting, **a region-wide film and article contest entitled “Better Learning, Better Life”** was organized in order to bring together voices of young people on education for the future. Young people of the region responded in writing and in images to the questions: “What is learning of good quality? What kind of skills will be needed for the future? What should young people be learning, and how should they be learning it?” The winning video and articles were shared at the expert meeting and contributed to the discussion.

The third meeting. “Beyond 2015 – Transforming Teaching and Learning in the Asia-Pacific Region” was convened from 16 to 18 October 2013 with the support of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan and the Korean National Commission for UNESCO. By addressing the question “What teaching and learning for the future?”, the participants exchanged their views on trends, issues, and challenges in the region, reflected on actions required to transform teaching and learning and discussed key aspects of quality education and learning beyond 2015.

5.1.2. Regional thematic consultation on education in the post-2015 development agenda

As a part of the worldwide consultation on the post-2015 development agenda led by the United Nations, and held adjacent to the 13th Regional Meeting of National EFA Coordinators, **the Regional Thematic Consultation on Education in the Post-2015 Development Agenda**, was co-organized by UNESCO and UNICEF in Bangkok, Thailand from 29 February to

1 March 2013. Supported by various non-governmental and civil society organizations, the meeting brought together 120 participants from 21 countries that represented a wide array of stakeholders. Prior to the meeting, preparatory consultations were carried out with communities, associations and networks at the grass-roots level in order to reflect broad-based civil society voices in the regional consultation. In addition, the Twitter Six-Word Slogan Competition was organized to encourage those who reside in the region to share their views on education in the future, and the winning slogan, “In the future, education will be interactive, innovative, and inclusive!” was submitted by a participant based in Cambodia.

The consultation meeting proposed the following as the goal for education in the post-2015 development agenda: “to guarantee equitable opportunities for all to participate in transformative quality learning at all levels aiming to provide the knowledge, skills, competencies and values vital to achieve inclusive and sustainable development.” The outcome of the meeting contributed to the Global Thematic Consultation on Education in the Post-2015 Development Agenda held in Dakar, Senegal from 18-19 March 2013.

5.1.3. Education for a Sustainable Future: UNESCO Asia-Pacific Regional Consultation on a Post-Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) Framework

UNESCO Bangkok organized the Asia-Pacific Regional Consultation on a Post-DESD Framework in Bangkok, Thailand from 16 to 17 May 2013. Representatives from governments, non-governmental organizations, educational institutions, universities and research institutions came together to assess the progress made during the Decade; review the lessons learnt; and provide recommendations for the post-2014 ESD programme framework. The outcome of this consultation will contribute to the World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development that is scheduled to take place in Nagoya, Japan from 10 to 12 November 2014.

5.1.4. Asia-Pacific Regional Early Childhood Development Conference

At the Asia-Pacific Regional Early Childhood Development Conference organized by the ARNEC in Singapore from 18 to 20 November 2013, experts from government agencies, universities, research institutions, NGOs, civil society networks, UNICEF and UNESCO came together and proposed post-2015 goals, targets and indicators for early childhood development. The proposal contributed to the UN General Assembly Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals.

5.1.5. Regional Technical Workshop: National EFA 2015 Reviews in Asia-Pacific

At the Regional Technical Workshop: National EFA 2015 Reviews in Asia-Pacific, held in Bangkok, Thailand from 20 to 22 November 2013, the participants analysed issues and challenges in education and reflected on education beyond 2015. The national EFA reviews are expected to include a discussion on education beyond 2015. A regional synthesis report will be prepared based on the national reviews, and the outcomes of these reviews will contribute to the World Education Forum 2015, which is to be held in Incheon, Republic of Korea in 2015.

5.1.6. Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) Consultation and Workshop on Post-2015 Education Scenarios and Post-EFA Education Agenda in Southeast Asia

The SEAMEO Consultation and Workshop on Post-2015 Education Scenarios and Post-EFA Education Agenda in Southeast Asia, held from 28 to 30 January 2014 in Chiang Mai, Thailand,

brought together Ministry of Education officials of SEAMEO member states to discuss the current efforts of Southeast Asian governments in supporting EFA and the post-2015 education agenda, especially in light of the 2015 ASEAN Economic Community.

5.2. Issues and challenges in the region

In the regional consultation process, debates on education post-2015 were situated in the broader context of rapidly transforming societies in Asia and the Pacific. The participants pointed out various trends that characterize the region, such as fast economic growth; changing social contexts and demography; technological advancement; and environmental degradation.

The discussions regarding the implications of these trends for education led to the view that education systems need to transform themselves in order to respond to the requirements of fast-changing, ever-globalizing knowledge-based societies and support their sustainable development while also leveraging and taking into account the diversity of people, traditions, cultures, languages and social fabrics of the Asia-Pacific region. The consultation also yielded a general agreement that, while significant progress has been made towards achieving EFA goals in the region—universal enrolment in primary education, in particular—the post-2015 education agenda also needs to address not only the current EFA goals that are yet to be achieved, but also newly arising issues and challenges posed by emerging trends. The following list highlights some of the persistent and emerging issues and challenges for education in the region raised in the consultation process:

- Significant, sometimes widening, disparities, both between and within countries, in enrolment, retention, progression and learning outcomes, often on the basis of gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity, language, geographical location, and disability.
- Rapidly increasing demands for post-basic education and pre-primary education, hence the urgent need to increase equitable access to all levels of education from early childhood to higher education and adult learning.
- Insufficient quality of education to effectively and efficiently support and improve learning for all learners.
- Poor quality of teachers and teaching often due to gaps between policy and practice, a lack of systematic teacher training and development, and non-conducive work environments for teachers.
- Disconnects between what is taught in schools and education programmes and what is needed by people for their effective participation in the increasingly inter-connected and rapidly changing world.
- A lack of long-term commitment to and sustained and well-resourced action for education.

- Poor and opaque governance of education, including non-transparency, weak accountability, corruption and malpractices.

5.3. Priority areas for action

From the debates and consultations that took place in the Asia-Pacific region since 2012, a broad consensus is emerging that, while achieving Education for All remains an unfinished agenda, orientations for education post-2015 need to go beyond EFA goals and address all levels of education, giving focus to learning, while incorporating transformative and inclusive approaches. Furthermore, there is growing agreement on several key concepts that will underpin education post-2015, such as access, equity, quality, relevance and lifelong learning. The regional discussions on these priority areas for action are summarized below.

5.3.1. Lifelong learning

Lifelong learning should therefore be considered a key, guiding principle in furthering education development and reform. Learning is a continuous process that occurs throughout life from early childhood to adulthood. It is also a “life-wide” process, acquired across various spheres of life, in and out of school, through various delivery modes—formal, non-formal and informal.

5.3.2. Access and participation

Equitable and inclusive access to quality learning should be ensured for all – children, youth and adults – at all levels of education. Education policy priorities need to begin with early childhood care and education and go beyond primary schooling to post-primary education, higher education and vocational training.

5.3.3. Equity

Greater focus should be placed on addressing inequity, inequality and exclusion. The root causes of disparities, not only in terms of access to quality education but also in terms of learning outcomes, should be addressed. Gender equality should be further emphasized. Those who missed formal schooling and lack foundational skills, such as basic literacy and numeracy, should also be given special attention in the post-2015 education agenda. The eventual aim is to eradicate all forms of exclusion, marginalization and discrimination in education.

5.3.4. Quality education and learning

In order to improve learning, the quality of education in all of its aspects must be addressed, and this encompasses the learning process, content, environment and outcome. Quality education requires a professional and committed teaching force that is able to respond to diverse learning needs and is supported by effective and safe learning environments, as well as competent school leadership. Also central to quality education are inclusive and relevant curricula, as well as a supportive pedagogy that enables the achievement of meaningful and relevant learning outcomes, and inclusive and participatory monitoring and assessment system.

5.3.5. Relevance of learning

There is a need for all people—children, youth and adults, especially those from disadvantaged groups and persons with disabilities—to acquire relevant skills that combine the generic,

technical and vocational in order to prepare them for decent work and a better life in a rapidly changing world. The future increasingly requires that every person acquire “non-cognitive” skills, as well as transversal competencies and attitudes, so as to be more creative and innovative, and be able to adapt, assimilate to changes, and live together in peace. Education systems should therefore promote among learners the formation of values and attitudes such as embracing diversity, non-discrimination, sympathy, communication, conflict resolution, and environmental awareness so as to enable children, young people and adults to participate actively and responsibly in their communities and in the increasingly interconnected world.

5.3.6. Governance and financing

Education is a basic human right of every person and a public good for all societies. While the obligation of governments to ensure equitable learning opportunities for all is unequivocal, strong and genuine partnerships among governments and various non-governmental stakeholders as well as the wider community, are essential in ensuring the right of every person to education.

Responsible and participatory governance is required to strengthen transparent and accountable education systems; to reduce and eventually eliminate corruption, malpractice, and inequalities in access to quality learning; and to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of policy implementation. Accountability frameworks need to be put in place at all levels, from the school level to the national level.

The post-2015 agenda on education should indicate a fixed percentage of fiscal revenue as a benchmark for governments to achieve. Clear and progressive targets should be set for domestic investment in education, including early childhood care and education programmes; technical vocational education and training; and non-formal education.

5.4. Next steps

As mandated by the 37th Session of the General Conference in November 2013, UNESCO is continuing to consult the Member States and a wide array of stakeholders on education post-2015, particularly through organizing and hosting stimulating debates at relevant conferences and meetings on education.

The significant milestone in this process will be the Asia-Pacific Regional Education Conference, which is scheduled to be held in Bangkok, Thailand in August 2014. At the conference, high-level officials of ministries of education and diverse stakeholders from Asia-Pacific countries will come together to take stock of regional EFA progress; discuss lessons learnt for the future; and develop regional recommendations for education post-2015. The outcome of this conference will contribute to the World Education Forum 2015 in Incheon, Republic of Korea.

6. Conclusion

Progress towards Education for All in Asia and the Pacific continues amidst a greatly diverse as well as complex regional and educational landscape. EFA challenges remain, including those that highlight concerns with access to inclusive quality education, teacher training, gender disparities, adult literacy, relevant learning, good governance, sufficient financing, as well as sustained and continuous primary and secondary enrolment in schools. Nevertheless, tremendous strides have been taken, and continue to be taken towards fostering collaboration amongst UNESCO, respective ministries of education, NGOs, CSOs, and other educational partners in order to increase and sustain enrolment; provide alternative educational opportunities; lead discussions and knowledge-sharing among relevant actors and stakeholders; as well as promote and defend the right to education for all in the Asia-Pacific.

Recognizing that the EFA Goals will not be met by 2015, and in accordance with the recommendation of the Global EFA Meeting in November 2012, UNESCO Bangkok and UNESCO field offices are closely working with Member States and educational partners in the region to effectively accelerate progress towards accomplishing all six EFA goals.

UNESCO Bangkok and UNESCO field offices are currently supporting regional and national level engagement with countries concerning the preparation of National EFA 2015 Reviews. A historic number of countries (40 or more) are engaged in reviewing and analyzing their national progress towards EFA, which includes both developed and developing countries and Pacific Island Countries. UNESCO provided technical support throughout the review process. Furthermore, in order to aid the feedback process and the finalization of the national EFA reports, UNESCO and UNICEF will host a follow-up workshop that will be held in April 2014. Civil society organization participation remains a vital aspect in promoting EFA in the region. CSOs have also been part of the review process. The final National EFA 2015 Reviews are to be submitted to UNESCO by June 2014.

UNESCO Bangkok continues to lead and promote the regional discussions, reflections, and debates regarding the Post-2015 Agenda on education in the Asia-Pacific. Regional and sub-regional events, activities, meetings, consultations, and conferences continue to be held which seek to address the issues and challenges confronting education in the region. The consultations so far have pointed the direction of the post-2015 education agenda to be anchored in a lifelong and sector-wide perspective, addressing access, equity and quality for all – children, youth and adults - at all levels of education from ECCE to higher education and adult learning across formal, non-formal and informal modalities.

UNESCO Bangkok will organize the Asia-Pacific Regional Education Conference from 6 to 8 August 2014 bringing together education ministers and high-level officials from countries in order to discuss issues, challenges and future priorities for education on the basis of the national EFA reviews and develop regional recommendations for the international framework for action to be adopted at the World Education Forum in Incheon in 2015.

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