

ALL CHILDREN IN SCHOOL BY 2015

Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children



SOUTH ASIA REGIONAL STUDY

Covering Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka

January 2014

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United Nations Children's Fund
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ISBN: 978-9937-8215-6-8

Cover Photo:

Children on the left walk to fetch water as school girls walk back to their homes at Amarpur village near Udaipur, Rajasthan, India in this photograph from September 2013. © UNICEF/INDA2013-00490/Altaf Qadri

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Foreword

If South Asia is going to be part of a world where all children can lead productive lives and be responsible citizens when they grow up, it is important to focus not only on children attending school but also on those who are out of school.

Much has been achieved in South Asia in getting more children to school. National legislation and policies are in place in line with international frameworks like the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC). Governments have shown strong commitment to upholding the right to education for all children.

Yet, the unfortunate reality is that the numbers of out-of-school children in South Asia are simply staggering. The latest UIS data indicate there are 7.57 million children between the ages 5 to 10 who are not attending school in the South Asia region. Another 25.29 million children between the ages 11 to 13 should be in secondary education but are not in school at all. These numbers make South Asia the region with the second highest number of children not getting an education, after Sub-Saharan Africa.

This study is primarily based on the country reports from Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The first three countries are the most populous in South Asia and home to the majority of out-of-school children in the region. The South Asia study and the country studies aim to understand the scale of the problem of exclusion of children in the four countries as well as in the region. This study shows there are a total of 27 million children out of school in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, of whom 17 million are of primary school-age and 9.9 million of lower secondary school-age.


Children not attending school are in most cases unaccounted for in school records. They are therefore “invisible” and often not considered in policy and decision-making. The lack of data and information on children who are the most excluded from education are making it even more difficult to reach these children. In addition there is a lack of tools and methodologies needed to identify children who are not attending school.

We hope that this study, which is part of the Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children, will equip countries with a methodology to better understand who are the children excluded from education, and come up with better solutions. This study highlights individual and household characteristics of out-of-school children - information that are crucial to make informed policy responses targeted at barriers facing specific groups of children not in school.

Profiles of children attending school who are at the greatest risk of dropping out have also been reviewed. If pushed out from the education system, these children are likely to become the out-of-school children of tomorrow. Prevention is better than cure. If policy responses can target at-risk children, and prevent them from dropping out, the scale of exclusion will diminish over time.

In order to realize the rights of ALL children to education, political commitment and adequate policy responses are needed to address exclusion from education. This study looks at some noteworthy policy responses in the four countries with the aim of documenting and sharing these practices to all South Asian countries and beyond. More importantly, this study identifies a set of recommendations and areas for further research to address exclusion in education. We highly encourage all education stakeholders to take note of these recommendations and the new insights into the characteristics of excluded groups of children in South Asia.

We hope that this study and the Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children will be instrumental in ensuring that ALL children in South Asia have a chance for a better future through quality education.



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Regional Director
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Acknowledgements

Many people and organizations have provided inputs, support and feedback in the process of drafting the South Asia OOSCI Regional Study, demonstrating genuine motivation to shed more light into the numbers, profiles and characteristics of the millions of South Asian children currently out of school.

First of all, the dedicated efforts of the country teams of Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka resulted in the four OOSCI country studies which formed the bases of the South Asia study. We would like to explicitly thank the authors of the country studies: Manos Antoninis and Ahmadullah Mia (Bangladesh); Anuradha De, Tanuka Endow and colleagues at Collaborative Research and Dissemination (India); Dr Abid Aman Burki, Usman Khan, Hina Sheikh and Abubakar Memon all from the Lahore University of Management Sciences (Pakistan); Swara Jayaweera and her colleagues at the Centre for Women's Research (Sri Lanka) and our UNICEF colleagues who led the initiative at the country level.

A special thank goes to Sheena Bell, Friedrich Huebler, Albert Motivans and Shailendra Sigdel of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) who have been true champions throughout the implementation of the Out-of-School Children Initiative phase I, in addition to providing extremely useful feedback on the statistical aspects of this report.

We are grateful to the team from Oxford Policy Management (OPM) composed of Anna Haas, Gitanjali Pande and Georgina Rawle for drafting the first version of the report and for supporting various processes at country level. Ian MacAuslan and Gunilla Petterson of OPM also reviewed and provided feedback to strengthen this study. Thanks is also extended to the Understanding Children's Work (UCW) programme for its inputs on the child labour components of the study.

Since the study used a multi-sectoral angle to look at the situation of out-of-school children, special thanks go to the colleagues at the UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia who guided the report conceptually: Genevieve Begkoyian, Henk van Norden, Ron Pouwels, and Andrea Rossi. Support from Rhiannon James, Pradeep Rajbhandari, and Jean Jacques Simone has been very helpful as well.

Finally, I would like to sincerely thank the education section colleagues who have been involved throughout the process. Their commitment has made this report possible. In the earlier stage Pushpa Chhetri, Dagny Fosen, Raka Rashid, and Michaëlle Marie Tauson worked hard to make sure all OOSCI country studies received adequate support while towards the end, Phuong T Nguyen, Geeta Wali Rai, and especially Leotes Lugo Helin have been instrumental in finalizing this compelling report.

Lieke van de Wiel
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Kathmandu, January 2014

Executive summary

South Asia has seen significant achievements in strengthening education systems and getting more children to school. Enrolment rates in primary education have reached 90 per cent in 2011 for the region, up from 75 per cent in 2000. More importantly, this growth has been accompanied by a sizeable progress in enrolling girls, with net enrolment rates for the region indicating 88 per cent of the total primary school-going age girls are now in school, up from 68 per cent in 2000 (UIS Database accessed January 2014). National laws and policies have been introduced in line with the CRC and other international frameworks. Countries have committed to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Education for All (EFA) goals. Across the region, strategies for a more equitable development, including in education, have been developed. Education has also been identified as a major priority area in the Post 2015 development agenda discussions.

Yet, the unfortunate reality is that millions of children in South Asia are still out of school. This study will contribute to efforts of offering these children education opportunities by making them visible and providing evidence-based recommendations on how to reach out to this excluded group across the region, and in particular the four participating countries: Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

This South Asia study has been prepared as part of the Global Initiative on Out-of-School-Children (OOSCI) initiated by UNICEF and the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) in 2010. The initiative's goal is to make a significant and sustained reduction in the number of children out of school around the world by:

- Developing comprehensive profiles of excluded children based on standardized and innovative statistical methods;
- Linking quantitative data with the socio-cultural barriers and bottlenecks that lead to exclusion;
- Identifying sound policies which address exclusion from education with a multi-sectorial perspective.

This South Asia study is primarily based on findings from four OOSCI country studies on Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. These four countries have strong national legislation and expressed commitment to the international frameworks to provide all children with basic education. Impressive achievements in improving basic school enrolment rates have been seen in these countries over the past decade. However, staggering numbers of children remain out of school, particularly in the three most populous countries: Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. It is clear that without further action, including some new and innovative strategies, inequity in school participation and ultimately opportunities in life will persist.

Conceptual framework

The South Asia study and the country studies follow the Conceptual and Methodological Framework (CMF) of the initiative. Analyses is based on the 'Five Dimensions of Exclusion' (5DE) which covers five target groups:

- Dimensions 1, 2 and 3 cover children who are not participating in formal schooling in three age groups: pre-primary, primary and lower secondary school age;
- Dimensions 4 and 5 cover children who are attending primary or lower secondary school, respectively but are at risk of dropping out.

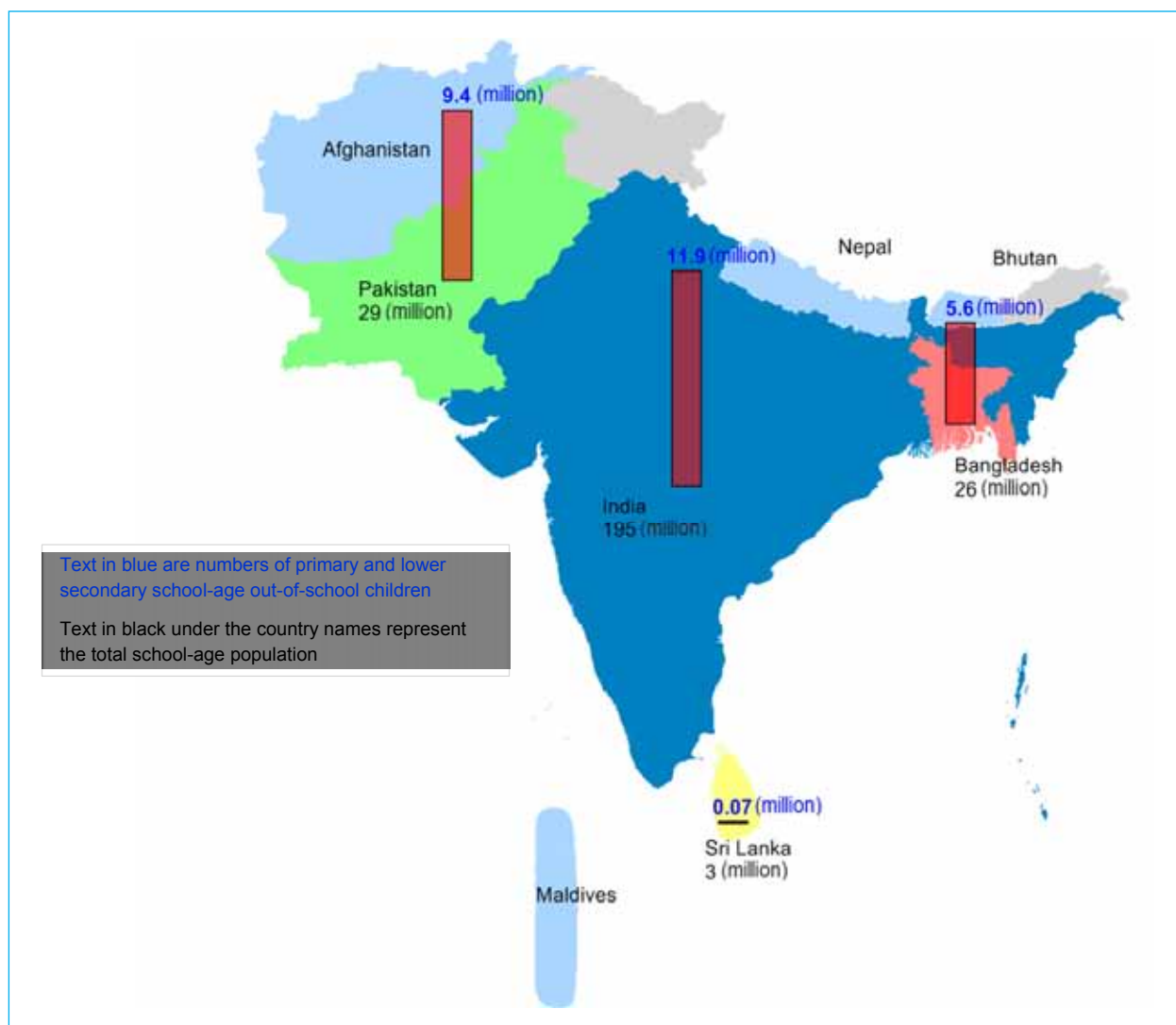
Household survey data and administrative data were analysed to get a deeper understanding of out-of-school children and their characteristics, and to get a better insight into enrolment and other trends in education in the countries covered. This is one of the key contributions of this study to existing literature.

Number of out-of-school children, their profiles and characteristics

South Asia is facing challenges with the high number of children being denied schooling. The magnitude of the numbers of out-of-school children (OOSC) in the region remain staggering despite efforts towards universal primary and basic education. An analysis of household surveys show that a total of **27 million children between the ages 5 to 13 are out of school** in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. This comprises 17 million children of primary school-age (ages 5-9 in Pakistan and Sri Lanka, and ages 6-10 in Bangladesh and India) and 9.9 million children of lower secondary school-age (ages 10-12 in Pakistan, 10-13 in Sri Lanka, and 11-13 in Bangladesh and India). The vast majority of out-of-school children live in India mainly because of its large school-age population; very few live in Sri Lanka because of its relatively small population and high rates of school attendance. The majority of excluded children in each of the three largest countries live in rural areas.

UIS data which is sourced from administrative data in countries also show an estimated 26.6 million children not in school in the four countries. Of this, 1.5 million are primary school-age children and 25.1 million are lower secondary school-age. India has the highest number of OOSC at 17.8 million followed by Pakistan with 6.5 million. For the eight South Asian countries, UIS estimates a total of 7.57 million children between the ages 5 to 10 are not in school. Another 25.29 million children ages 11 to 13 should be in secondary education but are not in school.

Number of primary and lower-secondary school-age out-of-school children, and total school-age population, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka



Note: This map is stylized and not to scale. It does not reflect a position by UNICEF on the legal status of any country or territory or the delimitation of any frontiers.

It should be noted that there are challenges when trying to calculate numbers of out-of-school children. Discrepancies arise when comparing participation rates in education and the number of out-of-school children generated from administrative and household survey data. The figures from the different data sources indicate the range of numbers of out-of-school children in a country. In countries with large populations, reaching the most accurate and exact number of out-of-school children would be very challenging. Having estimates from both administrative data and household surveys is thus crucial to get a better indication of school exclusion. This is important for policy and decision-making to be more evidence-based, nuanced and effective.

School exclusion is a significant problem in the three largest countries of the region:

- Pakistan has the highest rate of school exclusion for pre-school age children (51 per cent) and for primary school-age children (34.4 per cent). This indicator falls to 30.1 per cent for lower secondary school-age children largely due to late entry in school.
- In Bangladesh, around a third (34 per cent) of pre-school age children are not in school. The rate of exclusion is lower for primary school-age children at 16.2 per cent but rises sharply for lower secondary school-age children at 30.7 per cent.
- For India, rates of non-participation in schooling for pre-school age children is 12.4 per cent and for primary school-age children, 6.4 per cent. The rate of exclusion for lower secondary school-age children is 5.7 per cent. Given its large population size, India has the highest number of OOSC among the four countries with 11.9 million children not in school (ages 6 to 13).
- Sri Lanka has close to universal participation in primary and lower secondary schooling (with the caveat that the data does not cover some of the districts where conflict took place), and a small minority of pre-school age children who are out of school.

Number and percentage of out-of-school primary and lower secondary school-age children, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka

| | Dimension 2: Primary school-age children | | Dimension 3: Lower Secondary school-age children | | Dimensions 2 and 3 |
|------------|--|---|--|---|---|
| | Out-of-school primary school-age children as a percentage of the total primary school-age population (%) | Number of primary school-age out-of-school children (Million) | Out-of-school lower secondary school-age children as a percentage of the total lower secondary school-age population (%) | Number of lower secondary school-age out-of-school children (Million) | Total number of primary and lower secondary school-age children not in school (Million) |
| Bangladesh | 16.2% | 2.6 | 30.7% | 3.0 | 5.6 |
| India* | 6.4% | 7.8 | 5.7% | 4.0 | 11.9 |
| Pakistan | 34.4% | 6.6 | 30.1% | 2.8 | 9.4 |
| Sri Lanka | 1.9% | 0.03 | 3.2% | 0.04 | 0.07 |
| Total | | 17.0 | | 9.9 | 27.0 |

Sources: Bangladesh MICS 2006 & UNPD 2010 revision, India SRI-IMRB 2009 unit level data and UNPD 2012 revision, Pakistan PSLM -HIES 2007-08 & UNPD 2010 revision, Sri Lanka DHS 2006-07 & UNPD 2010 revision (excludes 5 conflict-affected districts in the north), as cited in the country OOSCI studies. Note: * For India, there are different estimates of OOSC as discussed in chapter 2. The total numbers for all four countries have been rounded off.

Profiles of out-of-school children

The profiles of out-of-school children show considerable heterogeneity across countries, with household wealth being the exception. Some of the key characteristics associated with school exclusion in the four countries are:

- *Household wealth*: low economic status is very clearly negatively correlated with school exclusion in the three largest countries across Dimensions 1 to 3. This wealth disparity in school attendance is particularly marked in Pakistan across the dimensions, and for lower secondary school-age children in all four countries.

- *Gender:* gender gaps are largest for the poorest families and for lower secondary school-age children. School attendance rates are lower for girls in Pakistan throughout the basic education cycle. In rural India, older girls are more likely to be excluded than older boys. Girls in rural areas, particularly those from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in India also have higher rates of exclusion. In Bangladesh, boys are more excluded in both levels of education.
- *Urban-rural location:* across the four countries children living in rural areas and in urban slums have a higher chance to be out of school. The urban-rural gap is highest in Pakistan. In metropolitan slums in Bangladesh, children are 2.5 times more likely to be excluded from school than the national average. In India, rural children also face a schooling disadvantage, but the urban-rural gap is smaller. Research from India also notes that deprivation in urban areas tends to be highly concentrated in specific groups, mainly slum dwellers and street children whose schooling situation is similar to the most disadvantaged in rural areas. Sri Lanka too has pockets of high exclusion: older children living in tea estates have markedly higher rates of school exclusion than the average.
- *Geographical location:* children living in Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh in India have significantly higher rates of exclusion compared with the national average. This is the same for children in Sylhet in Bangladesh, and Balochistan in Pakistan. In Sri Lanka, about 10 per cent of lower secondary school-age children living in tea estates are out of school compared with the 3 per cent proportion in rural and urban areas. In Bangladesh, access to education is lowest in areas with high concentrations of poor and vulnerable people due to a combination of geographic, climatic and socio-economic factors.
- *Social groups:* in India, school exclusion is considerably more prevalent among Muslim children, and among older children from socially disadvantaged groups. The average rate of exclusion for primary school-age children from Scheduled Castes is 5.6 per cent and Scheduled Tribes 5.3 per cent compared to the national average of 3.6 per cent. Girls from Scheduled Castes have the highest rates of exclusion at 6.1 per cent. Various research has also shown that children with a minority language as mother tongue are disproportionately excluded. In Bangladesh, children in the Chittagong Hill Tracts which is home to ethno-linguistic minorities have lower enrolment rates than their counterparts in Khulna, Rajshahi and Barisal.
- *Child labourers:* the incidence of child labour varies from 3 per cent in Sri Lanka to 16 per cent in Pakistan. In India and Bangladesh, an estimated 12 per cent and 9 per cent of children are engaged in child labour. In all four countries, school attendance rates for child labourers are lower than for other children of the same age. Generally, this disparity is much greater for children living in Pakistan and for older children across the countries. As children age, they are much less likely to combine school and work. More than 90 per cent of child labourers in Pakistan are out of school.
- *Children with disabilities:* children with disabilities are less likely to enrol and complete a full cycle of basic education. An estimated 90 per cent of children with disabilities in the developing world do not go to school. In India, 38 per cent of children ages 6 to 13 who have disabilities were found to be out of school.
- *Children in emergency settings:* children that live in areas where regular life and hence education systems are disrupted by emergencies are often excluded from schooling. All four countries are facing such challenges: (i) children living in conflict-affected northern and eastern areas of Sri Lanka have lower school participation than the national average, particularly in lower secondary education (data from 2007); (ii) cyclones in Bangladesh in 2007 and 2009 meant that more than 1.5 million children could not attend schools; (iii) widespread violence in the Swat valley in Pakistan in 2007 led to mass fleeing of internally displaced people (IDPs) and a marked drop in school attendance; (iv) some schools in India have been closed due to civil strife related causes; (v) school attendance rates for refugee children are comparatively low, and access to secondary education is particularly low for urban refugees.

Patterns of exclusion

It is also crucial to examine the patterns of exclusion to understand better the underlying causes keeping children out of school. Below are some patterns observed in the four countries based on the OOSCI studies.

Amongst children who are out of school, there is a group that is likely to never enter primary school. This is affecting a strikingly high proportion of excluded children in Pakistan (51 per cent) and in India (39 per cent). At the same time, India and Pakistan have issues with late entry to school: 39 per cent of OOSC in Pakistan and 31 per cent in India are expected to enrol at a later stage. They will enter school “older” than their peers putting them at risk of dropping out. In Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, the significant portion of out-of-school children are those who have dropped out from school at 68 per cent and 48 per cent, respectively. A better understanding of these patterns will help tailor policies and interventions to each group of children: those who have dropped out from school, those who are likely to enter late, and those who will never see the inside of a classroom.

The problem of children enrolling at an older age than the grade-appropriate age, along with repetition and dropout is leading to a major age-grade discrepancy in school attendance in the three largest countries in the region. The situation is most acute for Pakistan, and appears to be driven largely by children entering primary school late. In Bangladesh, repetition is the major cause of overage attendance. Studies show that being overage is a risk factor for dropping out. Late enrolment and repetition are phenomena that demonstrate a sub-optimal efficiency of the education system and reflect inappropriate use of resources. To have the right to education of all eligible children fulfilled, these challenges need to be addressed.

Survival rates are alarmingly low at the primary education level in Bangladesh, such that 40 per cent of children who enter the cycle drop out before they reach the final grade; the comparable figure is 20 per cent in India. Dropout rates by grade are high in Pakistan which also points to low survival rates. Transition between the primary and lower secondary education level is also a point of high dropout in the three largest countries: in India and Bangladesh, about 20 per cent of students in the last grade of primary schooling are lost by the education system and do not transition to lower secondary education. In Pakistan, the dropout rate in the last grade of primary education is 43 per cent. In Sri Lanka, 3 per cent of primary school students do not transition to the next level.


With respect to children in primary education who are at risk of dropping out (Dimension 4), the characteristics of exclusion vary somewhat across the four countries. In India, students in rural areas have markedly lower primary education survival prospects than urban students. It should be noted that the primary education survival rate for urban areas masks disparities between children in urban slum areas and other urban children. The survival rate for urban areas could also be overestimated if children from rural areas move to urban schools during the primary education cycle. There is not much variation in primary schooling survival rates by gender or urban-rural residence in Bangladesh or Sri Lanka. In Pakistan, primary education dropout rates for rural children are considerably higher. Some disparities are also evident in the transition rate from primary education to lower secondary education. Indian rural students have far lower transition rates than their peers in urban areas. In Bangladesh, the gender gap in transition rates is evident with boys having lower rates than girls.




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At the same time, in Bangladesh, girls are more likely to drop out from lower secondary grades than boys. This suggests that although fewer boys than girls reach lower secondary education, those that do make it are more likely to be retained. There are some similarities in the four countries in relation to characteristics of children attending lower secondary education who are at risk of dropping out (Dimension 5): rural children are more likely to drop out. India's rural children are at a disadvantage over those in urban areas (except urban slums) in terms of lower secondary education survival rates. In Pakistan, children living in rural areas have markedly higher dropout rates by grade.

Profiles and characteristics of excluded children in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka

| | | |
|---|---|--|
|  | Dimension 1: Pre-school age children | low income families; rural families (Bangladesh, India & Pakistan); girls (Pakistan); girls in the tea estate sector (Sri Lanka); families living in Balochistan (Pakistan) and Tripura (India) |
| | Dimension 2: Primary school-age children | low income families (India, Pakistan, & Bangladesh boys in particular); girls (India & Pakistan); boys (Bangladesh); rural families (Pakistan); metropolitan slums (Bangladesh); urban low income families (India); children in tea estates (Sri Lanka); families living in Balochistan (Pakistan) and Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh (India); Muslim families, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, particularly girls (India); families where mother has low level of education (Bangladesh); child labourers (Bangladesh & Pakistan) |
| | Dimension 3: Lower-secondary school-age children | low income families (all 4 countries; Bangladeshi boys & Pakistani girls in particular); girls (Pakistan & rural India); boys (Bangladesh: all income quintiles except top); rural families (Pakistan); metropolitan slums (Bangladesh); tea estates (Sri Lanka); Sylhet (Bangladesh); Balochistan (Pakistan); Rajasthan, Orissa, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh (India); Muslim families, Scheduled Tribes (India); families where mother has low level of education (Bangladesh); child labourers, particularly boys in the four countries |

| | | |
|---|---|--|
|  | Dimension 4: Children in primary education at risk of dropping out | rural families (India & Pakistan); children with no pre-school experience in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan are at risk of repeating the early grades of primary education and eventually dropping out; boys in Bangladesh and children from rural families in India are at risk of not making the transition to lower secondary education |
| | Dimension 5: Children in lower secondary education at risk of dropping out | rural families (India & Pakistan); girls (Bangladesh); boys (Pakistan) |

Barriers to school participation and policy responses

Efforts to improve school participation in the four countries over the past decade have mainly focused on easing quantitative supply-side barriers (e.g. building schools) and mitigating economic demand-side barriers (e.g. school-fee abolition). These approaches have generated a large influx of children enrolling in schools since the late 1990s. Furthermore, the impact of the mix of programmes, such as school fee abolition and concerted community based efforts around the UN Girls Education Initiative (UNGEI), increased enrolment rates in South Asia, reaching 89 per cent in 2011 from 75 per cent in 2000. At the same time, policies and programmes to address socio-cultural demand-side barriers such as those related to early marriage and child labour have scope for improvement. In reference to the interventions addressing supply-side barriers, systemic quality education sector reforms which impact classroom level

have remained elusive. This could be related to disappointing progress in learning achievements and high level of drop-out in the South Asia region. Reforms to governance and management systems have been partial, and critical system-level bottlenecks remain, especially in the rural and other marginalized areas which experience most challenges with out-of-school children.

Drawn from this study's Chapter 4, below is a summary of some of the noteworthy policy responses to the main categories of barriers to schooling facing different profiles of excluded children. It should be noted that although the link between barriers and profiles seem somewhat simplified: in reality, profiles of out-of-school children usually consist of multiple characteristics each with a reduced likelihood of attendance. The barriers related to these multiple characteristics reinforce each other and lead to exclusion.

Supply-side barriers

Improving the capacity of the schooling system has been a high priority of South Asian governments and societies overall. Large-scale construction programmes and public-private partnerships in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan, have delivered a considerable number of additional classrooms in regular formal schools. At the same time, private sector provision in Pakistan and India (to a large extent unregulated) has driven much of the growth in capacity. Alternative models of formal schooling have proved to be an important way of reaching some groups of vulnerable out-of-school children such as lower secondary school-age girls from marginalised social and religious groups in India, and children in remote areas in Bangladesh. Non-formal basic education programmes are widespread in some countries, and provide innovative and flexible learning opportunities for OOSC. Increasingly, non-formal education programmes have equivalency with the formal system. For instance, learning centres in Bangladesh under the Basic Education for Hard-To-Reach Urban Working Children (BEHTRUWC) project provide life skills-based non-formal basic education in the six largest cities for working children aged 10-14 years who have either never been to or have dropped out of school.

While there are many attempts in creating alternative pathways to basic education for children who dropped out and tend to be overage or for children who will never be reached by formal schooling, investment in these programmes is not sufficient to cover all eligible children. Second chance education, therefore is not a reality for the millions of children currently out of school. Even for children participating in non-formal education, the investment per child is much lower than for children in formal schools. This makes it much less likely for OOSC to return to school or enrol in school for the first time and obtain the same learning as their non-excluded peers.

Interventions to improve the quality of schooling have been numerous and some show positive results, but generally these have not been on a scale to make an impact on the majority of learners, especially the most vulnerable children. Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) interventions in the four countries vary, from improving infrastructure to school-based programmes on child health and hygiene education. Some are integrated into a holistic set of school improvement measures. Such health-promoting interventions aim to benefit all students, including adolescent girls who need sanitation facilities like separate functioning toilets. The education component of WASH interventions have proven to be particularly important for children from families where parental education levels are low.

Economic demand-side barriers

Commitment to 'free education' has resulted in fee abolition in all four countries and the provision of a wide range of programmes, such as incentives in the form of free uniforms, stationery, waiving of exam fees, and scholarship schemes. Large-scale conditional cash transfer (CCT) programmes have been introduced to offset the remaining direct costs of schooling, particularly in Bangladesh and Pakistan. There are also large-scale poverty alleviation programmes in place in all four countries. Noting the poor health and nutritional status of young children, particularly from poorer families, large-scale school feeding programmes have been introduced. This is also an incentive to households to send their young children to school. These interventions will largely benefit children from poorer households, rural areas, and also, for some of the CCT programmes, older girls.

Socio-cultural demand-side barriers

There have been relatively few effective interventions to tackle prominent socio-cultural barriers to school attendance. Community mobilisation campaigns have been successful to some extent in fostering positive attitudes to education and changing socio-cultural norms in Bangladesh and Pakistan (related to gender roles and tolerance of child labour). The physical and social restrictions placed on older girls in some

communities has been alleviated in some cases by provision of more single-sex school places closer to home, and single-sex residential facilities (supply-side responses). Efforts to delay the age of marriage for girls via conditions set in some CCT programmes (as already mentioned), have had, at most, a modest effect in the short-term as seen in Bangladesh. Some reproductive health programmes have had spin-off benefits related to combatting child marriage. Some relatively small-scale child protection programmes provide care and welfare for children deprived of a safe family environment, such as children living and working on the streets, though there is no significant evidence that these have directly improved school enrolment or attendance beyond the limited target group.

System bottlenecks

The main programmes in place to mitigate bottlenecks are governance reforms, often in the context of decentralisation. The aim has been to promote decision-making and resource allocation based on local needs - a thinking pushed as part of the formulation of Education Sector Plans or Sector Wide Approaches. The delegation of authority to lower levels of the education administration, and to school-based management bodies has been partial: sometimes initiatives have positive impacts, especially on reasonably performing schools. But these positive impacts have been offset by unwanted effects in terms of weak administrative bodies (e.g. districts, blocks, upazillas, etc.) and schools not able to take charge and make use of the transferred responsibility in a constructive manner. The provision of direct grants to schools in Bangladesh to support school-level improvement plans has demonstrated that this funding mechanism can work well under certain circumstances. Sri Lanka is applying an equity-based decentralised funding mechanism which invests more in under-performing schools in provinces. Systems for delivering textbooks on a vast scale in Bangladesh and India have become much more efficient over the decade.

Barriers to schooling in emergency situations

Since emergency situations are characterized by providing basic services in systems that are temporarily non-functioning or breaking down, education responses in this setting are often initiated in parallel to the more traditional systems. In this context, some flexible and innovative programmes in the four countries include delivering schooling to children and youth in affected populations. These include interventions to support accelerated learning for children who have missed many years of schooling, some with equivalence to the formal education system. To promote early response to emergencies, ministries of education with the support of UN agencies and INGOs have developed and applied/implemented a range of standardised responses focusing on education provision, such as school-in-a-box kits, child-friendly spaces, and school feeding. Emergency preparedness is also increasingly integrated into education sector planning.

Key recommendations

This study provides important new insights into the characteristics of excluded groups of children in South Asia, the barriers they face in attending school and the major gaps in current education policy and programming on school participation across the four countries. This forms a rich evidence base for immediate policy action, and highlights areas where further research is warranted.

The profiles provide a rich picture of the characteristics of out-of-school children. However, due to data limitations the analysis did not pick up some specific groups of marginalised children which other studies suggest are disproportionately excluded from school. Such groups include: children living in urban slums and on the street, children from families who migrate seasonally for work, child refugees and internally displaced children, children with disabilities, and children who do not speak the national or official language(s). These groups merit further research to understand the multitude of barriers they face in attending school so that they can be effectively targeted with interventions.

Taking stock of the profiles of excluded children, related patterns of exclusion and the existing range of interventions to address the barriers to school participation, there are some noticeable gaps and opportunities for strengthening existing programmes. Three general recommendations arise:

- 1. Increase public spending on basic education.** Public expenditure on education in the four countries is low by international standards, with total public spending on education as a percentage of GDP only between 2-3 per cent. More importantly, budget priority for education seems to have

stagnated in Bangladesh and India, and is falling in Pakistan. This is of particular concern in Pakistan, which has the highest rate of school exclusion in the region, and the largest wealth disparity in school participation. Although Sri Lanka does not face the same challenges, if the country were to make the shift to a knowledge society, the current levels of public spending on education would not be sufficient to make the required leap in quality and learning outcomes. Given the enormous challenge of mitigating the barriers keeping the 27 million children in the four countries out of school, it is clear that additional public financing along with more efficient allocation of resources is critical.

2. **Continue to strengthen education sector-wide planning approaches and reflect increased opportunities for alternative pathways to basic education.** Sector-wide planning approaches should promote explicit objectives, coordinated action and large-scale integrated programming and financing mechanisms, in line with the type of holistic interventions needed. Sector plans should include appropriate strategies and resource provision that improve equitable education opportunities. This means significant scale up in the number and quality of alternative pathways to basic education, including for children affected by emergencies, increased emergency preparedness, and targeted and realistic interventions for excluded children, in particular children with disabilities and ethnic and religious minorities.
3. **Implement more large-scale holistic interventions that address multiple barriers to schooling simultaneously.** Out-of-school children often face numerous and reinforcing barriers which single interventions cannot address effectively. For example, the high priority to measures to tackle economic barriers in the past decade seems appropriate in view of the strong negative association between school participation and household wealth. Yet almost all the other barriers disproportionately affect poor children too. This study has shown that excluded children from minority groups who are poor and come from rural areas often face multiple deprivations due to systemic bottlenecks, opportunity costs, and socio-cultural expectations. Barriers preventing some children going to school cannot be dealt with by the education sector alone. Policy responses need to address these overlapping barriers and must be cross-sectoral to be effective.

At a more detailed level, the policy and thematic Chapters 4 to 6 identified some critical gaps in current strategies to mitigate the different types of barriers to school exclusion. Proposals to improve the impact of some existing programmes have also been discussed. The key recommendations are categorized according to the below focus areas:

I. Progressive investment on excluded children, weak schools and under-performing areas

- **Target children who are likely to never enter school** and improve equitable distribution of resources within the education system. An estimated 9.7 million Indian children and 4.8 million Pakistani children are not likely to ever go to school unless specific interventions are in place. The expansion across the region of alternative pathways to education is crucial to reach children who could not access or are pushed out by the traditional schooling system. By increasing investment in these programmes, including increasing the amount invested per pupil and ensuring equivalency, outreach to out-of-school children will be more



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equitable. Scaling-up some of the alternative models of education which are tailored to attract particular groups of marginalized children (e.g. child labourers, migrant children, and older adolescents) is also necessary so these children are equipped with basic literacy, numeracy and relevant life skills.

- **Increase transition rates between the primary and lower secondary education cycle** in the three largest countries. Possible supply-side strategies include: delivering lower secondary education on the same site as primary schools (this has implications for infrastructure but also for teachers and is probably only feasible for primary schools above a certain size). On the demand-side, costs for schooling rise substantially as the education level increases, so measures to offset these costs are needed for poorer children. Girls are less likely to transition to lower secondary education hence specific measures to improve their completion of the basic education cycle is crucial. There is also a need to address dropout and repetition in primary schooling so children can transition to lower secondary education.
- **Continue to expand public provision of school (and pre-school) infrastructure targeted at areas where need is greatest**, taking into account demand-side factors. For example there is an acute shortage of schools for girls in rural Pakistan; and many primary schools in Bangladesh operate double shifts (and restricted learning hours) due to insufficient classrooms. To match rapidly increasing pre-school enrolment of children from urban and middle-income families, governments have to prioritize pre-primary provision in marginalized rural areas in order to provide equitable opportunities.
- **Provide schools and districts that perform below average in terms of retention and learning achievements with appropriate support and resources** in a needs-based manner. This might imply that some of the performance-based incentives schemes, such as per capita grants, matching grants for community contributions, and social audits as condition for additional cash transfers are not the best fitted programmatic response for under-performing schools. For example, experience in India has shown that under-performing schools improve more rapidly when they receive stronger personalized guidance, capacity building and on-location support from educational authorities and civil society organizations.
- **Invest in rural areas and urban slums** in terms of coverage and quality improvement, especially in the rational distribution of trained teachers to address the disparities in these areas and ensure the gaps do not worsen.

II. Inclusive and equitable education sector-wide approaches

- **Translate ambitious political commitment and progressive objectives of education plans into specific and equitable results to overcome disparities** in terms of gender, educational opportunities for children with disabilities, ethnic minorities and geographic discrepancies. Set targets that take into account the agreed results to be achieved through doable time-bound programmes with appropriate budget.
- **Ensure gender-sensitive, equitable and responsive budget allocations and utilization** by tracking expenditures and assessing planned versus utilized budget across urban-rural disaggregation, level of schooling, and geographic location. Identify bottlenecks that hinder implementation and limit absorption capacity. Address these bottlenecks starting with those that affect mostly marginalized groups and areas.
- **Make direct cash grants more beneficial for schools.** School grants need to be predictable, timely, transparent, flexible and of appropriate value, to be effective and avoid a perverse impact such as increased risk of corruption. Varying the level of public subsidy according to community poverty levels as done in Sri Lanka, is an approach that should be considered as a means of narrowing differences in total spending on education (public and private) per student.
- **Explore ways to capitalize on public-private partnerships to expand provision, particularly of lower secondary education for disadvantaged students.** If public provision for secondary schooling does not match the demand, alternative (temporary) scenarios need to be explored taking into account that the government has primary responsibility to ensure the right to education. For example, provide incentives to private schools that receive public subsidies to expand enrolment and to serve disadvantaged students. This can be done by having a transparent, competitive and open bidding process, and clear contracts which detail outputs and responsibilities for both parties.



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III. Child-centered approach

- **Concerted action is necessary to eliminate corporal punishment**, which many children in the region are subjected to, making schools far from child-friendly environments conducive to learning. Laws prohibiting corporal punishment look likely to be in place in all four countries in the near future, which is a strong signal of intent, but this needs further attention, to ensure that social norms and practices are adjusted accordingly.
- **Improving teaching and learning processes at scale must be at the core of reform efforts.** There are many ways to start this process, but it is worth considering some of the successful models of child-centered pedagogy in the region as the basis for reform. Achieving change at scale in this area almost certainly requires interventions in curricula, learning materials, formative and continuous assessments, teacher education and management (including addressing high levels of teacher absenteeism). All of these reforms need to be carefully sequenced.

IV. Well-functioning, well-managed and accountable education systems

- **Promote age-appropriate enrolment and reduce age-grade disparity** in the three largest countries. Possible strategies include making pre-primary education a part of the basic education cycle so children are more likely enrol in Grade 1 at the appropriate age and are more 'school-ready'; undertaking campaigns at the community level at the start of the school year to encourage parents to enrol children at the correct age; work with parents and communities to raise demand of quality education; changing the policy on repetition in Bangladesh in line with competency-based assessment and automatic promotion to vastly reduce the need for children to repeat grades.
- **Reduce dropout rates in the primary cycle**, particularly in Pakistan and Bangladesh. To ensure that enrolled children stay in school and complete the full primary education cycle, schools, resource centres, district education and social welfare authorities should be empowered, supported and held responsible for minimizing drop-out in their schools. Practices that reduce the risk of drop-out should be promoted in parallel fashion: systematically at policy and at school level. Immediate results should be achieved in the areas of grade repetition (by continuous assessment instead of examination), remedial teaching (children falling behind receive additional in- and out-of classroom support), multi-lingual education in the early grades of primary education (teachers from the community who speak the language should be recruited; children speaking their mother tongues when in school should not be penalized), encourage age-appropriate enrolment, zero tolerance for teacher absenteeism, make schools child-seeking schools (teachers visit family when child does not go to school for a prolonged time).

- **Improve key aspects of teacher management**, so that teachers have clear incentives to perform well in the classrooms; school-management committees have the capacity to reward and sanction as appropriate. The politicization of teacher recruitment and deployment also needs to be tackled if the wide disparities in class sizes, which favor urban areas, are to be reduced.
- **Ensure conducive environment for education programmes in emergency situations.** Flexible and innovative programmes exist to attract children and youth to schooling or alternative learning spaces among affected populations, but low levels and unpredictable funding undermine effective and continued responses. In addition, existing policies need to be reformed in order to address better the needs of emergency response such as the ability to print textbooks locally (with the textbook curriculum on the MOE website), equivalency given to NFE programmes, flexibility for enrolment in schools in host communities, etc.
- **Improve use of resources by increasing efficiency and effectiveness of programmes**, particularly those targeted at disadvantaged groups. The efficiency of some of the existing targeting mechanisms of large-scale CCTs could be improved considerably using measures such as targeting based on poverty or geographic location. Consideration should also be given to the level of the cash transfer, in light of high opportunity costs (as well as direct schooling costs). An innovative approach might be to target child laborers with a CCT. The profiles analysis could help refine profiles of child laborers for effective targeting: for example amongst out-of-school children in Bangladesh older boys are particularly likely to be engaged in child labor. From an equity perspective, consideration should be given to include in the education cash transfers schemes children attending NFE or flexible programmes.

V. Accelerate efforts to mitigate socio-cultural barriers to schooling

- **Give higher priority to interventions mitigating socio-cultural barriers to schooling** since there are relatively few effective programmes in place. Some of the key barriers are child marriage (and early childbearing) for girls, restricted physical and social mobility for older girls, discriminatory employment practices affecting minority communities, lack of information on the likely returns to education, social norms related to schooling and child labor, and social neglect and abuse of particular groups of marginalized children (e.g. children with disabilities). To mitigate gender gaps related to socio-cultural barriers, the profiles data suggest that it would be appropriate to target poor families with primary school-age children in Pakistan and Bangladesh, and older children in Pakistan, Bangladesh and rural India.
- **Invest vigorously in increased access for specific groups of marginalised children who do not show up in the aggregate OOSC profiles** (partly because of data constraints) but are disproportionately excluded from school as other data sources suggest. Such groups include: children with disabilities; children from ethnic minorities often with different languages; children from religious minorities; children living in urban slums, and on the street; children from families who migrate seasonally for work; and refugee and internally displaced children. Aside from targeting these groups with education that takes into account their needs and specific circumstances, it also includes addressing discriminatory socio-cultural practices in the education system and society at large.
- **More cross-sectoral efforts at scale are needed, between education, health, child protection and welfare.** It is clear that the barriers keeping children from school or pushing them out of school cannot be dealt with by the education sector alone. The involvement of central ministries (e.g. Planning, Finance, Prime Minister's office), which set country-level performance frameworks including targets on education participation, is critical in ensuring appropriate cross-sectoral incentives.

Some priorities for further research

This study raises a number of research questions related to school participation in the four countries and the region at large. Some priority areas for research, grouped into three focus areas, are mentioned below. The findings from this research should help to inform the policy debate on how best to mitigate school exclusion in the region, by filling important information gaps.

I. Focus on early childhood development (ECD) and early grades of primary education

- A systematic review of the main types of ECD programmes available will be important to make informed policy decisions. Numerous different models of ECD operate in the region - from provision of pre-school education in primary school facilities to fully integrated ECD programmes which have education components.

- Research on the impact of ECD/pre-primary education exposure of children on their retention and performance in primary education;
- Late entry to school is common, particularly in Pakistan. It would be useful to understand the main reasons behind this, and whether the comparatively early entry age of 5 years is relevant;
- Studies on how and what type of multi-lingual education in the early grades of primary education improves enrolment, retention and learning achievements of children.

II. Focus on enhancing inclusion and learning

- Research on how and what quality improvements in schooling impacts enrolment, retention and learning achievements, and on how parents perceive the quality of education.
- Noteworthy practices related to alternative pathways to basic education (e.g. NFE, flexible learning or accelerated programmes, etc.) for primary and lower secondary school-age out-of-school children, including information on what is required to scale them up and/or expand these programmes.
- Noteworthy practices on mainstreaming primary school-age children to formal education.
- Noteworthy practices to meet the learning needs of children with disabilities, including on scaling up or expansion.
- Schooling and work decisions for children who drop in and out of schooling, including seasonal migrants. These children are comparatively difficult to track, and so some basic research is needed to establish their profiles, the scale of this pattern of schooling, and the factors which prevent these children spending sustained periods in school.

III. Focus on sector coordination and other issues

- Noteworthy practices in addressing public investment and alignment regarding different streams of schooling (e.g. secular and religious; formal and non-formal; public and private) for improved sector planning and resource prioritization with a focus on disadvantaged groups.
- The actual and perceived connection between school, work and future income. This could be much better understood, particularly for marginalised groups who do not have the same professional opportunities in the labour market.
- More data and research on the characteristics and barriers keeping children out of school (see data recommendations below).

Data recommendations

Section 2.2 in Chapter 2 highlighted some of the limitations of the data sources used in the study. Some recommendations for strengthening data sources on school participation and exclusion are:

- a) Ministries of education should use and analyse household survey data on education to complement administrative (EMIS) data, particularly in designing policies, programmes and interventions for disadvantaged groups.
- b) Improve the quality of the data collected on pre-school programmes: establish an administrative data collection system which covers all service providers; use standardized definitions in both household surveys and administrative data collection.
- c) Use standard definitions on dropout, OOSC, and school types in administrative data collection systems and in household surveys to improve comparability, and enable better monitoring.
- d) In household surveys covering health and nutrition (and school attendance), collect additional data on selected health and nutrition indicators (anthropometrics) and on disabilities for children of school age (or a subset of children of school age).
- e) In the administrative data collection system, make efforts to tag schools located in urban slum areas.
- f) Integrate the fragmented administrative data collection systems covering basic education in Bangladesh (see country OOSCI study for details).
- g) Improve the coverage of the administrative data collection system in countries, particularly in Pakistan to systematically include all types of public and private providers.
- h) When possible, administrative data collection, particularly in India, should try to collect data on children's age including in pre-primary education (see country OOSCI study for details).
- i) Where there are concerns about the quality of the school census data for particular reasons (e.g. potential inflation of enrolment data in response to incentives), conduct carefully designed sample surveys to validate the data.
- j) Improve the data collection system, coverage and reliability of data on non-formal and flexible education programmes and use these for informed policy making, including increased investment.

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Acronyms

| | |
|----------|---|
| 5DE | Five Dimensions of Exclusion |
| AEPAM | Academy of Educational Planning and Management (Pakistan) |
| ASER | Annual Status of Education Report |
| BEHTRUWC | Basic Education for Hard-to-Reach Urban Working Children |
| BBS | Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics |
| CAMPE | Campaign for Popular Education (Bangladesh) |
| CCT | Conditional Cash Transfer |
| CFS | Child-Friendly Schools |
| CORD | Collaborative Research and Dissemination (India) |
| CRC | Convention on the Rights of the Child |
| CWD | Children with disabilities |
| DHS | Demographic and Health Survey |
| DISE | District Information on School Education (India) |
| ECE | Early Childhood Education |
| ECD | Early Childhood Development |
| ECCE | Early Childhood Care and Education |
| EFA | Education for All |
| EMIS | Education Management Information System |
| ESDFP | Education Sector Development Framework Programme |
| FMRP | Financial Management Reform Programme |
| GER | Gross enrolment rate |
| HDI | Human Development Index |
| IDP | Internally Displaced People |
| IFPRI | International Food Policy Research Institute |
| IIPS | International Institute for Population Sciences |
| ILO | International Labour Organization |
| JRM | Joint Review Mission (India) |
| LFS | Labour Force Survey |
| LHWP | Lady Health Worker Programme (Pakistan) |
| MDG | Millennium Development Goals |
| MHRD | Ministry of Human Resource Development |
| MWCD | Ministry of Women and Child Development |
| MICS | Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey |
| MLE | Multi-lingual Education |
| MOE | Ministry of Education |
| NEP | National Education Policy (Bangladesh) |
| NFE | Non-Formal Education |
| NGO | Non-governmental Organisation |
| NSSO | National Sample Survey Organisation (India) |
| OBC | Other Backward Caste (India) |
| OOSC | Out-of-School Children |
| OOSCI | Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children |
| OPM | Oxford Policy Management |
| PEDP-II | Primary Education Development Programme II (Bangladesh) |
| PPPs | Public-Private Partnerships |

| | |
|--------|--|
| PSLSM | Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey |
| PTR | Pupil-Teacher Ratio |
| ROSA | (UNICEF) Regional Office for South Asia |
| RTE | Right to Education Act (India) |
| SC | Scheduled Caste (India) |
| SSA | Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (India) |
| ST | Scheduled Tribe (India) |
| UCW | Understanding Children's Work Programme |
| UIS | UNESCO Institute for Statistics |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| UNFPA | United Nations Population Fund |
| UNHCR | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children's Fund |
| UNPD | United Nations Population Division |
| WASH | Water, Sanitation and Hygiene |
| WFP | World Food Programme |
| WHO | World Health Organization |

1. Introduction

1.1 Objectives of the study

This South Asia study is part of the Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children (OOSCI) launched in 2010 by UNICEF and UIS. A total of 26 countries where half of the world's out-of-school children live, are participating in this first round of the Initiative. The South Asia region accounts for more than one fifth of the total number of primary school-age out-of-school children, despite some impressive achievements in improving basic school enrolment rates over the past decade.

The initiative's goal is to make a significant and sustainable reduction in the number of children out of school around the world by:

- Developing comprehensive profiles of excluded children based on standardized and innovative statistical methods;
- Linking quantitative data with the socio-cultural barriers and bottlenecks that lead to exclusion of children from education;
- Identifying sound policies which address exclusion from education from a multi-sectorial perspective.

This initiative will lead to a more systematic approach to address the problem of out-of-school children and guide concrete education sector reforms in this regard. It is hoped that through this initiative countries taking part will have improved statistical information and analysis of OOSC and the factors that contribute to exclusion from education. This initiative is in line with UNICEF's focus on achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) with equity, which involves prioritising the poorest and most vulnerable children and their families. It is also in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The CRC, which has been ratified by Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, sets out the rights to education (including free primary education) and non-discrimination.

This study provides a synthesis of findings from four country case studies on out-of-school children in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka in addition to other analytical work. This study thus mainly focuses on these four countries while taking into account the overall context in South Asia.

1.2 Development context in South Asia

The prospects for enrolling all children in education are influenced by a wide range of interrelated factors, including demography, socio-economic and cultural norms, governance and political stability. How these areas evolve over time have important implications not only for the educational development of the countries in South Asia, but also for children's broader development opportunities. Some of the defining features of the region are summarised below, as well as in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 Demographic, economic and health indicators

| Indicator | Bangladesh | India | Pakistan | Sri Lanka |
|---|------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Total population (thousands) (2010) | 150,493 | 1,241,491 | 176,745 | 21,045 |
| Population density per sq km (2011) | 1,174 | 411 | 229 | 333 |
| Annual population growth rate (%) (2009) | 1.2 | 1.4 | 1.8 | 1 |
| Rural population (%) (2009) | 71.6 | 68.7 | 63.8 | 84.9 |
| GDP per capita as Purchasing Power Parity US\$ (2009) | 1,776.90 | 3,650.20 | 2,744.80 | 5,581.70 |
| Percentage of the Population living on less than \$1.25/day | 43.3 ⁽²⁰¹⁰⁾ | 32.7 ⁽²⁰¹⁰⁾ | 21 ⁽²⁰⁰⁸⁾ | 4.1 ⁽²⁰¹⁰⁾ |
| Under-five mortality per 1,000 live births | 53 | 55 | 72 | 12 |
| Adult literacy rate (%) (2007-2011) | 57* | 63 | 55* | 91 |

Sources: UIS Online Database accessed January 2014 except for percentage of population living on less than \$1.25/day and population density from the World Bank Databank accessed 9 October, 2013; under-five mortality and adult literacy rate from the South Asia Data Pocketbook 2013, UNICEF;



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Changing demographic profiles: India, Pakistan and Bangladesh are the second, sixth and eighth most populous countries in the world. In most South Asian countries, high rates of fertility and mortality have recently declined as part of a ‘demographic transition’. For instance, the annual population growth rate in Bangladesh has halved in the last 35 years (from 2.7 per cent to 1.2 per cent) and the size of the cohort of primary school-age children has remained stable at 17 million since 1990. It is expected that the size of this cohort will decrease considerably in the coming decade (UNDP, 2011). Nevertheless, there remain large numbers of adolescents and youths for whom education opportunities and jobs need to be found.

Rapid urbanization, but most of the population remains rural: While the majority of the South Asian population lives in rural areas (see Table 1.1 above), cities are growing rapidly, presenting a range of new education challenges. For instance, in India, the level of urbanization has grown from 25.5 per cent in 1990 to 30 per cent in 2010 and will grow to a projected 39.7 per cent in 2030 (UN-HABITAT, 2012). In Bangladesh and Pakistan over 45 per cent of the urban population lives in slum areas, with limited service provision and a host of other difficulties keeping children from school (UN-HABITAT, 2012).

Sustained economic growth, but poverty remains widespread: For the majority of countries in South Asia, the rate of economic growth has accelerated since the early 1990s. The annual gross domestic product (GDP) per capita growth rate between 1990 and 2010 averaged 3.5 per cent in Bangladesh, 4.8 per cent in India, 2 per cent in Pakistan and 4.3 per cent in Sri Lanka (World Bank, 2012).

Sustained economic growth has reduced poverty levels and improved human development in the region. All four countries covered in this report have made significant progress in human development, as measured in terms of the Human Development Index (HDI). Bangladesh has experienced the sharpest rise in human development, with its HDI value increasing by 42 per cent between 1990 and 2011. India registered a 33 per cent rise in its HDI value over the same period, followed by Pakistan (26 per cent) and Sri Lanka (19 per cent). The level of human development in Sri Lanka remains substantially higher than in the other countries, with an HDI value of 0.715 in 2012 (compared to 0.554 in India, 0.515 in Bangladesh and Pakistan). The gap is partly related to the level of Sri Lanka’s GDP per capita, which is also substantially higher than in the other countries.

However, absolute levels of poverty remain high in South Asian countries. Most notably, close to half of the population in Bangladesh (43 per cent) and one-third in India (33 per cent) were still living on less than US\$1.25 per day at purchasing power parity in 2005 (World Bank, 2013). Income disparity, as measured by the Gini coefficient on a scale of 0 (perfect equality) to 100 (perfect inequality), is higher in Sri Lanka (36.4) than in India (33.9), Bangladesh (32.1) and Pakistan (30.0)¹.

Diversity in ethnic and social identities: The South Asia region is highly diverse in terms of ethno-linguistic and religious composition as mentioned in the respective OOSCI country studies:

- In Sri Lanka, the ethnic composition is Sinhalese 82 per cent, Sri Lankan Tamil 4.3 per cent, Indian Tamil 5.1 per cent, Sri Lankan Moors 7.9 per cent, Malays 0.3 per cent, Burghers² 0.2 per cent, and others 0.2 per cent (these proportions are calculated based on the data from only 18 districts excluding all districts from Northern Province and two districts from Eastern Province).
- The population in Pakistan is divided as: Punjabi 44.7 per cent, Pashtun (Pathan) 15.4 per cent, Sindhi 14.1 per cent, Sariaki 8.4 per cent, Muhajirs 7.6 per cent, Balochi 3.6 per cent and others 6.3 per cent.
- In Bangladesh, about 98 per cent of the population are ethnic Bengalis who speak Bangla. The remainder is made up of many small ethnic and linguistic minorities, which can be classified into three broad groups:
 - Indigenous groups living in the Chittagong Hill Tracts in south-eastern Bangladesh of which the largest ones are the Chakma and the Marma;
 - Indigenous groups living in other areas, of which the largest are the Santali and the Garo (next to the border with the Indian states of West Bengal and Meghalaya, respectively);
 - the Bihari who largely settled in Bangladesh following the 1947 partition.
- India is as diverse as it is vast. Comprising 35 states and union territories, the country has 122 languages and 234 mother tongues.³ The history of demographic and ethnic diversity of the Indian society helps to identify why a large section of people have been bypassed during the country's recent economic growth process. Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST)⁴ and religious minorities, especially Muslims, are social groups who have been identified to be largely impoverished and/or to have been excluded from the mainstream development to a great extent. As per the 2001 Census, SCs accounted for 166.63 million (16.2 per cent), STs for 84.32 million (8.2 per cent) and minorities for 193.66 million (18.4 per cent) of the country's total population.⁵
- The population living in the estate sector in Sri Lanka are an important socioeconomic category. The estate sector comprises the tea and rubber plantations established during the British colonial administration. This community, descendants of South Indian Tamil immigrants brought over by the colonial administration as estate labourers, has been a marginalized population since the 19th century. In particular, it has been disadvantaged educationally, confined initially to plantation enclaves and provided with minimal primary education facilities. After estates were nationalized in the 1970s, 830 plantation schools were integrated into the national education system.

1.3 Education context in South Asia

The governance structures and economic conditions of the countries in South Asia have direct bearings on the functioning of the education systems and the children they serve. The marked advances in reducing the number of out-of-school children in the region over the past decade point to some strong political commitments to education and the capacity to pursue education reforms. Some recent examples of strategic milestones for the development of education in the region are:

¹ Source: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.GINI/> Accessed 9 October 2013. The figures cited are from 2008 (Pakistan), and 2010 (India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh).

² Moors, Malays and Burghers are ethnic groups that descend from groups that had immigrated to Sri Lanka (of Arab traders, South East Asians and colonists, respectively).

³ India OOSCI Study, forthcoming.

⁴ Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are groupings of historically disadvantaged groups in India that receive protection, affirmative action and development in the Constitution of India.

⁵ Data on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes from 2011 census are not currently available.

- **The new National Education Policy (NEP) in Bangladesh** was approved in 2010 and introduces two major changes. Previously, pre-primary education was not part of the formal education system. Building on the 2008 Pre-Primary Education Operational Framework, the NEP expresses a commitment to expand the provision of pre-primary education for children aged 5 years by providing one pre-primary teacher in each Government Primary School. Primary education (grades 1-5) was made compulsory for children aged 6-10 years under the 1990 Compulsory Education Act. As of 2009, students sit for the Terminal Examination at the end of Grade 5. According to the NEP, the primary education cycle will be extended from five to eight years as soon as arrangements can be made for sufficient classrooms and teachers.
- **The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RTE) in India**, enacted in 2009, states that all children between 6 and 14 years have a right to free and compulsory education and recommends that free preschool delivered by the appropriate authority for the 3-5 age group. The national Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) programme, initially mandated as part of the Constitutional right to free and compulsory education for 6-14 year olds, is adapted to ensure that no children in this age group remain out of school, and they all study in age appropriate grades. This is a landmark change in the Indian education system as it is not a policy direction nor a guiding principle for new schemes but an enforceable law. The planning process has started at the school level and the focus is on providing these entitlements to every child in this age group.
- In **Pakistan under the 18th amendment to the constitution in 2010**, the responsibility for education was devolved to provinces. Provinces now have full authority for education policy and strategic planning, and, below this, districts are largely responsible for implementing plans and ensuring delivery of education services. This landmark change was in line with The National Education Policy from 2009 which had put forward that decentralization should be pursued at each level of governance to move decision-making closer to the point of implementation. Furthermore, Article 25-A (the Right to Education) was inserted into the 18th Amendment stipulating that, *“The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of 5 to 16 years in such a manner as may be determined by law.”* Combining devolution and provision of free and compulsory education for all children requires tremendous efforts for full



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implementation to take place in each province, including the change and provision of sub-national level rules, procedures, human resources, budgeting and other administrative conditions.

- **Article 27 of the Constitution of Sri Lanka** stipulates the right of all children to universal and equal access to education. Education is also compulsory for children ages 5 to 14 years. Sri Lanka initiated its Education Sector Development Framework and Programme (ESDFP) in 2006. This national programme focuses on equity in access, improving the quality of education, efficiency and equity in resource allocation, and improving service delivery. It aims to develop a bottom-up approach to school planning, with Annual School Development Plans being prepared by local stakeholders and communities. Special focus is also made to support children with disabilities and special education needs, street children and those affected by conflict.

The South Asian countries differ widely in the extent to which their education systems are decentralized. While all the countries included in this report have undertaken reforms to decentralize responsibilities for education, the nature of these efforts differs. At one extreme, Pakistan is a federal state where education is primarily a provincial matter (as explained above). At the other extreme, while the 13th amendment to the Sri Lankan constitution in 1989 mandates that education is a devolved subject (with a few exceptions in curriculum development and examination), Sri Lanka's education system remains highly centralized and attempts to decentralize education to the district level have been largely limited to routine administration. A breakthrough in the traditional centralization of planning and plan implementation towards a participatory approach was partially achieved with the introduction of the ESDFP. The objective has been to transform the planning process through a bottom-up approach, with Annual School Development Plans being prepared at the school level in cooperation with local stakeholders and the community as an initial step.

The countries in the region also differ in terms of education service providers. The vast majority of children in Sri Lanka attend government schools. By contrast, public-private partnerships are common in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. The most common type of PPP is a privately owned school which receives a public subsidy (often to pay teachers' salaries). The role of the private sector is particularly important in Pakistan, where the private sector accounts for more than one-third of the country's total school enrolments.

Governments should be the main providers of education and therefore are the most important source of finance for reducing the number of out-of-school children. Despite rapid economic growth in South Asia, several countries in the region have low tax bases which puts a constraint on public revenue generation. This is the situation in Bangladesh, where the share of education in government spending has been fluctuating around 15 per cent in recent years. But with a low revenue base, this means that it remains below 2.5 per cent of GDP. Overall, the countries in South Asia still devote a low share of national income to education, ranging from 2 per cent in Sri Lanka (in 2011), to 2.2 per cent in Bangladesh (2009) and Pakistan (2011), to 3.2 per cent in India in 2011 (UIS Database accessed January 2014). The allocation in these countries is well below the world median of 5 per cent in 2008 (UNESCO, 2011) and the international recommendation of total public expenditure in education to account for at least 6 per cent of GDP. See Table 3.4 which shows data on public expenditure in education.

1.4 Methodology

The Conceptual and Methodological Framework (CMF) of the Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children introduces a model for analysing the problem of OOSC through the 'Five Dimensions of Exclusion' (5DE). The model presents five target groups of children that span (i) three age groups: children of pre-primary, primary and lower secondary school-age (note that the age groups are country specific); and (ii) two groups by school participation status: children who are out of school and children who are in school but at risk of dropping out. The term '**exclusion**' has a slightly different meaning depending on the population concerned: children who are out of school are excluded from education, while children who are at risk of dropping out may be excluded within the education school setting.

The Five Dimensions of Exclusion covers:

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

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

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

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

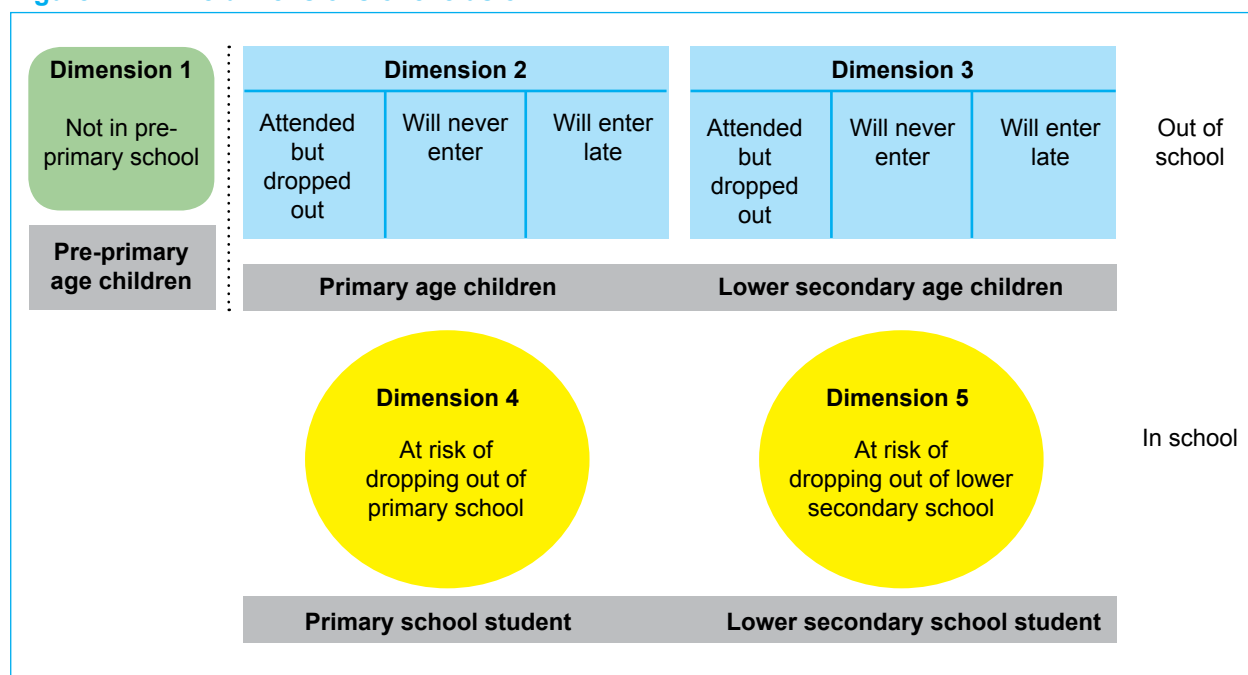
Dimension 5: Children who are in lower secondary school but at risk of dropping out.

Dimensions 2 and 3 are split into three mutually exclusive groups based on the OOSCI Conceptual and Methodological Framework:

- Children who attended in the past and dropped out;
- Children who will never enter school; and
- Children who will enter school in the future.

Figure 1.1 summarises these dimensions and the groups of children which this report is focusing on.

Figure 1.1 Five dimensions of exclusion



Source: UNESCO and UIS. http://www.unicef.org/education/files/OOSCI_flyer_FINAL.pdf

In general, all children of primary or lower secondary school-age are considered to be in school if they participate in primary or secondary education. However, two groups of school-age children are considered to be out of school even though they may be participating in learning-related activities:

- Children of primary school-age or older who are attending pre-primary education are considered out of school because the educational properties of pre-primary education and the qualifications of teaching staff in such programmes do not meet the criteria applied to primary education.
- Children of primary school-age or older who attend a non-formal education programme may be considered out of school unless the programme has a clear path into the formal education system.

Based on this typology, the report has the following structure:

- Chapter 2 presents the **profiles** of excluded children capturing the complexity of the problem of OOSC in terms of magnitude, inequalities and multiple disparities.
- Chapter 3 analyses **barriers and bottlenecks**, in other words the dynamic and causal processes that explain the observed profiles.
- Chapter 4 discusses the education and social protection **policies and strategies** that address the barriers and bottlenecks.
- Chapter 5 and 6 explore the themes of **child labour** and **emergencies**, two of the most serious obstacles to children's education in the South Asia region.
- Chapter 7 concludes, summarizing **key findings** and providing **recommendations**.

2. Profiles of out-of-school children in South Asia

2.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out to understand the scale of the problem of excluded children in the four countries in the region, and to highlight their individual and household characteristics by creating statistical profiles of out-of-school children. The overall purpose is to inform policy responses which are targeted at barriers facing specific groups or 'profiles' of out-of school children.

Profiles of children who are attending school but are at the greatest risk of dropping out have also been reviewed. These children if pushed out from the education system are likely to become the out-of-school children of tomorrow. Prevention is better than cure. If policy responses can target at-risk children, and prevent them from dropping out, the scale of exclusion will diminish over time.

In summary, this chapter addresses three main questions:

1. How many children in the four countries are out of school?
2. What are the profiles of the group of children who are out of school? (Who are they? Where do they live? What are the characteristics of the households they belong to? Are they engaged in child labour?)
3. What are the profiles of children at greatest risk of dropping out from school?

Profiles of out-of-school children and the age of children

At the heart of the 5DE model (see Figure 1.1) is a focus on the age of children in relation to their participation in school. There are two aspects to this. First, children are defined as being out of school if they are of official school age for pre-primary to lower secondary school (commonly 5 or 6 years to 13 to 14 years), but are not attending formal school. Second, the methodology brings out the extent of over- and under-age enrolment in each level of education⁶.

The analysis of age-appropriate enrolment is relevant to the third question above (factors affecting dropout), and has multiple implications for policy responses because it affects both the effective delivery of education, the efficiency of the education system, as well as demand for schooling. There is growing evidence on the underlying reasons for these effects.

Children who start school younger than the official school age tend to benefit less from educational activities as their school readiness is lower resulting in worse learning outcomes and a higher risk of dropping out (Das et al., 2008). Overage students are more likely to repeat grades and to drop out of school before completing the education cycle, and frequently have lower learning outcomes (UNESCO, 2007; Cameron, 2005; Wils, 2004). In settings where child marriage is a cultural preference and in the presence of earnings opportunities for older children that raise the opportunity cost of staying in school, overage children are more at risk of dropping out before completing the cycle than their younger counterparts (UNESCO, 2011; Lewin, 2007).

On the delivery side, in schools where there is a combination of under-, appropriate, and over-age students, the age range within grades becomes wider. This creates pedagogic challenges as all students are subject to the same curriculum regardless of their age-related cognitive development and learning readiness (CREATE, 2008). At the system level, grade repetition and drop out induced by under- and over-age enrolment reduces internal efficiency and is costly. Recent evidence for India shows that both under-age and over-age students progress less efficiently through the education system (UNESCO, 2009).

⁶ This analysis of school participation covers children from pre-school age up to age 17, even though the upper official school age for lower secondary education is 13 years at most in the four countries. This is because there are many overage children studying in the schooling systems.

The analysis of age-appropriate school participation, and the presentation of the profiles of OOSC, relies on different data sources from each of the four countries. In addition, there are a few key analytical issues relating to the interpretation of the profile estimates, and to the cross-country comparisons, which the reader needs to keep in mind. The next section discusses these two issues and provides details of the data sources.

2.2 Data sources and use

Data sources

No single data source can provide a complete profile of out-of-school children, who they are and where they are. Multiple data sources are needed to get a comprehensive analysis. In monitoring OOSC numbers, Ministries of Education traditionally use administrative data which are collected from schools and compiled largely as part of the Education Management Information System (EMIS). **Administrative** sources usually focus on reporting of enrolment at the beginning of the school year and do not provide information on regular attendance (i.e. a child could be enrolled but not attending school). Moreover, data are collected only from children who are enrolled in school. Data are disaggregated by sex, administrative divisions, and public-private providers. In some countries, disaggregation is available by caste. The UIS, which is the official source of internationally comparable education statistics including data used in the EFA Global Monitoring Report, uses administrative data submitted by governments to calculate numbers of out-of-school children. UIS estimates of OOSC for South Asia and the four countries covered in this report are shown in **Box 2.2**.

Another source of data on OOSC are **household surveys** which estimate educational participation using data on school attendance. Although not carried out every year, household surveys provide data that can be disaggregated according to numerous individual or household characteristics. It collects data on children who attend and do not attend school. This makes it possible to estimate the proportion of children who are out of school.

Both administrative and household survey data sources were used in the four OOSCI country studies, with household surveys used for a more in-depth analysis of the profiles of out-of-school children. Various household surveys in the four countries were reviewed and based on the coverage and reliability the following surveys were primarily used to investigate the profiles of out-of-school children (questions 1 and 2 above):

- Bangladesh: Multiple Cluster Indicator Survey (MICS), 2006;
- India: National Sample Survey 64th Round (NSS), 2007-08; and All India Survey of Out-of-School Children of Age 6-13 and Age 5, 2009 undertaken by the Social and Rural Research Institute, a specialist unit of IMRB International (subsequently referred to as SRI-IMRB throughout the study)
- Pakistan: Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey-Household Income Expenditure Survey (PSLM-HIES), 2007-08;
- Sri Lanka: Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), 2006-07.

This regional study uses different household survey sources as the basis for estimates of child labour, as detailed in section 2.5.

There are several key advantages, and some disadvantages, to using household survey data instead of administrative data to estimate the number of children out of school and to provide information on their profiles. Household survey data have the advantage that it:

- covers children who do not attend school (both those who have never enrolled and those who have dropped out) and therefore direct analysis of the out-of-school population is possible;
- can be disaggregated according to numerous individual and household characteristics (e.g. sex, ethnicity, area of residence, household wealth quintile, child labour status, the parents' level of education), allowing for a deeper analysis of disparities and inequities
- collects data on school attendance covering all types of provider (public and private); and
- is a source of data on child labour, a phenomenon related to school attendance.

Household survey data also has limitations:

- it is often not possible to link results to information about the education system;
- large household surveys are generally not carried out every year;
- the sample population typically does not include the homeless (including children living or working on the street), nomadic or mobile populations, refugees and internally displaced children, which can constitute a significant number of out-of-school children in some countries; and
- the precision of estimates and the level of disaggregation are limited by the design of a survey, which are often not designed to capture the out-of-school phenomenon, and the sample size.

The above points relate to household surveys in general and apply to the four main sources used in this study. Despite these limitations, household survey sources were chosen as the basis for this part of the study, because they enable an analysis of profiles of out-of-school children (which cannot be done in detail with administrative data). At the same time, administrative data were analysed to understand better the enrolment and other trends in education in the countries covered. This is one of the main contributions of this study to the existing literature.

Two specific points relating to the coverage of the country sources are worth noting. First, the Pakistan PSLM-HIES only covers four provinces in Pakistan, namely Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It excludes four smaller administrative units, which together account for about 6 per cent of the country's population⁷. Second, the Sri Lanka DHS excludes five districts of the Northern Province. The excluded areas in the Pakistan survey are a mixture of urban and rural locations, with some of the latter being very remote and impoverished, and some experiencing violence. Conflict in the Northern Province of Sri Lanka is also the reason for the exclusion of five districts in the DHS of 2006-07. Urban children are probably more likely than average to be in school, while the children living in remote rural areas, and those living in violence-affected locations are probably less likely than average to attend school. This suggests that in the following analysis based on these surveys (which are not adjusted to account for incomplete coverage) the rate of school exclusion is probably slightly underestimated in Sri Lanka. It is difficult to judge the likely effect on the estimates in Pakistan.

To reiterate, the country-specific household survey sources listed above are used in this study to estimate the proportion to the total population and number of out-of-school children in each country. This source also provides for a rich disaggregation of the profiles of out-of-school children, which is one of the main objectives of this study. It is important to highlight that these survey-based estimates are not strictly comparable across countries (for reasons that will be explained below). Internationally comparable estimates of the number of out-of-school children are available from the UIS based on country administrative data, standardised definitions and collection instruments. The UIS estimates are presented for comparison later in this chapter (Box 2.2).



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⁷ The administrative units excluded are: Islamabad Capital Territory, Federally Administered Tribal Areas, Azad Kashmir, and Gilgit-Balistan.

The main data sources used in each of the four countries to explore the characteristics of children at risk of dropping out (question 3 above), are administrative, using data from annual school censuses. This source was chosen because this part of the analysis focuses on children who are in school and thus a school census should provide a more comprehensive picture than a household survey. The sources used are:

- Bangladesh: Annual School Census, 2009, and Post-Primary Education Institution Survey (PPEIS), 2009;
- India: District Information on School Education (DISE) school level data, 2007-08;
- Pakistan: Pakistan Education Statistics from the Academy of Educational Planning & Management (AEPAM) 2008-09;
- Sri Lanka: Annual Census of Government Schools, 2010.

Two of the specific limitations of these administrative data sources are summarised below. The annexes in the country studies provide more details:

a. Coverage:

- In none of the four countries is there full coverage of all types of formal schools delivering primary and lower secondary education. In Pakistan and India, where private schooling accounts for a high proportion of total enrolment, coverage of private schools by administrative data sources is partial. In Bangladesh, the gap mainly relates to unrecognised private schools. In Sri Lanka, data from international and private schools are not captured. But the vast majority of schooling in Sri Lanka is provided publicly.
- Pre-primary education provision is very heterogeneous in all countries, ranging from non-formal early childhood care programmes for fairly young children, to formal pre-primary schools. There is very limited coverage of administrative data from pre-primary providers in any of the countries. Bangladesh and Sri Lanka capture some information about the pre-primary exposure of new entrants to primary school.

b. Reliability:

- Often there are incentives for schools to exaggerate enrolment figures because of the proliferation of per capita incentive schemes (e.g. the school stipend programmes in Bangladesh).
- Response rates from schools are generally not published and there is a lack of transparency in the process of imputing data for missing schools in some countries.
- Given the lack of standardisation of pre-school provision, it is unlikely that a standard definition of pre-primary education is understood and consistently applied by respondents when asked about pre-schooling exposure.

Source for population data

The main source of population data used in analysing OOSC in each of the four countries is the UN Department of Economics and Social Affairs Population Division (UNPD) 2010 revision. The UNPD is the main source for population data used by UIS and all UN agencies. Ministries of Education, however, often use population data from their respective authorized government ministries or agencies. The use of different population data sources also contribute to the differences in the calculation of OOSC figures.

A note on varying out-of-school children numbers

Discrepancies arise when comparing participation rates in education and the number of OOSC generated from administrative and household survey data. The collection of enrolment and attendance data do not always occur at the same time. Household surveys are often not coordinated with the academic calendar and the timing of a survey can affect estimates of participation rates and age reporting. Thus analysis must be made with caution. One point of caution is that household survey data consider a child in school irrespective of the grade he or she is enrolled; hence, the numbers of children in school are reflected by age-range and not by grade. Therefore, a child who is age 12, would be considered in school even if he or she is attending Grade 1. Secondly, as household survey data can more accurately record age, it can show much higher numbers as it includes those children who have had a late start in enrolling in school.

It should be noted that there is no one correct figure on out-of-school children. The numbers of OOSC from household survey data analysis and administrative data indicate the range of numbers of OOSC in a country. In countries with large populations, arriving at a most accurate and exact number of out-of-school children would be very challenging. Having estimates from both administrative data and household

surveys is thus very useful at giving an indication of the numbers of out-of-school children which is very important for evidence-based policy and decision-making.

Interpretation of profile estimates

The profiles of out-of-school children which follow are descriptive. They are based on household survey estimates of the characteristics of children (their sex, location, household wealth and maternal education) who are more likely to be excluded from school than others. These profiles do not reveal the cause of school exclusion or indeed if the cause is related to the identified characteristics. For example, in Bangladesh, school attendance increases with both maternal education and with household wealth. Maternal education and wealth are themselves positively correlated, so barriers relating to either or both of these characteristics could be driving school attendance. Nonetheless, the profiles provide a starting point for investigating the underlying causes of school exclusion (barriers/bottlenecks to school attendance) in the existing literature.

The profile estimates are based on sample surveys, and are therefore subject to sampling errors. For this reason, care needs to be taken in interpreting differences between the estimates for sub-groups of children, particularly when differences are small and may not be statistically significant.

Ideally the exact cohort of children eligible for primary schooling or lower secondary schooling (according to a country's school entry rules) would be used as a basis for measuring the rate of school exclusion at each level. This is extremely difficult in countries without good birth registration systems, because families often have difficulty recalling the exact date of birth of their children. Instead, household surveys usually collect the age of the child at the time of the survey. This can result in considerable inaccuracy in measuring school attendance rates, if there is a large time gap (i.e. greater than six months) between the start of the academic year and the survey collection period. This is the case for *each* of the household surveys used in this study⁸. It is standard practice to adjust the ages back one year to reduce (not eliminate) this inaccuracy. This age-adjustment was made to the Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lankan data, but not to the Indian data (both the NSSO and SRI-IMRB surveys). This means that the age-grade disparity reported in this study for India is probably slightly overestimated.

The rate of school exclusion varies across sub-groups of the school-age population. This information on profiles is very useful from a policy perspective for targeting particular groups of marginalised children. However, the sizes of the sub-groups of the population differ, meaning that a very large sub-group with comparatively low rates of school exclusion could contain more out of school children than a smaller sub-group with slightly higher rates of exclusion. This is also relevant for targeting policy responses to make the largest quantitative impact on school exclusion. Information on both the rates of school exclusion and the number of excluded children is presented where possible for these reasons.

Cross-country comparisons

When comparing indicators and results across the four countries it is important to be aware that the entrance age to, and duration of, the different schooling levels (pre-primary, primary, lower and upper secondary) is not the same in each country, as Table 2.1 illustrates. The official entry age to primary school is 5 years in Pakistan and Sri Lanka, and 6 years in Bangladesh. The situation in India is complicated because the entrance age to primary education is 6 years in 12 states, and 5 years in 23 states/union territories. This report follows the country study which uses 6 years because the Right to Education mandates compulsory education for children of age 6 to 14 years.

All four countries have five years of primary schooling. Sri Lanka has four years of lower secondary schooling compared with three years in the other countries. For consistency this report uses the International

⁸ The Bangladesh MICS 2006 data collection took place between June-October 2006; the school year starts in January which means that data collection continued into the second half of the school year. The Pakistan PSLM-HIES 2007-08 data collection continued for more than 6 months (i.e. into the second half of the school year). The Sri Lankan DHS 2006/07 was conducted 9–10 months after the start of the school year. The India NSSO 2007-08 was conducted between July 2007 – June 2008 which covers two academic years, as the school year starts in April. As part of the SRI-IMRB report, a nationwide independent sample survey of households was conducted from February to May 2009 in all States and Union Territories in India to provide state-wise estimates of the number and percentage of OOSC in the 6-13 age group.

Standard Classification of Education (ISCED)⁹ terminology ‘primary’, ‘lower secondary’ and ‘upper secondary’ to describe the schooling levels rather than country-specific terms. All countries use the term ‘primary education’ consistent with the ISCED, but have different terms for lower secondary education. India uses the term ‘upper primary’ in place of ‘lower secondary’ and also uses the term ‘elementary education’ to cover both primary and upper primary grades, and these are often provided within the same school.

Table 2.1 Entrance age and duration of schooling levels in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka

| Level of education ¹ | Bangladesh | | India | | Pakistan ² | | Sri Lanka | |
|---------------------------------|------------|------------------|-----------|------------------|-----------------------|------------------|-----------|------------------|
| | age range | duration (years) | age range | duration (years) | age range | duration (years) | age range | duration (years) |
| Pre-primary ³ | 5 | 1 | 5 | 1 | 4 | 1 | 4 | 1 |
| Primary | 6 to 10 | 5 | 6 to 10 | 5 | 5 to 9 | 5 | 5 to 9 | 5 |
| Lower secondary | 11 to 13 | 3 | 11 to 13 | 3 | 10 to 12 | 3 | 10 to 13 | 4 |
| Upper secondary | 14 to 17 | 4 | 14 to 17 | 4 | 13 to 16 | 4 | 14 to 17 | 4 |
| Compulsory stage | 6 to 10 | 5 | 6 to 14 | 9 | 5 to 16 | 12 | 5 to 13 | 9 |

Source: UIS data, except information on compulsory stage for Pakistan which is from Article 25a of the 18th Amendment of the Constitution. Note: (1) the classification of primary, lower secondary and upper secondary follows the ISCED classification for levels 1, 2 and 3, respectively. (2) In Pakistan the official primary entry age has been changed to 6 years based on the National Education Policy 2009 and Article 25a of the 18th Amendment of the Constitution mandating that “all children are to receive free and compulsory education from age 5 – 16 as determined by law.” Pre-primary will start at age 5. However, the new age structure has not yet been implemented throughout the country and data collection still uses 5 year as the official entry age for primary education. Legally the compulsory stage is now 5-16 years, not 5 to 9 years (as reported by UIS) but this has not been fully implemented. (3) The age range for pre-primary includes only the year before the primary entrance age, consistent with the OOSCI Conceptual and Methodological Framework.

Care also needs to be taken in comparing data across the four countries because these are from different years (the household surveys are from 2006, 2006-07, and 2007-08 and 2009 — see table footnotes). Another caveat is that slightly different questions were asked about school attendance in each of the surveys. More details are in the annexes of the country OOSCI studies.

2.3 Profiles of children in Dimension 1

Context for Dimension 1 profiles

Well-conceived early childhood development (ECD) programmes tend to improve enrolment, retention, completion, and student achievement by raising school readiness and promoting cognitive and social-emotional development (Alderman, 2011; Myers, 1995). For instance, an evaluation of a pre-school programme in rural Bangladesh found that children who had attended pre-school had higher school readiness and a better vocabulary and reasoning skills than their counterparts who had not (Aboud, 2006). Such programmes can also help compensate for economic and social disadvantages of vulnerable children (UNESCO, 2011).

The growing evidence on the array of benefits of pre-school education, and the research which highlights the importance of age-appropriate enrolment, mean that it is critical for policy makers to understand the profiles of pre-school age children who are excluded from schooling. This is the first dimension of exclusion in the 5DE framework.

Dimension 1 covers pre-school age children (4 years old in Pakistan and Sri Lanka, and 5 years old in Bangladesh and India) who are not attending either pre-school or primary school. As per the OOSCI Conceptual and Methodological Framework, Dimension 1 covers only one age group which is the year before the primary education entrance age. This group of children have missed the opportunity to attend

⁹ UNESCO developed the ISCED to facilitate comparisons of education statistics and indicators across countries on the basis of uniform and internationally agreed definitions. In 2011, a revision to ISCED was formally adopted by UNESCO Member States. The product of extensive international and regional consultations among education and statistical experts, ISCED 2011 takes into account significant changes in education systems worldwide since the last ISCED revision in 1997.



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pre-school at the appropriate age, and are excluded from school completely. Pre-primary age children who are attending primary schools are counted as in school for Dimension 1. The aim is to explore the characteristics and estimate the size of this group of out-of-school children.

Before discussing the results, there are three key issues to note:

- *Coverage of pre-schooling*: the analysis of Dimension 1 is a snapshot of the attendance status of a cohort of pre-school age children at a point in time (when the surveys were administered). The eventual coverage of pre-schooling in this cohort will almost certainly be higher. Children in this cohort who are currently excluded may attend pre-school in future, and, some who are attending primary school early may have attended pre-school in the past¹⁰.
- *Definition of pre-schools*: only formal pre-primary education programmes are considered in the analysis. A variety of non-formal early childhood care and education (ECCE) programmes exist in the different countries (data issues noted above). Some children in Dimension 1 will have had some exposure to non-formal pre-school programmes.
- *Early-entry to primary schools*: this is a fairly common phenomenon in developing countries, often because pre-school facilities are not available or because parents are trying to give their children a head start. Dimension 1 does not include these children because they are attending school, but it is important to note that this group also missed out on attending pre-school at the appropriate age and may lack school readiness (although some may have attended pre-school early too). It would be useful to understand the extent of early entry, but unfortunately for the single pre-school age group, the breakdown of school attendance data into pre-school attendance and early primary school attendance does not appear to be very accurate partly because of imperfect age adjustment of the survey data (see discussion in section 2.2).

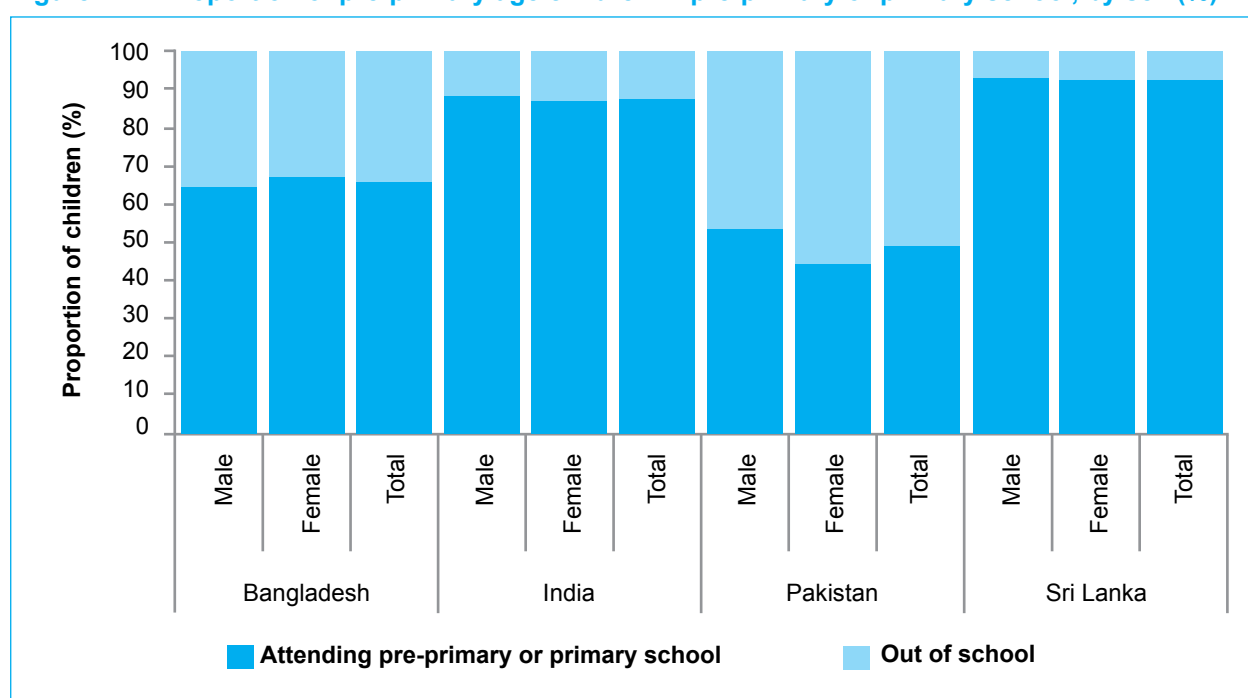
¹⁰ In Sri Lanka about 7 per cent of pre-school age children are out of school, but an analysis of children in their first year of primary school revealed that only 5 per cent had entered with no pre-school education. Since almost all children enter primary school in Sri Lanka, 5 per cent is a reasonable estimate of the percentage of children who ever attend pre-school.

Analysis of Dimension 1 profiles

The extent of exclusion of pre-school age children varies widely across the four countries, as Figure 2.1 demonstrates. Over half (51 per cent) of pre-school age children are not attending pre-primary education in Pakistan, 34 per cent in Bangladesh, and 7.3 per cent in Sri Lanka. In India, 12.4 per cent of 5-year olds are not attending any formal schools (20.7 per cent are attending pre-primary classes while 66.9 per cent are in primary school). Sri Lanka is considerably richer than the other countries on a per-capita basis, with a history of high access to primary education spanning many decades. It is thus not surprising that Sri Lanka has a very low rate of pre-school age exclusion. Of the three largest countries, India and Pakistan are more comparable on a per-capita income basis, while Bangladesh has a considerably lower per capita income. It is clear that income alone does not drive the differences in rates of exclusion across countries as seen in Figure 2.1.

In absolute terms, children in Dimension 1 comprise an estimated 6.1 million, of whom 3 million are in India, 2 million in Pakistan, and 1 million in Bangladesh^{11 12}. Sri Lanka hardly features in the absolute picture with figures for excluded children in the tens of thousands because of its relatively small population and high rates of pre-school coverage.

Figure 2.1 Proportion of pre-primary age children in pre-primary or primary school, by sex (%)



Sources: Bangladesh MICS 2006, India SRI-IMRB unit level data 2009, Pakistan PSLM-HIES 2007-08, Sri Lanka DHS 2006-07, as cited in the four country OOSCI studies. Notes: (1) Pre-primary age is defined here as the year before the official primary entry age. Pre-primary age is 5 years in Bangladesh and India, 4 years in Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

Turning to the profiles of children in Dimension 1, it is clear from Figure 2.1 that gender differences are fairly minimal at an aggregate level in Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka. Girls in Pakistan already face gender bias even in pre-primary education. Pakistani pre-school age girls are nearly 20 per cent more likely to be excluded than boys.

Household wealth is positively associated with pre-school age attendance. For Bangladesh, Pakistan, and rural India, the difference in the rate of exclusion (defined as the number of out-of-school children as a percentage of the reference population) in pre-school between children from the top and bottom wealth groups is between 30 and 35 percentage points. This gap is slightly smaller in urban India, at 27 per cent for boys and 21 per cent for

¹¹ This is a simple estimate based on multiplying the proportion of pre-school children out of school shown in Figure 3.1 with the single-age pre-school age population estimates used in the country reports from the (UNPD) 2010 population revision.

¹² UIS estimates that the number of pre-school age children out of school in Bangladesh is 1.11 million (2011) which accounts for 36.6 per cent of the pre-primary age children. UIS was unable to compute estimates for the other three countries due to lack of data.

girls¹³. Although the scale of exclusion is far lower in Sri Lanka, there is a clear wealth disparity in attendance rates here too. Sri Lankan pre-school age children from the poorest quintile of households are three times more likely to be out of school than their peers in the richest quintile.

In India, the pattern of association between wealth quintiles and pre-school age attendance differs in rural and urban areas. In urban areas rates of non-attendance for pre-school age children drop markedly for households above the lowest wealth quintile. This is not the case in rural areas where pre-school age children from the bottom three wealth quintiles all have fairly high rates of non-attendance. It is possible that this is due to a relative lack of pre-school services in rural areas.

Rural and urban location is correlated with exclusion in the three largest countries. In both Pakistan and India, pre-school age children who live in rural areas have non-attendance rates that are 15 to 24 percentage points higher than their urban peers. The urban-rural gap is smaller in Bangladesh (about 9 percentage points), but there are pockets of very high exclusion in urban areas—for pre-school age children living in metropolitan slums the rate of exclusion is nearly 60 per cent higher than in rural areas. In Sri Lanka the overall rural-urban gap in attendance rates is minimal, but pockets of high exclusion exist here too: close to 20 per cent of pre-school age children from the estate sector are out of school compared with 7 per cent overall. Female pre-school age children who live on estates are particularly disadvantaged.

Large disparities in exclusion rates for pre-schoolers are also evident between geographical regions within each country. Among Bangladesh's six divisions, there is a 14-percentage point gap in rates of pre-school exclusion between the lowest (Barisal at 25 per cent) and the highest (Sylhet at 39 per cent). In Pakistan the disparity in pre-school exclusion among the four provinces (those included in the survey) is even greater. Here Balochistan records the highest proportion of out-of-school pre-school age children (76 per cent) compared with Punjab which reports the lowest (41 per cent). According to NSSO 2007-08 data, three Indian states recorded non-attendance rates for pre-schoolers that are 18, 26 and 48 percentage points above the country average (Bihar, Chhattisgarh, and Tripura, respectively)¹⁴.

Among India's social and religious communities, two groups stand out as having a higher than average proportion of pre-school children excluded from school based on analysis of NSSO 2007-08 data. About half of pre-school age children from Scheduled Castes and from Muslim families are not attending school, compared to 40 per cent overall.

2.4 Profiles of children in Dimensions 2 and 3

Context for Dimensions 2 and 3 profiles

The fundamental right of children to attend primary school is enshrined in national laws in all four countries and in international agreements, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child to which all four countries are signatories¹⁵. In India and Sri Lanka this legal imperative extends to lower secondary education, while Bangladesh and Pakistan are committed to making secondary education available and accessible to every child (CRC, Article 28b).

This section investigates the profiles of children who officially should be in primary or lower secondary school but are not¹⁶. Two groups of children are the focus of attention: children of official primary school age, and children of official lower secondary school age. The exact age ranges are country specific:

¹³ Data for the analysis of wealth quintile and urban-rural disparities for pre-primary education in India is from the NSSO unit level data 2007-08.

¹⁴ The country study notes that there is no clear pattern to the states which have high proportions of out-of-school pre-school age children, though, on average, this proportion is higher in states with 6 years as the entry age.

¹⁵ In Pakistan, after nationwide devolution in 2011, education up to Grade 12 is a district subject. All implementation lies at district and provincial level. National compulsory primary education law cannot be devised as this action is done at the provincial level. Compulsory primary education laws have been introduced in almost all parts of the country except Balochistan province. (See <http://www.right-to-education.org/country-node/383/country-minimum>, accessed June 2012).

¹⁶ It is important to note that some children of lower secondary school-age may already be in upper secondary education if they entered the schooling system earlier than the official age. These children are counted as attending school.

- Bangladesh and India: primary education (6-10 years); lower secondary education (11-13 years);
- Pakistan: primary education (5-9 years); lower secondary education (10-12 years); and
- Sri Lanka: primary education (5-9 years); lower secondary education (10-13 years).

Thus when comparing profiles across countries it is important to bear in mind that children are a year younger when they become eligible for primary school in Pakistan and Sri Lanka, and that Sri Lanka has a longer lower secondary cycle than the other countries.

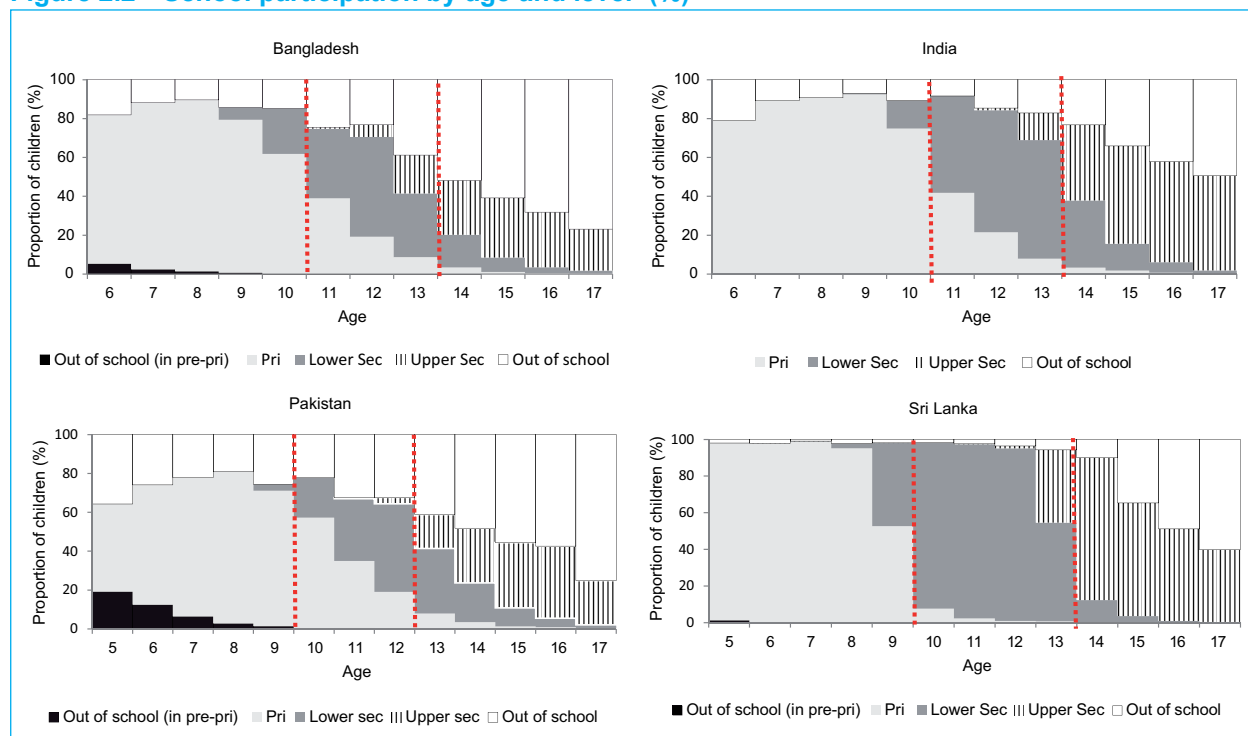
In the 5DE framework, children of primary school age who are not attending school are in Dimension 2, while Dimension 3 is defined as children of lower secondary age who are out of school. More detailed information is needed on these groups of marginalised children in order to better target policy responses to reduce school exclusion. This section is also able to inform the subsequent analysis of children at risk of dropping out (Dimensions 4 and 5 in the 5DE framework covered in section 2.6) by investigating age-appropriate attendance. Hence this section explores the:

- rate of school exclusion for primary school-age children and for lower secondary school-age children, and the absolute number of children in Dimensions 2 and 3;
- extent of age-grade disparity;
- likelihood of out-of-school children entering school later; and
- key characteristics ('profiles') of children in Dimensions 2 and 3.

Analysis of school exclusion

To get an overview of school participation in the region, Figure 2.2 shows the proportion of children of official primary school-entry age up to age 17 who are attending pre-primary, primary, lower and upper secondary school in each country. The white bars show the proportion of children who are out of school at each age. Children who are attending pre-school are considered to be out of school in the 5DE framework-this sub-group of out-of-school children is denoted by black bars at the bottom of the figures for Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. For India this sub-group is subsumed in the overall group of out-of-school children because of data constraints.

Figure 2.2 School participation by age and level¹ (%)



Sources: Bangladesh MICS 2006, India NSSO unit level data 2007-08, Pakistan PSLM -HIES 2007-08, Sri Lanka DHS 2006-07, as cited in country OOSCI studies. Note: (1) The vertical red dotted lines denote the official exit age for the primary education level and lower secondary level in each country.

Age-grade discrepancy

One striking feature of Figure 2.2 is the age-grade discrepancy in the three largest countries in the region. It is clear that this is a serious problem – children are not enrolling at the right age for the corresponding grade even when accounting for the caveat that the representation here is only approximate because of the difficulty in identifying cohorts of children of exact eligible age for school¹⁷. The apparent early entry of a sizable proportion of 9 year olds to lower secondary school in Sri Lanka is symptomatic of this inaccuracy, since it seems unlikely that Sri Lanka has a problem of age-grade disparity of this degree. Hence the estimates of the proportion of overage children should be treated as indicative only.

Many children in the three largest countries are attending primary and lower secondary education when they are older than the target age. There are three possible reasons for this: late entry into primary school, repetition, and re-entry following dropout. The latter is hard to track, but repetition and late entry are evident in the region. The problem of over-age attendance is acute in Pakistan: here about one quarter of primary students are overage, while some 40 per cent of lower secondary students are older than expected. As will be seen later in this report, repetition rates at primary education level are in the order of 3-6 per cent, so it appears that late entry is the most important driver of age-grade disparity here.

Age-grade disparity is also a serious problem in Bangladesh and India where some 14 per cent of primary education students are older than expected. This is partly driven by repetition, particularly in Bangladesh where rates are 10-15 per cent. India has a higher proportion of overage students at lower secondary level than Bangladesh (20 per cent vs. 16 per cent) partly because it has higher retention rates than Bangladesh. It should be noted that the data for India is from the NSSO 2007-08.

The adjusted net attendance rate (ANAR) is a summary indicator which measures age-appropriate participation in primary and lower secondary school, with an adjustment to include children who are studying in levels *above* their target age. The exact definition is given in Box 2.1.

Box 2.1 Definition of Adjusted Net Attendance Rate

$$\text{Primary ANAR} = \frac{\text{Number of children of primary school-age attending primary or secondary education}}{\text{Total population of primary school-age children}}$$

$$\text{Lower Secondary ANAR} = \frac{\text{Number of children of lower secondary school-age attending lower or upper secondary education}}{\text{Total population of lower secondary school-age children}}$$

Table 2.2 presents the primary and lower secondary education ANAR for each country. This reveals a wide variation in country performance in getting children into school at the right age. Pakistan has a very low primary education ANAR of 66 per cent; in Bangladesh this figure is well above 80 per cent. Sri Lanka and India has close to full age-appropriate participation at the primary education level. Sri Lanka is the only country of the four that is not far off this target at lower secondary education level.

Table 2.2 Adjusted net attendance rates, by level and sex (%)

| | Primary Education | | | Lower Secondary Education | | |
|------------|-------------------|--------|-------|---------------------------|--------|-------|
| | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total |
| Bangladesh | 81 | 87 | 84 | 39 | 52 | 46 |
| India | 94 | 94 | 94 | 64 | 64 | 64 |
| Pakistan | 70 | 61 | 66 | 37 | 31 | 34 |
| Sri Lanka | 98 | 98 | 98 | 93 | 95 | 94 |

Sources: Bangladesh MICS 2006, India SRI-IMRB 2009 unit level data, Pakistan PSLM -HIES 2007-08, Sri Lanka DHS 2006-07, as cited in the country OOSCI studies.

¹⁷ For a more detailed explanation, see discussion of age-adjustment of household survey data in section 2.2.

Apart from in Sri Lanka, there is a noticeably large drop in ANARs between primary and lower secondary education, indicating that many children do not continue to lower secondary and thus do not complete the basic education cycle. This also shows low levels of internal efficiency across the whole cycle — this will be revisited in section 2.6. The drop in ANARs is particularly large in Bangladesh, Pakistan and India. Pakistan has only one-third of its lower secondary school-age children attending lower secondary school or above while in Bangladesh only about half are in school. In India, about six in 10 (64 per cent) lower secondary school-age children are attending school.

Care should be taken in interpreting the ANAR. The ANAR is a good measure of age-appropriate attendance, but it is not a perfect measure of school participation for a given cohort of children. The phenomenon of late entry means that the proportion of a cohort of children ever attending primary school will almost certainly be higher than the primary education ANAR (the same applies to lower secondary) shown in Table 2.2. The lower secondary education ANAR excludes lower secondary school-age children who are in primary schools. These children are not out of school, so it is important to note that 100 per cent minus the lower secondary education ANAR is not equal to the percentage of lower secondary school-age children who are out of school (Dimension 3). It is this latter group of out-of-school children, together with their primary school-age counterparts in Dimension 2 that is the focus of the remaining analysis in this section.

Rate of school exclusion and number of out-of-school children in Dimensions 2 and 3

The contrasting patterns of white bars in Figure 2.2 reveal that school exclusion is a much more significant problem in some countries in the region than in others. The summary figures bear this out: about 35 per cent of primary school-age children are out of school in Pakistan, 16 per cent in Bangladesh, 6.4 per cent in India and 2 per cent in Sri Lanka. Table 2.3 contains the estimates of both the percentage and number of out-of-school children in each country.

Table 2.3 Percentage and number of out-of-school children (in millions), by age-group (dimension), sex and country

| | Dimension 2: Primary school-age children | | Dimension 3: Lower secondary school-age children | | Dimensions 2 and 3 |
|-------------------|--|--------------------|--|--------------------|--------------------|
| | percentage of OOSC (%) | number of OOSC (m) | percentage of OOSC (%) | number of OOSC (m) | number of OOSC (m) |
| Bangladesh | 16.2 | 2.6 | 30.7 | 3.0 | 5.6 |
| Male | 19.1 | 1.6 | 36.3 | 1.8 | 3.4 |
| Female | 13.1 | 1.0 | 25.2 | 1.2 | 2.2 |
| India* | 6.4 | 7.8 | 5.7 | 4.0 | 11.9 |
| Male | 6.3 | 4.0 | 5.1 | 1.9 | 6 |
| Female | 6.6 | 3.8 | 6.3 | 2.1 | 5.9 |
| Pakistan | 34.4 | 6.6 | 30.1 | 2.8 | 9.4 |
| Male | 30.2 | 3.0 | 23.0 | 1.1 | 4.1 |
| Female | 38.9 | 3.6 | 37.6 | 1.7 | 5.3 |
| Sri Lanka | 1.9 | 0.03 | 3.2 | 0.04 | 0.07 |
| Male | 1.9 | 0.02 | 3.7 | 0.02 | 0.04 |
| Female | 1.8 | 0.01 | 2.8 | 0.02 | 0.03 |
| Total | | 17.0 | | 9.9 | 27.0 |
| Male | | 8.6 | | 4.8 | 13.5 |
| Female | | 8.5 | | 5.0 | 13.4 |

Sources: Bangladesh MICS 2006 & UNPD 2010 revision, India SRI-IMRB 2009 unit level data and UNPD 2012 revision, Pakistan PSLM -HIES 2007-08 & UNPD 2010 revision, Sri Lanka DHS 2006-07 & UNPD 2010 revision (excludes 5 conflict-affected districts in the north), as cited in the country OOSCI studies. Note: * For India, there are different estimates of OOSC as discussed in the text below. The total numbers for all four countries have been rounded off.

In the case of India, the estimates of the numbers of OOSC and their proportion vary even when using the same data source - in this case the SRI-IMRB 2009 unit level data. The source of the discrepancy is two-fold: 1) the different definitions of OOSC and, 2) the population projection sources used. The SRI-IMRB Survey of Out-of-School Children in 2009 was commissioned by the Indian Ministry of Human Resource Development. The survey considers any child who, even when enrolled, had not attended school any time in the two months preceding the survey, as out of school. It also counts primary school-age children who are enrolled in pre-primary schools as in school whereas the OOSCI-CMF definition counts them as out of school. The methodology used for the estimation in the SRI-IMRB differs from the methodology presented in Conceptual and Methodological Framework of the Global Initiative of Out-of-School Children. As part of this study, the OOSCI methodology was applied to the SRI-IMRB 2009 data. Analysing the NSSO 2009-10 data using UNDP population projections also result in a different number of OOSC. Table 2.3a below shows the different estimates using two definitions of out-of-school children from 1) the CMF, and 2) the SRI-IMRB Out-of-School Children Report 2009, and two estimates of child population based on 1) the Registrar General of India (RGI) and 2) UNPD population projections, and two data sources 1) the SRI-IMRB 2009 data and 2) the NSSO 2009-10 data. For Table 2.3 above, the OOSC figures used for India are from the SRI-IMRB 2009 data and UNPD population projection analyzed using definition 2.

Table 2.3a: Percentage and number of out-of-school children (ages 6-13), India

| Out of school children | SRI-IMRB 2009 data RGI population projection | | SRI-IMRB 2009 data UNPD population projection | | NSSO 2009-10 UNPD population projection | |
|---|--|-------------------------|---|-------------------------|---|-------------------------|
| | Proportion (%) | Number) (in million) | Proportion (%) | Number) (in million) | Proportion (%) | Number) (in million) |
| 6 to 10 years (Primary Education) - Dimension 1 | | | | | | |
| Definition 1 | 3.69 | 4.3 | 3.69 | 4.5 | 7.9 | 9.6 |
| Definition 2 | 6.41 | 7.5 | 6.42 | 7.8 | 10.81 | 13.2 |
| 11 to 13 years (Lower Secondary Education) - Dimension 2 | | | | | | |
| Definition 1 | 5.23 | 3.8 | 5.23 | 3.7 | 8.03 | 5.7 |
| Definition 2 | 5.73 | 4.2 | 5.64 | 4 | 8.34 | 6 |
| 6 to 13 years - Dimensions 2 and 3 | | | | | | |
| Definition 1 | 4.28 | 8.1 | 4.28 | 8.2 | 7.95 | 15.4 |
| Definition 2 | 6.15 | 11.7 | 6.17 | 11.9 | 9.92 | 19.2 |

Source: SRI-IMRB 2009 data and NSSO 2009-10 data, population projections from RGI 2009 and UNPD 2009 (2012 revision).

Definition 1: OOSC are children who have never enrolled in and who dropouts from pre-primary education, or higher classes in formal or non-formal education facilities.

Definition 2: OOSC are children who have never enrolled in and dropouts from Grade 1 and above in formal education facilities. Primary school-age children enrolled in pre-primary education are counted as out of school.

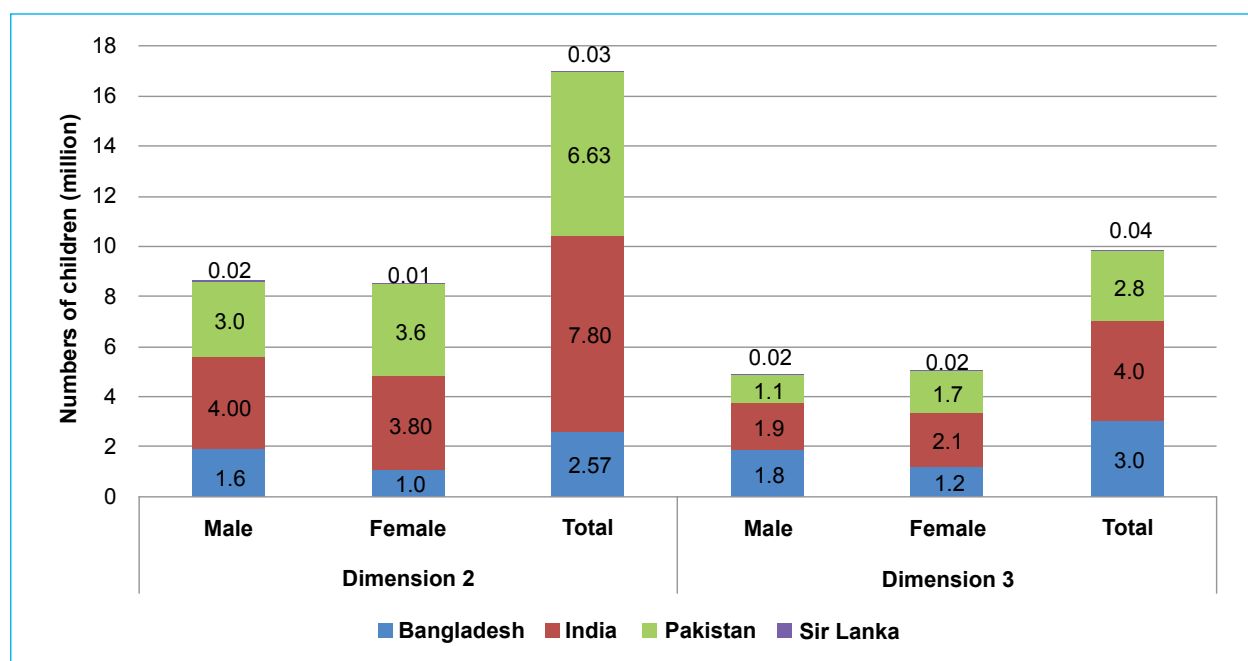
The varying proportion and numbers of out-of-school children shown in Table 2.3a illustrate how estimates can differ with changes in definition and methodology. This highlights the need for a standard definition and methodology to be used in analysing OOSC numbers. This is discussed further in the India OOSCI Study. It is also important to note that there is no one correct figure on OOSC but the different numbers from the different data sources indicate the range of numbers of OOSC. This is true for India and for Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

Moving from primary school-age to lower secondary school-age children, the rate of school exclusion rises in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. There is a particularly sharp increase in Bangladesh where about 30 per cent of lower secondary school-age children are out of school compared with 16 per cent of primary school-age children. In Sri Lanka, the exclusion rate for older children is 3.2 per cent compared with 1.9 per cent for primary school-age children. A reverse pattern is seen in India and Pakistan where the percentage of older children out of school is lower than among primary school-age children. This is largely due to late entry to school (e.g. a 9-year old enrolled in Grade 1), not because both countries have a high degree of participation in lower secondary education.

India has the largest population of school-age children in the region with some 195 million children of primary and lower secondary school-age (6-13 years)¹⁸. Pakistan has 29 million 5-12 year olds while Bangladesh has 26 million (6-13 year olds. Sri Lanka has almost 3 million school-age children (5-13 years)¹⁹. This pattern is reflected in the absolute number of out-of-school children in Dimensions 2 and 3 shown in Table 2.3 and in Figure 2.3 which shows India having the highest number of OOSC.

An analysis of household surveys shows an estimated 27 million children in Dimensions 2 and 3 together are out of school in the four countries with 44 per cent of these children living in India. An estimated 35 per cent are in Pakistan and 21 per cent in Bangladesh. Sri Lanka barely features in the aggregate picture because it has a comparatively small population, and close to universal participation in primary and lower secondary education. Some 17 million of the excluded children are in Dimension 2 (primary school-age children), while 9.9 million are in Dimension 3 (lower secondary school-age children).

Figure 2.3 Number of out-of-school children in Dimensions 2 (primary school-age) and 3 (lower secondary school-age), by sex (in millions)



Sources: Bangladesh MICS 2006 & UNPD 2010 revision, India SRI-IMRB 2009 data & UNPD 2012 revision, Pakistan PSLM -HIES 2007-08 & UNPD 2010 revision, Sri Lanka DHS 2006-07 & UNPD 2010 revision, as cited in country reports.

It is worth highlighting at this point that administrative sources of data produce slightly different estimates of the number of out-of-school children in the four countries compared to those based on household survey data presented above. The UIS data show there are a total of 26.6 million children not in school in the four countries, 1.5 million of whom are in Dimension 2 (primary school-age children) and 25.1 million are in Dimension 3 (lower secondary school-age children).

¹⁸ Data for 2012 based on the UNPD 2012 revision

¹⁹ These school-age population figures are from the typology spreadsheets used in the country studies based on UNPD 2010 revision.

Box 2.2 Number of out-of-school children based on administrative data standardized by UIS

UIS uses a standard questionnaire to collect education administrative data from countries, and applies a standard methodology to produce figures on the number of out-of-school children of primary school-age (Dimension 2) and of lower secondary school-age (Dimension 3). The table below contains the latest available data.

| Country | Year | Number of out-of-school children | |
|--------------|------|----------------------------------|---|
| | | Dimension 2: Primary school-age | Dimension 3: Lower secondary school-age |
| Bangladesh | 2010 | 621,163* | 2,206,301 |
| India | 2011 | 1,387,374 | 16,395,635 |
| Pakistan | 2012 | 5,370,428* | 6,460,622 |
| Sri Lanka | 2011 | 103,178 | 93,600 |
| Total | | 1,490,552 | 25,156,158 |

Source: UIS Database accessed 05 November 2013.

Notes: Meanings of the symbols in the table: * national estimation;

For the eight South Asian countries in total, there are 7.57 million children between the ages 5 to 10 who are not in either primary or secondary schools. Another 25.29 million children between the ages 11 to 13 should be in secondary education but are not in school at all according to UIS.

There are notable differences between the figures in the table above and those based on household survey sources. The household survey data (Table 2.3) show more primary school-age children not in school (17 million) while the administrative data used by UIS show more lower secondary school-age children not in school (25.2 million). The household survey data also show a lower number of OOSC in India (11.9 million) compared with the 17.7-million UIS figure. The reverse is seen for Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka where UIS numbers of OOSC are lower than household survey data. However, there is no major discrepancy in the calculation of the total number of primary and lower secondary school-age out-of-school children using the two data sources with the number from household surveys totalling 27 million and the UIS total figure at 26.6 million.

Some differences can be expected between estimates of out-of-school children based on administrative and household survey sources; for example different measures of participation can be used, age data is often misreported (particularly in administrative sources), and different population data may have been used. For the particular comparison here, the administrative data used by UIS is also more recent than the survey data which may explain part of the difference. But it would still be useful to further investigate the component sources of the two estimates for each country to try to pinpoint the main drivers of the discrepancy.

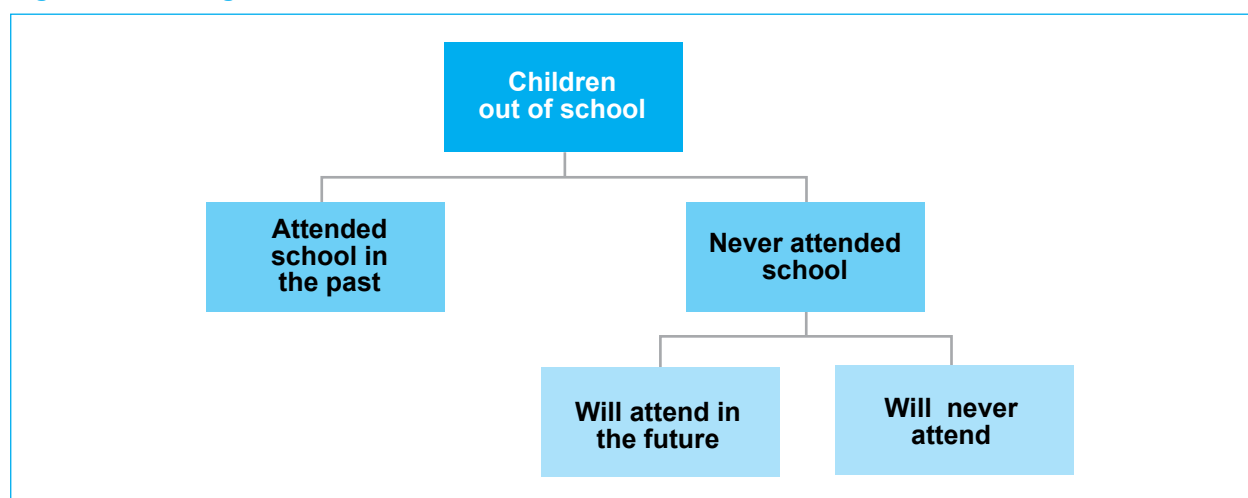
It is also important to note that there is no one correct figure on out-of-school children for the above countries. The different numbers from the UIS and administrative data, and the household survey analysis indicate the range of numbers of OOSC in the concerned countries.

Categories of out-of-school children based on school exposure

Out-of school children are not homogenous in terms of previous school exposure. Some have past exposure (i.e. they entered school in the past and dropped out), while the rest have never entered school (Fig. 2.4). This information is known from household survey data. Some children who have never entered school can also enter school later. It is possible to estimate the likelihood of late entry based on the behaviour of previous cohorts of children. On this basis, the group of out-of-school children in each of the

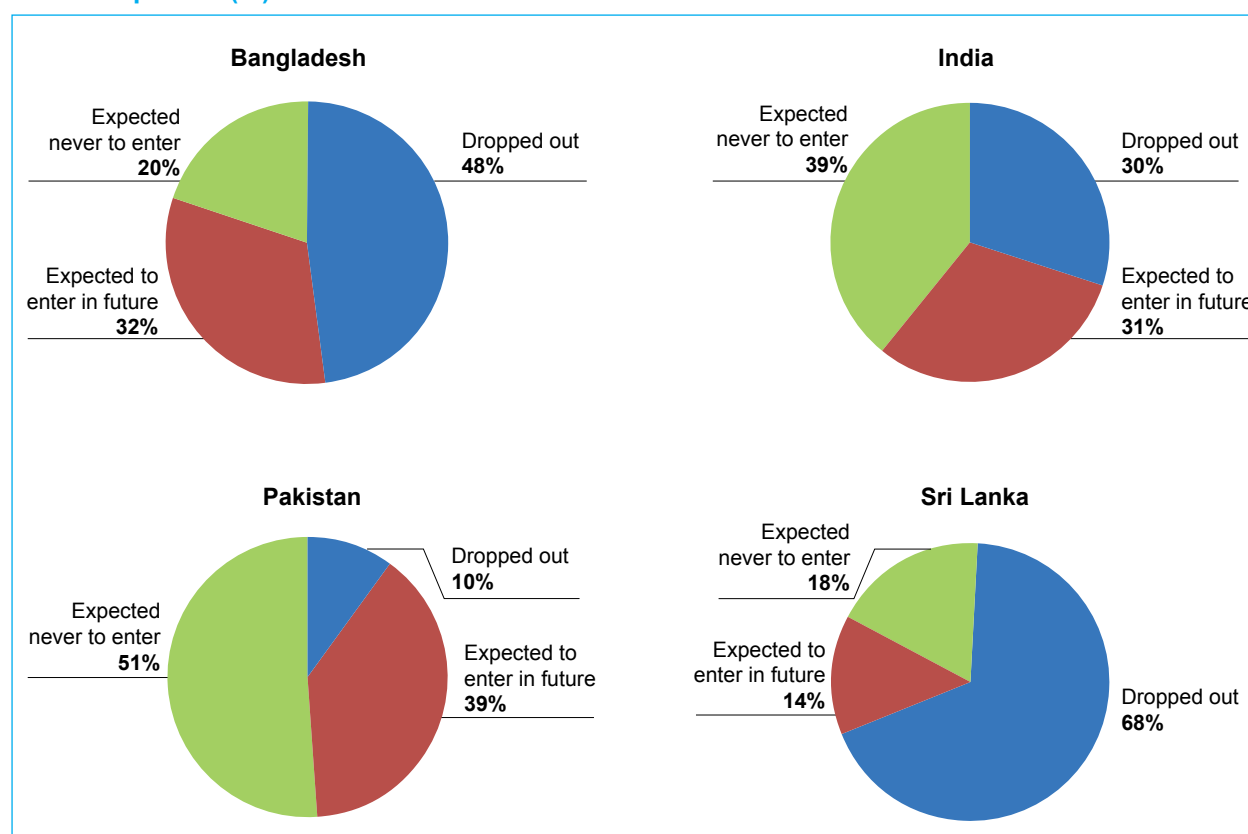
four countries has been divided into three mutually exclusive subgroups: (i) children who entered school and dropped out; (ii) children expected to enter late; and (iii) children never expected to enter²⁰. The relative size of these subgroups matters for policy and programmes, since the children in each are likely to have different educational needs.

Figure 2.4 Categories of out-of-school children



There is considerable variation in the pattern of previous school exposure of out-of-school children across the four countries as Figure 2.5 illustrates.

Figure 2.5 Proportion of out-of-school children of primary and lower secondary school-age by school exposure (%)



Sources: Bangladesh MICS 2006 & UNPD 2010 revision, India NSSO unit level data 2007-08 & UNPD 2010 revision, Pakistan PSLM 2007-08 & UNPD 2010 revision, Sri Lanka DHS 2006-07 & UNPD 2010 revision, as cited in the country OOSCI studies.

²⁰ For full details of the methodology used to compute the three subgroups of out-of-school children, see Annex 2 of the OOSCI CMF.

A relatively low proportion of excluded children in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka are expected to never enter school, although in absolute terms a substantial number of Bangladeshi children (1.1 million) are in this situation. The largest category of out-of-school children in these two countries is those who have dropped out. For Bangladesh, this is illustrative of a system with a relatively high access to primary schooling, but serious problems with dropout, and, to some extent, late entry. In Sri Lanka where very few children end up with no school exposure, and the absolute number of children who drop out before completing the basic education cycle are in the tens of thousands.

A strikingly high share of excluded children in India and Pakistan are expected to never enter school. This is the circumstance facing some 9.7 million school-age children in India and 4.8 million in Pakistan. The scale of Pakistan's problem of children entering primary school late is also evident in Figure 2.5, affecting 3.7 million out-of-school children.

Profiles of out-of-school children

Beyond the classification of out-of-school children by school exposure, it is useful to highlight other characteristics of this group of marginalised children. Figure 2.3 above illustrates that there are slightly more girls out of school than boys, except in Bangladesh. In fact the disadvantage facing girls is even more serious than these figures imply because there are more boys than girls in the total school-age population.

Gender disparity in access to education

At the outset, the gender gap in access to education between boys and girls is not so evident when looking at just the total numbers of girls and the total numbers of boys not in school for both Dimensions 2 and 3. There are almost the same number of boys (13.5 million) and girls (13.4 million) out of school in the four countries. But combined, there are actually more boys in the school-age population in the four countries. There are 11.3 million more boys than girls in the primary and lower secondary school-age population in the four countries combined, of which 9.8 million live in India. If there was no gender difference in access to education, then there would be more boys out of school than girls. The direction of the gender disparity varies by country. In Pakistan there are more girls out of school than boys in both dimensions. The same is true in India at the lower secondary level. The opposite is true in Bangladesh where boys are at a considerable disadvantage when it comes to school attendance. Among children who are out of school, there are 1.2 million more boys than girls. Sri Lanka has virtually no gender disparity at an aggregate level.

The profiles of out-of-school children differ quite markedly by age-group, as will be seen below. Sri Lanka is not mentioned in the description of Dimension 2 profiles because for primary school-age children there is very little statistical disparity by sex, wealth or location in school exclusion rates²¹. It is important to remember that the Sri Lankan data excludes five districts in the North where conflict took place and rates of school exclusion are known to be higher than average.

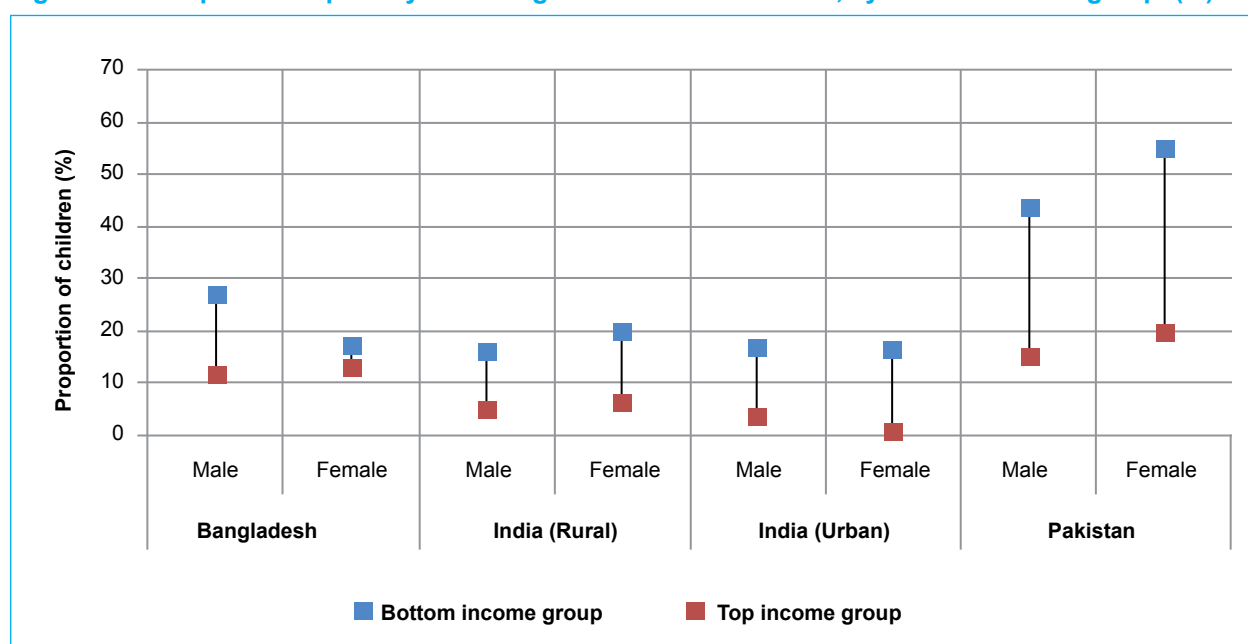
Dimension 2 (primary school-age children)

There are clear disparities in rates of exclusion for primary school-age children by wealth group, as Figure 2.6 shows. The extent of the wealth disparity in exclusion varies between countries. The largest disparity is seen in Pakistan where children from the poorest quintile of households have rates of non-attendance that are about 30 percentage points higher than children from the richest quintile of households. The wealth gap in primary school-age exclusion rates is small for Bangladeshi girls, but in the order of 10 to 15 percentage points for Bangladeshi boys and for Indian children in both rural and urban areas.

The gender disparity in school exclusion in Bangladesh and Pakistan is concentrated among lower income households. Poor primary school-age boys have much higher rates of exclusion than poor girls in Bangladesh. The reverse is true in Pakistan where poor primary school-age girls have much higher rates of non-attendance than poor boys. In Pakistan this gender gap narrows as income increases, but a small gap still persists even for the richest group of households. The gender gap for children in Dimension 2 is virtually eliminated for the richest households in Bangladesh. In India, there are more boys out of school

²¹ There are some differences in the estimates of the percentage of out-of-school children of primary age by location, but they are small and may not be statistically significant (rural areas: 1.6 per cent; urban areas: 3.1 per cent; estates: 4.4 per cent).

Figure 2.6 Proportion of primary school-age children out of school, by sex and income group¹ (%)



Sources: Bangladesh MICS 2006, India NSSO unit level data 2007-08, Pakistan PSLM -HIES 2007-08, as cited in the country OOSCI studies. Notes: (i) The analysis is based in five equally sized household income groups (quintiles). (ii) The proportion of children out of school for the other income groups generally lie in between the estimates for the top and bottom but there are some exceptions.

among the richest families in urban areas (2.8 percentage points more) but almost no gender gap among the poorest families in the urban areas. However, in the rural areas more girls are out of school across the income quintiles, with the gender gap the highest among the poorest families (3.5 percentage points). Pakistan has the biggest gap in rates of school exclusion between urban and rural areas overall. Here rural primary school-age children are 83 per cent more likely to be out-of-school than their urban counterparts. In India, the disparity also favours urban primary school-age children, but the difference is small when looking at the national average. If urban slums will be disaggregated from urban areas, data would likely indicate higher rates of exclusion in rural areas compared with urban non-slum areas. There is no overall urban-rural divide for Bangladeshi children in Dimension 2. However, this aggregate picture conceals pockets of primary school-age children in urban slums with very high rates of school exclusion which implies that the urban average rate, if excluding urban slums, is lower than the rural average exclusion rate.

Deprivation in urban areas tends to be highly concentrated in specific groups, and the schooling situation for these children is similar to the most disadvantaged in rural areas. In India, urban out-of-school children are concentrated among households with low incomes: some 73 per cent are from the lowest wealth quintile. The comparable figure for rural areas is 45 per cent. In terms of location, poor urban children tend to live in slums. In metropolitan slums in Bangladesh, children are 2.5 times more likely to be excluded from school than the national average. The (statistical) metropolitan areas of Bangladesh include Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna and Rajshahi. There are significant data gaps for children living in slums in the other countries. However, some studies in Kolkata have estimated that as many as a third of 6-13 year olds living in slums may be out of school (Jha and Jhingran, 2005). The State of the World's Children 2012 cites a report that showed a primary education attendance rate of 55 per cent in slums in Delhi compared with 90 per cent in the city overall²².

Non-attendance rates for children in Dimension 2 show little regional variation (only a few percentage points) in Bangladesh with one exception: Khulna stands out as having relatively low rates of exclusion of primary school-age children compared with the five other divisions in the country. In Pakistan, the rate of exclusion in Dimension 2 varies from 30 per cent in Punjab to 48 per cent in Balochistan, with rates in Sindh and KPK close to 40 per cent. India also has considerable regional variation in Dimension 2. Based

²² UNICEF, The State of the World's Children in 2012: Children in and Urban World, p.28.

on SRI-IMRB 2009 data, Arunachal Pradesh has the highest rate of exclusion for Dimension 2 at 9 per cent. Bihar (6.9 per cent), Rajasthan (6.8 per cent) and Uttar Pradesh (6.5 per cent) also have significantly higher rates of exclusion compared with the national average of 3.6 per cent.

Among India’s religious communities, Muslim children of primary school-age are more likely to be out of school than an average Indian child. Analysis of SRI-IMRB 2009 data also show comparatively higher proportions of out-of-school children among the socially disadvantaged groups with the average rate among Scheduled Castes at 5.6 per cent and Scheduled Tribes at 5.3 per cent while the national average is 3.6 per cent. Girls from Scheduled Castes have the highest rates of exclusion at 6.1 per cent.

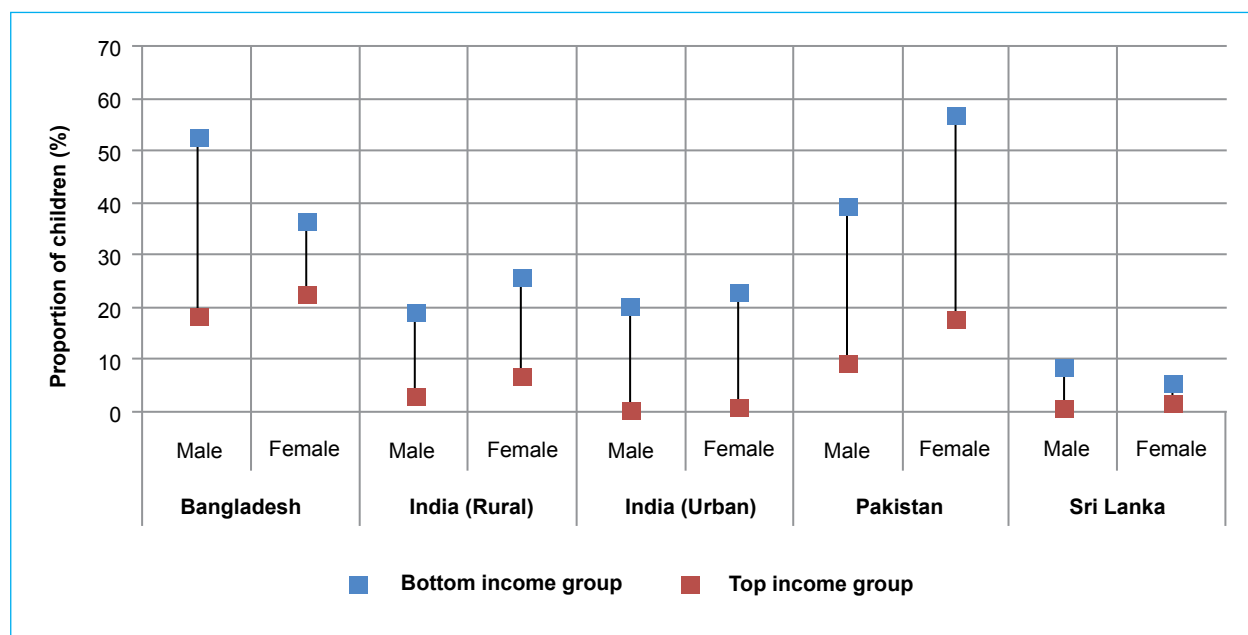
In Bangladesh, the education status of a child’s mother is positively correlated with school attendance. A primary school-age child whose mother has no formal education is 3.5 times more likely to be out of school than a child whose mother has secondary education or higher. Similar data on the other three countries is not readily available, but a report on school exclusion from 2005 (UNICEF/UNESCO, 2005) stated that ‘in South Asia on average a child whose mother has no education is 2.5 times as likely to be out of primary school compared to a child whose mother has some education’.

Various research have also shown that children with a minority language as mother tongue are disproportionately excluded. In Bangladesh children in the Chittagong Hill Tracts which is home to ethno-linguistic minorities have lower enrolment rates than their counterparts in Khulna, Rajshahi and Barisal.

Dimension 3 (lower secondary school-age children)

Similar, but more marked, disparities are evident in the proportion of lower secondary school-age children out of school. Figure 2.7 shows non-attendance rates for lower secondary school-age children by wealth and gender.

Figure 2.7 Proportion of lower secondary school-age children out of school, by sex and income group¹ (%)



Sources: Bangladesh MICS 2006, India NSSO unit level data 2007-08, Pakistan PSLM -HIES 2007-08, as cited in the country OOSCI studies. Notes: (i) The analysis is based in five equally sized household income groups (quintiles). (ii) The proportion of children out of school for the other income groups almost all lie in between the estimates for the top and bottom groups—India urban males is an exception.

It is clear from comparing the length of the lines in Figure 2.6 and Figure 2.7 that there is much larger disparity in rates of exclusion of lower secondary school-age children by wealth groups than for primary school-age children. For Dimension 3, Pakistan displays very large attendance gaps by wealth: girls from the poorest quintile of households have non-attendance rates which are 40 percentage points higher than girls from the richest quintile of households. For Bangladeshi boys, the gap is also notably large at some 35 percentage points.

Gender disparities in school attendance increase with age in Bangladesh, Pakistan and rural India. Girls in Dimension 3 from all wealth groups in Pakistan and rural India are less likely to be attending school than boys with comparable economic backgrounds. The gender-wealth interaction is more complex in Bangladesh. Bangladeshi boys from all wealth quintiles except the richest are less likely to be attending school than their female counterparts. But the direction of the gender disadvantage switches to girls for children from the richest quintile. There is very little gender difference in school attendance rates in urban India for any of the wealth groups. In Pakistan, more than half of the girls from the poorest families (56.7 per cent) are not in school compared to 17.9 per cent from the richest households.

The pattern of urban-rural disparity in school attendance for lower secondary school-age children is similar to that for the primary school-age group. In Pakistan rural children are again about 80 per cent more likely to be out of school than their urban counterparts. This location gap has remained small in India looking at the urban aggregated picture and hence not taking into account the large disparities between urban slums and urban non-slum areas. For the older age group in Bangladesh, there is again no evidence of an overall rural-urban divide in school attendance. But the point made above that primary school-age children living in urban slums face disproportionate disadvantage in school attendance applies here too. The rate of non-attendance for lower secondary age children living in Bangladesh's metropolitan slums is 60 per cent. Hence, like as in Dimension 2, children in rural areas and urban slums are the most excluded compared with those in urban non-slum areas. In Sri Lanka, older children living on estates represent another pocket of exclusion. About 10 per cent of this group of lower secondary school-age children are out of school compared with 3 per cent of their peers living in rural and urban areas.

Unlike for primary school-age children, regional disparities in rates of exclusion are clearly evident for lower secondary school-age children in Bangladesh where the rate of non-attendance varies from 25 per cent in Khulna to 41 per cent in Sylhet. Among Pakistan's four provinces (included in this study), the rate of exclusion ranges from 26 per cent in Punjab to 43 per cent in Balochistan. In India, the proportion of lower secondary school-age children not in school is significantly higher in Rajasthan (11 per cent), Orissa (10.4 per cent), Bihar (8.5 per cent), Uttar Pradesh (8 per cent) and Arunachal Pradesh (7.6 per cent). The national average is 5.2 per cent based on the SRI-IMRB 2009 report.

Among India's religious communities, Muslims again have a comparatively high proportion of lower secondary age children excluded from school — the exclusion rate is 9.1 per cent. Among India's social groups, lower-secondary school-age children from Scheduled Tribes are the least likely to be in school with a rate of 9.3 per cent. ST lower secondary age girls in rural areas are among the most excluded with 11.4 per cent of them not in school based on SRI-IMRB 2009 data.

The disparities in school attendance associated with the education status of a child's mother are even sharper for lower secondary school-age children in Bangladesh. A child in this age group whose mother has no education is 12 times more likely to be out of school than a child whose mother has secondary education or higher.

2.5 Out-of-school children and involvement in child labour

Introduction

Child labour is in contravention of many national laws and international covenants, including the CRC. Children who spend long hours working will find it hard to make the most of schooling opportunities, and some will be denied their right to schooling altogether. Even when a child can combine school and work, working conditions may affect the likelihood of a child continuing in education (for example, by affecting health, causing fatigue, making a child lose focus and value school less). The relationship between child labour and schooling outcomes is not straightforward, and chapter five takes this up in detail. This section aims to:

- estimate the overall prevalence of child labour in the region;
- present a descriptive profile of child labourers in the region (who they are, where they live, what their household characteristics are); and
- examine the overlap between child labourers and out-of-school children.

Measuring child labour is not straightforward. The three principal international conventions on child labour — ILO Convention No. 138 (Minimum Age) (C138), CRC, and ILO Convention No. 182 (Worst Forms)

(C182)— together set the legal boundaries for child labour, but these contain a number of flexibility clauses left to the discretion of the competent national authority²³. This means that there is no single legal definition of child labour across countries, and thus no single standard statistical measure of child labour consistent with national legislation across countries.

As part of this OOSCI, the interagency research project Understanding Children's Work (UCW)²⁴, came up with a definition of child labour that could be used as a benchmark for international comparative purposes. They drew on the guidelines contained in the 18th International Conference of Labour Statisticians, and decided to include children up to and including 14 years of age (the most common upper age limit for basic schooling). The full details are provided in Annex A. Under this definition, child labourers comprise three groups of children

- 5-11 year olds in economic activity for at least one hour a week. Economic activity covers all market production, certain types of non-market production (including production of goods for own use). It includes forms of work in both the formal and informal sectors, and both inside and outside family settings;
- 12-14 year olds in non-light (or 'regular') economic activity for at least 14 hours a week; and
- 5-14 year olds in unpaid household services (commonly called 'household chores') for at least 28 hours a week. At this high volume of hours, this form of work is labelled as 'hazardous'.

Before presenting the analysis of child labour and school exclusion, it is important to highlight two issues that affect the comparability of estimates across the four countries.

- First, different survey instruments have been used in each country, and the data is not from the same year in most cases. Bangladesh and Pakistan's estimates are based on labour force surveys, from 2005-06 and 2007-08 respectively. India's estimates come from a national family health survey in 2005-06. Sri Lanka used a child activity survey from 2008/09 (again this survey excluded a number of districts which were affected by conflict, where children are probably more likely to be out-of-school, and possibly more likely to be child labourers²⁵).
- Second, the standard definition of child labour set out above was fully applied in Bangladesh and India only. In Pakistan the estimates are based on an older group of children (10-14 years). This is a particularly important distinction because child labour propensity tends to be positively related to age. In Sri Lanka a narrower national definition was applied to a broader age range of children (age 5-17 years). Full details of the Sri Lankan definition are in Annex A.1.2.

The discussion below is in four subsections: first, an overview of the interplay between child labour and school attendance; second, the profiles of child labourers and of out-of-school children who are engaged in child labour; third, an analysis of the type of work and intensity of child labour; and fourth, a summary snapshot of school attendance rates by child labour status.

Interaction between child labour and schooling

Even with the caveats about cross-country comparisons outlined above, it appears that the interaction between child labour and school attendance varies considerably between the four countries. Figure 2.8 presents the relationship between the four overlapping groups of school-age children, as defined by their school attendance and child labour status, in each country.

Children attending school are represented by blue shading in Figure 2.8. Within this group, dark blue is used for child labourers, and light blue for the remaining children. The vast majority of school-age children in each of the four countries are in the light blue category i.e. in school and not in child labour.

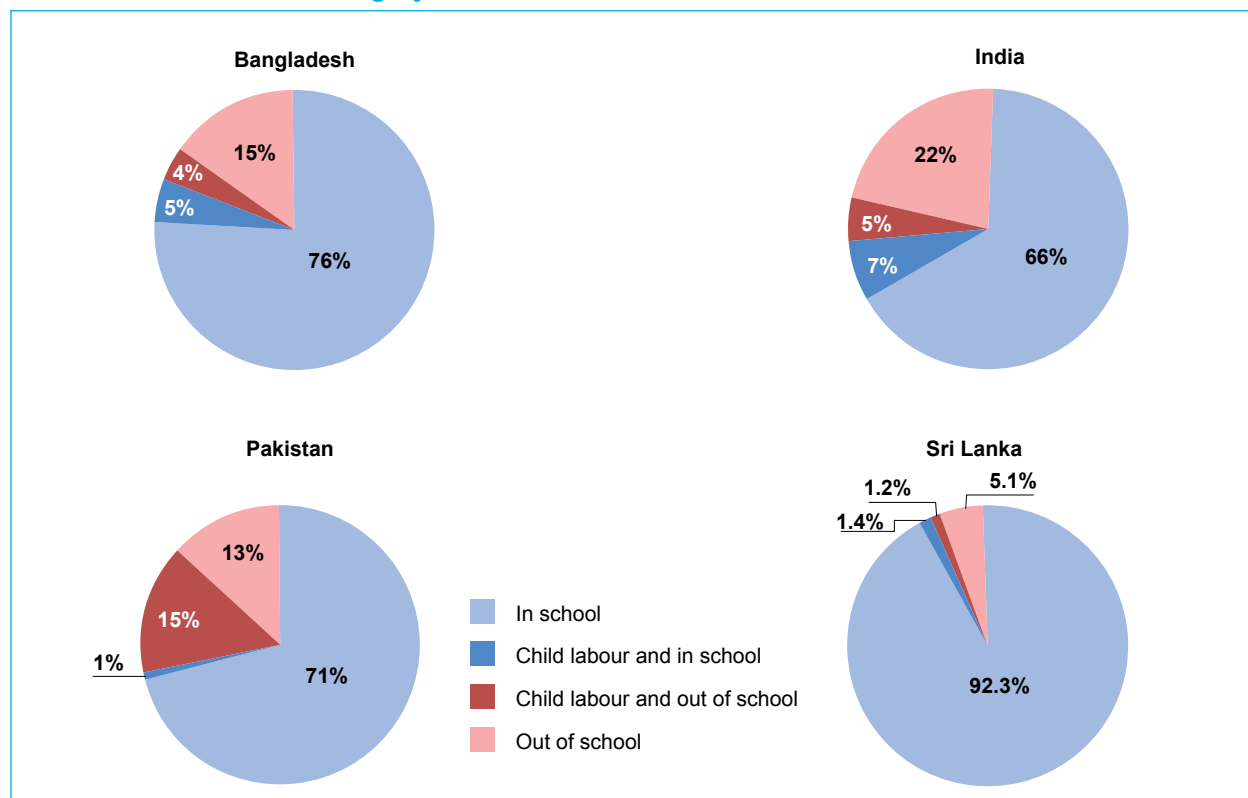
²³ In consultation (where relevant) with worker and employer organisations. Note that this only applies to the ILO conventions, not to the CRC.

²⁴ UCW programme is an inter-agency research cooperation initiative involving the ILO, UNICEF and the World Bank. Research efforts help provide a common understanding of child labour, and a common basis for action against it. (see www.ucw-project.org)

²⁵ Five districts from North Eastern Province and three districts from Eastern Provinces were excluded.

Out-of-school children are represented by pink shading in Figure 2.8. Within this group dark pink denotes child labourers, and light pink marks the remaining children. Pakistan has a notably high proportion of out-of-school children at 28 per cent, consistent with the previous analysis. Close to one fifth of children in Bangladesh, and 6 per cent of children in Sri Lanka do not attend school — again this is consistent with previous findings. However, the India estimate of the proportion of 5-14 year olds out of school (27 per cent) is considerably higher than rates of exclusion presented earlier for primary and lower secondary school-age children (12 per cent and 14 per cent, respectively). Part of the explanation for this difference is the inclusion of 5 year olds in the estimate below. The earlier analysis found that 40 per cent of 5-year olds were out of school. Another reason may be that the data source below is two years older than the survey used in the earlier analysis.

Figure 2.8 Interaction between child labour and schooling: proportion of children by school attendance/child labour category



Sources: Bangladesh Labour Force Survey (LFS) 2005-06, India NFHS-3 2005-06, Pakistan LFS 2007-08, Sri Lanka Child Activity Survey 2008-09, as cited in the country OOSCI studies. Notes: (i) Sri Lanka data is not directly comparable to the other three countries because it uses a narrower definition of child labour, and covers the age-range 5-17 years. (ii) Pakistan data is not directly comparable to data from India and Bangladesh because it covers the age range 10-14 years. (iii) The age range used in the Bangladesh and India estimates is 5-14 years.

A minority of children are engaged in child labour in each country; these are represented by the dark blue and dark pink shading together in Figure 2.8. The incidence of child labour varies from 3 per cent in Sri Lanka to 16 per cent in Pakistan which is a considerable gap, but it seems likely that this would narrow if the OOSCI definition of child labour was fully applied in each country²⁶. The prevalence of child labour in India and Bangladesh is fairly similar at 12 per cent and 9 per cent, respectively.

Not all child labourers are excluded from school. In fact, the group of doubly disadvantaged children who are both labourers and excluded from school (dark pink area in Figure 2.8) account for 5 per cent or less of children in Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka, but 15 per cent in Pakistan. Roughly half of child labourers attend school in the former three countries, but the situation is very different in Pakistan. Here the vast

²⁶ The application in Sri Lanka of the broader OOSCI definition would be likely to increase its estimate, while Pakistan's estimate would be expected to fall because the age-range would be widened to include younger children (the opportunity cost of not working tends to rise with age).

majority of child labourers, more than 90 per cent, are out of school. This is striking, but it is important to remember that the Pakistan data are for an older group of children (10-14 years) who typically face higher opportunity costs of school attendance. More generally, this static picture of the interaction between child labour and school attendance conceals the fact that a child's school attendance status is not necessarily permanent. A study of child labourers in the cotton industry in India found that many child labourers return back to school after periods of working (OPM, 2010). This is highly relevant for policy interventions to mitigate child labour and school exclusion.

Profiles of child labourers

Two sets of profiles follow below. The first provides a picture of the characteristics of children who are most likely to be engaged in child labour; the second describes the subgroup of child labourers who are also excluded from school. It is interesting to see how these profiles differ across the four countries, given the country-specific patterns of child labour prevalence and overlap with school exclusion presented above. Unfortunately data is not readily available on the profiles of child labourers in Sri Lanka, but is available for the subgroup who are out of school.

All child labourers

There is a clear gender disparity in the prevalence of child labour in Bangladesh: boys are three times more likely than girls to be child labourers. It seems highly likely that this is linked to the earlier finding that Bangladeshi boys from poorer wealth groups are much more likely to be out of school than girls (although it is not clear *a priori* what the direction of causality might be). There is little gender bias in child labour rates in India and Pakistan. Pakistan provides an interesting contrast to Bangladesh, since it too has a large gender gap in school attendance for the near comparable age group of children (lower secondary school-age: 10-13 years).

There is some evidence of a rural-urban gap in the incidence of child labour in Bangladesh and India, but this should be treated with some caution since the gap is fairly small in percentage points (data are not available for Pakistan or Sri Lanka). Indian and Bangladeshi children in rural areas are more likely to be in child labour than their urban peers. The distinction is greatest in India where the propensity to be a child labourer is nearly 60 per cent higher in rural areas than in urban areas. In Bangladesh the comparable disparity is about 30 per cent. To a large extent this mirrors the discussion about rural-urban gaps in school attendance in Bangladesh and India, and it is important to reiterate that children living in urban slums are amongst the most disadvantaged. The chances of being a child labourer in some of the most deprived urban areas are likely to be comparable, or higher, to those in rural areas.

Regional variation in child labour rates is fairly small in Bangladesh, where some 10-11 per cent of children are engaged in child labour in four of the six divisions. The lowest rate is found in Chittagong where 6 per cent of children are labourers. The range is slightly wider for India's six regions; here children living in the West are more than twice as likely to be labouring as children in the South. For three of the six remaining regions, child labour rates are 10-11 per cent.

Both the education level of the household head and the household's wealth are negatively correlated with child labour in Bangladesh and India. Put simply, the prevalence of child labour is higher in the least educated and poorest households. Wealth disaggregated data is not available for Pakistan, but the negative correlation between child labour and parental education is evident here too. There are some interesting differences between countries in the patterns of association between child labour and education or wealth. Household heads with a primary education are associated with a very large drop in the incidence of child labour in Pakistan—the children are half as likely to be working as if the head has no education. In Bangladesh, child labour rates are fairly similar for the bottom four wealth quintiles but drop substantially for the top quintile, while in India the decline in child labour rates is more gradual as wealth increases.

The likelihood of being a child labourer varies with age. Table 2.4 shows that older children in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan are considerably more likely to be in work than younger children. As children get older, and stronger, their ability to take on more lucrative roles in the labour market may play a part in explaining this pattern.

Table 2.4 Proportion of children in child labour by age group (%)

| | Bangladesh | India | Pakistan* |
|----------------|------------|-------|-----------|
| 5 to 11 years | 5.6 | 9.3 | 9.1 |
| 12 to 14 years | 14.2 | 16.5 | 20.2 |
| Country mean | 8.5 | 11.5 | 15.7 |

Sources: Bangladesh LFS 2005-06; India NFHS-3 2005-06; Pakistan LFS 2007-08; Notes: * The age groups for Pakistan are 10-11 years and 12-14 years.

Out-of-school children who are child labourers

As well as knowing the main characteristics of child labourers, the policy analyst who is focused on reducing school exclusion will want to understand which types of out-of-school children are most likely to be engaged in child labour. This subsection describes the profiles of this subgroup of children who are represented by the dark pink areas in Figure 2.8.

More than half of the children out of school in Pakistan are engaged in child labour (Table 2.5). For the other three countries, where the reference group includes younger children, the prevalence of child labour amongst excluded children is much lower ranging from 17 per cent in India to 21 per cent in Bangladesh.

Table 2.5 Proportion of out-of-school children engaged in child labour (%)

| | Bangladesh | India | Pakistan | Sri Lanka |
|--------------------|------------|-----------|--------------------|-----------|
| Male | 31.4 | 16.8 | 62.3 | 24.7 |
| Female | 9.2 | 17.9 | 45.5 | 11.8 |
| Urban | 20.2 | 14.0 | n/a | 28.1 |
| Rural | 21.4 | 18.3 | n/a | 18.4 |
| Estate | n/a | n/a | n/a | 11.2 |
| Regional Variation | 17.7-36.3 | 14.8-23.1 | n/a | n/a |
| Age 5-11 | 8.7 | 8.8 | 38.3 ⁱⁱ | 1.1 |
| Age 12-14 | 39.5 | 43.1 | 57.7 | 20.8 |
| Age 15-17 | n/a | n/a | n/a | 23.6 |
| Country Mean | 21.2 | 17.4 | 52.1 | 19.1 |

Sources: Bangladesh LFS 2005-06, India NFHS-3 2005-06, Pakistan LFS 2007-08, Sri Lanka Child Activity Survey 2008-09, as cited in the country OOSCI studies. Notes: (i) Sri Lanka data is not directly comparable to the other three countries because it uses a narrower definition of child labour, and covers the age-range 5-17 years. (ii) Pakistan data is not directly comparable to data from India and Bangladesh because it covers the age range 10-14 years. (iii) Regional variation is the range in the percentage of OOSCI who are in child labour, across regions.

It is clear that boys who are excluded from school are at greater risk of being in child labour than excluded girls, in Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The disparity is particularly pronounced in Bangladesh where out-of-school boys are three times more likely to be engaged in child labour than their female peers. The equivalent gender gaps in Pakistan and Sri Lanka are also sizable. India stands out in this context, since excluded boys and girls are equally likely to be labouring. It would be useful to understand why India appears to be so different in this respect (apart from reasons related to the data used). Some of the explanation may lie in differences in the type of work performed and its time intensity; this is taken up below.

Out-of-school children who live in rural India are slightly more likely to be engaged in child labour than their urban peers but again it should be noted that the rural-urban aggregated picture does not disaggregate urban slum areas. Location is more important in regional terms within India: excluded children from the West region are 50 per cent more likely to be labouring than excluded children living in the Central region. The regional disparity is even more marked in Bangladesh where out-of-school children in Sylhet are twice as likely to be in child labour as excluded children in Dhaka or Chittagong divisions.

For children who are out of school, the chances of being a child labourer increase sharply with age in all four countries. The step-up in the incidence of child labour from the younger to the older group of children

Box 2.3 Definition of children in economic activity vs. child labour

Children aged 5-14 years who work for at least one hour per week in economic activities are classified as 'children in economic activity'. The classification of children age 5-14 years as 'child labourers' is different in two ways:

- (i) the threshold for hours in economic activity for children age 12-14 years is 14 hours per week for child labourers; and
- (ii) children age 5-11 years engaged in household chores for 28 hour or more are considered to be child labourers.

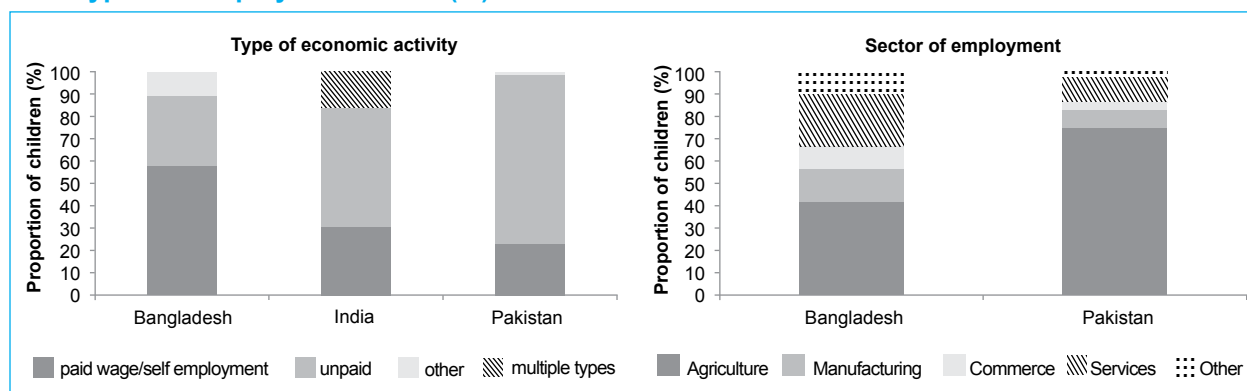
The data show that the proportion of out-of school children in economic activity is only slightly higher than the proportion of out-of-school children who are child labourers in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. A plausible explanation for this is that the vast majority of older excluded children either work in economic activity for a substantial number of hours or not at all. The data also show that the proportion of children age 5-14 years working intensively in household chores is low in India and Pakistan, and extremely low in Bangladesh. It is unlikely that these represent a large share of child labourers who are not classified as 'children in economic activity'.

is more than 30 percentage points in both Bangladesh and India. In Pakistan the increment between age groups is smaller, at 20 percentage points, but this is at least partly because the data exclude the youngest children (ages 5-9 years). Sri Lanka's narrower definition of child labour probably partly explains its very low incidence for excluded children ages 5-11 years (1 per cent).

Type of work performed by children in economic activity who are out of school

Out-of-school children carrying out economic activities have very different patterns of work in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan (data is not available for Sri Lanka). Children aged 5-14 years who work for at least one hour per week in economic activities are included in this analysis because data is not available on the type of economic activity performed by child labourers alone. Figure 2.9 explains the difference between the group of 'children in economic activity' and the narrower group of child labourers. In the discussion which follows, the term 'child worker' rather than 'child labourer' is used because of the broader definition.

Figure 2.9 Proportion of children in economic activity and excluded from school, by economic work type and employment sector (%)



Sources: Bangladesh LFS 2005-06, India NFHS-3 2005-06, Pakistan LFS 2007-08, as cited in country studies. Notes: (i) Pakistan data is not directly comparable to data from India and Bangladesh because it covers the age range 10-14 years. (ii) India data is not directly comparable to the other countries because it has a 'multiple types' category, and it has no self-employment category (these are included under paid work). (iii) Children in economic activity include children aged 5-14 engaged in at least 1 hour of economic activity per week.

Child work patterns, among those excluded from school, are less varied in Pakistan than in Bangladesh (see Figure 2.9). Pakistani child workers are much less likely to be paid for their work, and much more likely to be in agriculture than their Bangladeshi counterparts. In contrast, more than half of excluded working children are in paid work (wage and self-employment) in Bangladesh, and a minority are in agriculture (although this sector still absorbs the largest share of excluded child workers). The service,

commerce and manufacturing sectors feature more strongly in the working lives of excluded children in Bangladesh, than in Pakistan. There is no employment sector data for India, and the data on economic activity type (left hand panel) is not strictly comparable with the other countries because India has a sizeable 'multiple types' category (12 per cent). All that can be said is that 30 per cent to 42 per cent of excluded child workers are paid (wage or self-employed).

Economic work patterns among out-of-school children differ by gender in all three countries. Male child workers who are out of school are more likely than their female counterparts to undertake paid work, and less likely to undertake unpaid family work, in India and Pakistan. The opposite holds in Bangladesh where excluded female child workers are more likely to be in paid work than their male peers. Given that the distribution of work is skewed towards different sectors in Bangladesh compared with Pakistan, this suggests that there may be gendered paid employment roles for children in different sectors, as there are in the adult labour market (for example in Bangladesh some 80 per cent of the workers in the ready-made garment industry are women (ADB, 2009).

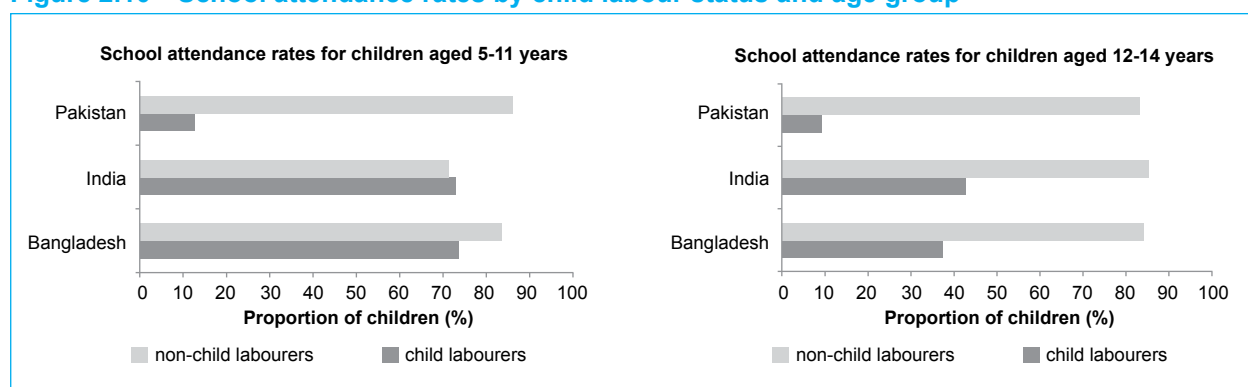
Child workers in the region who are not in school are working very long hours on average. Table 2.6 reveals that working children put in the longest hours in Bangladesh on average — 41 hours per week — and the least hours in India (27 hours per week on average). When the estimates are broken down by sex and age group, there are some shocking findings. In Bangladesh, the younger age group of excluded working children work almost the same number of hours on average as their older peers. The same is found in Pakistan, but the comparison is between working hours for 10-11 year olds and 12-14 year olds, so it is less surprising that their work intensity is similar. Young Bangladeshi children (potentially some as young as 5 years) are working an average of 40 hours per week — this leaves no scope for combining work with school and seems likely to result in extreme fatigue and vulnerability to other health issues. Younger children work fewer hours in India — an average of 2.5 hours per day — while older Indian children work for almost 4.5 hours per day on average, based on a seven day working week. There is no gender gap in the intensity of child work in Bangladesh, but in India and Pakistan boys work much longer hours than girls — nearly twice as many hours in Pakistan on average.

Table 2.6 Mean number of hours per week in economic activity for children in economic activity and out of school, by sex and age group

| | Bangladesh | India | Pakistan ¹ |
|--------------|------------|-------|-----------------------|
| Females | 40 | 23 | 23 |
| Males | 41 | 30 | 43 |
| Age 5-11 | 40 | 18 | 32 |
| Age 12-14 | 41 | 31 | 32 |
| Country mean | 41 | 27 | 32 |

Sources: Bangladesh LFS 2005-06, India NFHS-3 2005-06, Pakistan LFS 2007-08, as cited in country studies. Notes: (1) The age groups for Pakistan are 10-11 years and 12-14 years.

Figure 2.10 School attendance rates by child labour status and age group



Sources: Bangladesh LFS 2005-06, India NFHS-3 2005-06, Pakistan LFS 2007-08, Sri Lanka Child Activity Survey 2008-09, as cited in country studies. Notes: (i) Sri Lanka data is not directly comparable to the other three countries because it uses a narrower definition of child labour, and covers the age-range 5-17 years. (ii) Pakistan data is not directly comparable to data from India and Bangladesh because it covers the age range 10-14 years.



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Child labour as a risk factor for school exclusion

The main message from the preceding discussion is that child labourers constitute an important profile of out-of-school children. School attendance rates for child labourers are much lower than for other children of the same age in all four countries. In Sri Lanka, only 53 per cent of the child labour population attend school, compared with close to universal attendance for non-working children (Child Activity Survey, 2008-09 as cited in the Sri Lanka OOSCI Study). Figure 2.10 compares school attendance rates for child labourers and non-child labourers in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. For younger children in Bangladesh and Pakistan, child labourers are far less likely to be attending school than their non-working peers, while school attendance rates are similar for the two groups in India. However, for older children, there is a large disparity in school attendance rates in all three countries. For all three countries, the disparity between school attendance rates for the two groups of children is much greater for older children, in other words as children age, they are much less likely to combine school and labouring. The change in definition of child labour between the two age-groups probably also partly explains why labouring and schooling get less compatible with age. The threshold for the number of hours worked in economic activity increases sharply at age 12 from 1 to 14 hours, making it much harder to combine with schooling.

2.6 Profiles of children at risk in Dimensions 4 and 5

Context for Dimensions 4 and 5 profiles

Dimensions 4 and 5 cover children in primary and lower secondary education respectively who are at risk of dropping out. Clearly, all children attending school have some probability of dropping out, so the aim of this section is to identify the characteristics of groups of children that are associated with the greatest risk of dropping out in the four countries, so that interventions can be targeted to reduce this risk.

Child labour is clearly a major risk factor for children dropping out in the region, as the section above has shown. There is evidence to suggest that another important risk factor for premature dropout is a lack of exposure to pre-primary education (see Kaul et al., 1993 for evidence from India²⁷). Hence the profiling

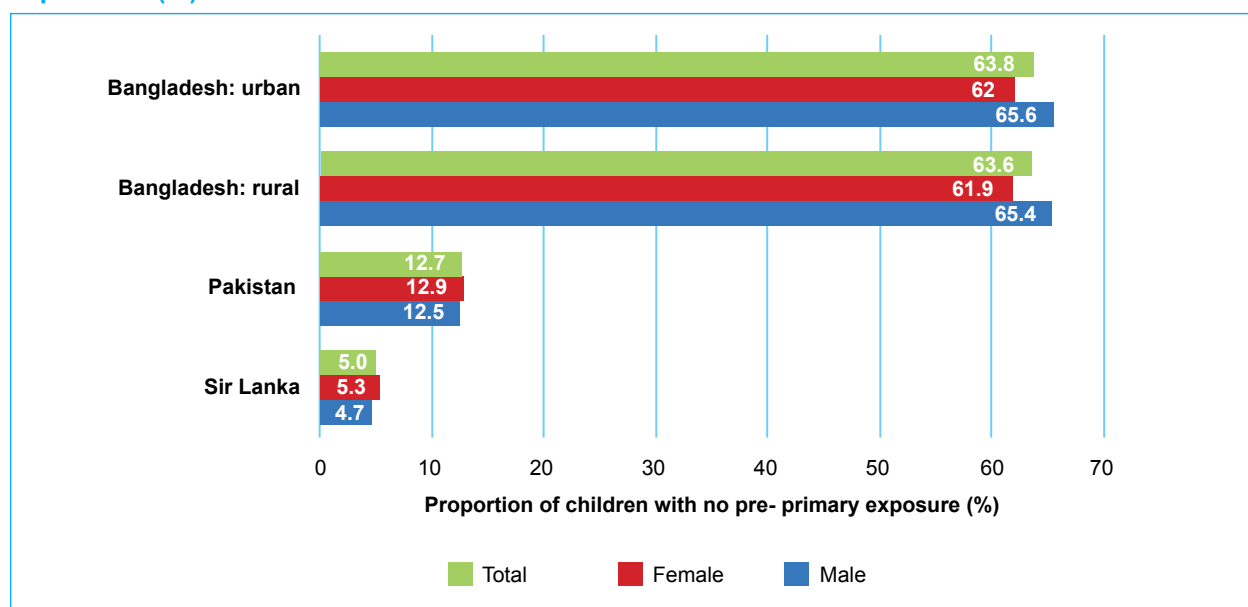
²⁷ This longitudinal study looked at the impact of an early childhood program operating in 10 states on the subsequent retention of children in primary grades. The overall results showed a positive impact on retention right through primary grades, although the result did not hold in all states.

of children in Dimensions 4 and 5 starts by looking at the extent to which different groups of enrolled children have missed out on pre-primary education. This is followed by a historical approach to profiling which examines the characteristics of children who have dropped out in the recent past, as an indication of risk factors for children currently enrolled. Other aspects of internal efficiency are also relevant. Grade repetition, for example, induces or compounds age-grade disparity—another factor associated with higher dropout (and worse schooling outcomes).

Participation in pre-primary education

As discussed in section 2.2 above, obtaining reliable and comparable data on participation in pre-primary education within and between countries in the region is problematic. Figure 2.11 summarises the available information on the participation of new entrants to primary school in pre-primary programmes in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka based on administrative data, and from Pakistan based on a household survey. No data are available from India.

Figure 2.11 Proportion of new entrants to primary education with no pre-primary education experience (%)



Sources: Bangladesh annual school census 2009, Sri Lanka annual school census 2010, Pakistan PSLM –HIES 2007-08, as cited in country reports. Notes: (i) The Bangladesh information is based on grade 1 students not just new entrants. No data for India.

Sri Lanka has a very high rate of coverage of pre-primary programmes with gender parity in participation. As shown earlier in this chapter, almost all Sri Lankan children enter primary school and the figure above shows that only 5 per cent of new entrants had never attended pre-primary education. Despite these impressive coverage figures, a recent government report cast doubt on the quality of pre-primary provision and suggested that it has little effect on student performance in primary schools (Ministry of Child Development and Women’s Empowerment, 2010 as cited in the Sri Lanka OOSCI Study).

Bangladesh provides a starkly different picture of pre-school provision to that in Sri Lanka. Nearly two-thirds of first grade primary education students have missed out on pre-school education. Boys have slightly lower rates of exposure to pre-schooling than girls, and although there is little urban-rural disparity, there are some areas of the country where children have exceptionally low rates of pre-school exposure. Some 82 per cent of first grade children in the Haor wetlands in the North East have no pre-school experience, which suggests that this group may be particularly susceptible to dropping out.

Evidence from a household survey in Pakistan finds that only 13 per cent of children (both boys and girls) enrolled in Grade 1 had not been enrolled in pre-primary education in the previous year. Katchi (or pre-school) classes are widespread in the public school system and have been for many years. Traditionally, the “informal” katchi class has catered to children as young as 3 and 4 of age, but also has been used by the primary school teachers to place children of 5 or 6 years of age that appear to not be ready for a Class 1 curriculum²⁸.

²⁸ Sindh Education Foundation website www.sef.org.pk/ecdpak/govt.html accessed 16 Jan. 2013

In India, pre-school education is largely provided by the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD). Formal pre-primary classes from one to three years in duration and ranging in quality are provided largely by private-run formal schools which may be recognized or unrecognized by the government. The GER for pre-primary education is estimated to be 57 per cent for 2011-12 based on enrolment data from the MWCD and the Statistics of School Education. UIS data also shows the GER for pre-primary education in India is 54.8 per cent in 2010.²⁹

Internal efficiency

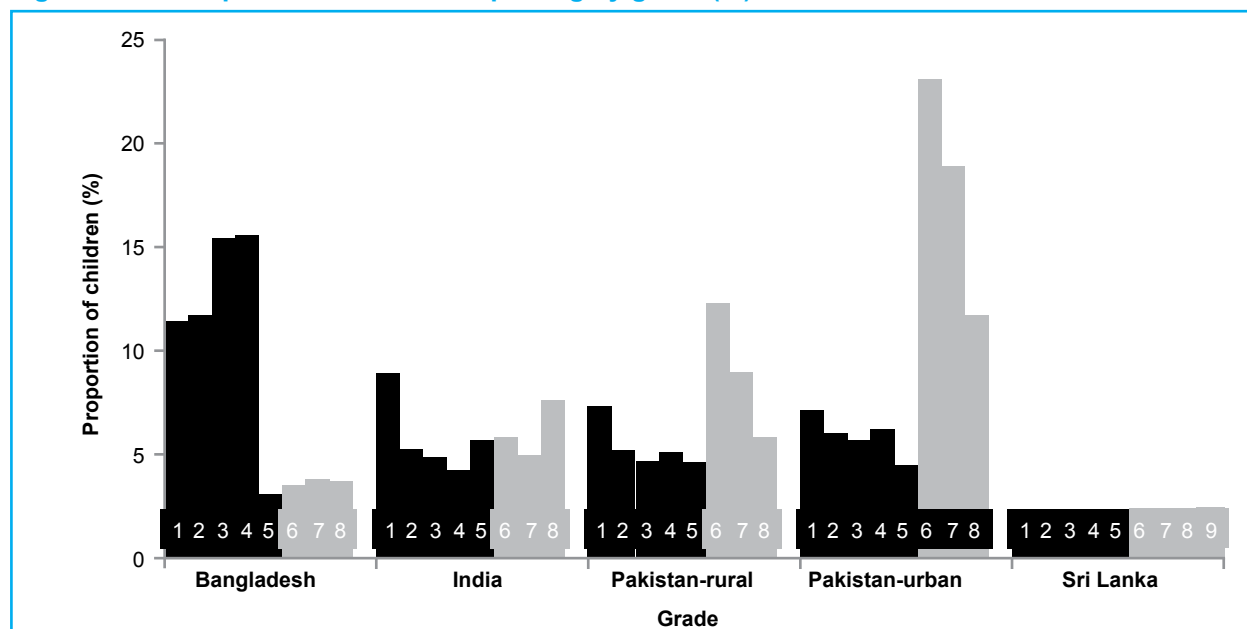
Repetition rates

Figure 2.12 presents repetition rates by grade based on administrative data. The four countries exhibit quite different patterns. Sri Lanka has very low repetition rates of about 1 per cent throughout the primary and lower secondary education grades. Bangladesh has fairly high rates of repetition (11-15 per cent) in the lower primary education grades, but this drops to around 3-4 per cent for the final grade of primary and throughout lower secondary education. Pakistan displays the opposite pattern: fairly low rates of repetition (4-7 per cent) in primary education grades followed by markedly higher lower secondary education repetition rates. India shows less variation by grade, with repetition rates of around 4-5 per cent in most grades rising by a few percentage points at the beginning and end of each cycle.

Apart from grade differences in repetition rates, there are some marked variations by location and gender in some countries. At the lower secondary education level, Figure 2.12 highlights the extremely high rates of repetition in urban areas of Pakistan. There is also a gender gap in Pakistan: lower secondary boys repeat more often than girls in both urban and rural areas. At the extreme, almost one-quarter of urban male Grade 6 Pakistani students are repeating. In India, there is little disparity in repetition rates by location or gender generally, although first grade rural children have repetition rates which are five percentage points higher than their urban peers.

It is worth noting that household surveys in Bangladesh, Pakistan and India generally report lower repetition rates than the administrative sources used here. The difference is particularly marked for lower secondary students in Pakistan, where household survey estimates of repetition rates are less than 3 per cent in classes 6, 7 and 8³⁰. For primary school students in Pakistan, the household survey repetition estimates are much closer to the administrative estimates, and also show a high rate of repetition at Grade 1 compared with the other primary education grades. The two sets of repetition rate estimates are fairly close in Sri Lanka.

Figure 2.12 Proportion of children repeating by grade (%)



Sources: Bangladesh annual school census 2009, India DISE school level data 2007-08, Pakistan AEPAM 2008-09, Sri Lanka annual school census 2010, as cited in country reports. Note: The numbers on the bars denote grades.

²⁹ UIS Online Database accessed 30 Sept. 2013

³⁰ PSLM-HIES 2007-08, as cited in the Pakistan OOSCI study.



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Survival rates

Internal efficiency can be summarised by looking at survival rates, which provide information on the cumulative dropout of a cohort students over a cycle of schooling³¹. Figure 2.13 and Figure 2.14 presents survival rates from administrative sources (calculated using a reconstructed cohort analysis³²) to the final grade of primary education and to the final level of lower secondary education in three countries³³. Data on survival rates are not presented in the Pakistan country study, but estimates of current dropout rates by grade are available which sheds some light on the magnitude of survival rates.

There is considerable inter-country variation in survival rates at the primary education level. While Sri Lanka retains most children who enter primary education to the final grade, roughly 20 per cent drop out in India, and 40 per cent drop out in Bangladesh. Evidence from a household survey in Pakistan found that current dropout rates by grade at primary school are 3 per cent (Grade 1), 9 per cent (Grade 2), 13 per cent (Grade 3) and 16 per cent (Grade 4), so it is clear that the primary education survival rate is also low in Pakistan³⁴.

What are the characteristics of the children who drop out during the primary education cycle? There is not much variation in survival rates by gender or rural-urban location in Sri Lanka or in Bangladesh (when data for urban areas and urban slum areas are not disaggregated). In India, children from urban areas stand out as having far higher rates of survival in the primary education cycle than average, although it is possible that the urban survival rate is overestimated if children from rural areas move to urban schools during the primary education cycle. This also masks the disparity between urban slums and urban and rural areas. In Pakistan, primary education dropout rates for rural children are considerably higher than for urban children.

The lower secondary education cycle is shorter than the primary cycle and this may help to explain why the lower secondary schooling survival rate in Bangladesh is 90 per cent overall, nearly 30 percentage points higher than the primary education survival rate. Survival rates are fairly similar for both cycles in India and Sri Lanka. Again, evidence from a household survey in Pakistan points to low survival rates across the lower secondary education cycle: current dropout rates are 16 per cent in Grade 6, and 14 per cent in Grade 7³⁵.

Similar to primary education, there is an urban advantage in lower secondary education survival rates in India (Figure 2.14), but the rural-urban gap is smaller than for the primary education cycle. Small differences in survival rates by gender emerge in Bangladesh at lower secondary education level such that female students are more likely to drop out from lower secondary grades than male students. In Pakistan, lower secondary education dropout rates for rural children are considerably higher than for urban children.

³¹ The survival rate for each education cycle (or level) is defined as the percentage of a cohort of students who are enrolled in the first grade of an education cycle in a given school year and are expected to reach the final grade, regardless of repetition.

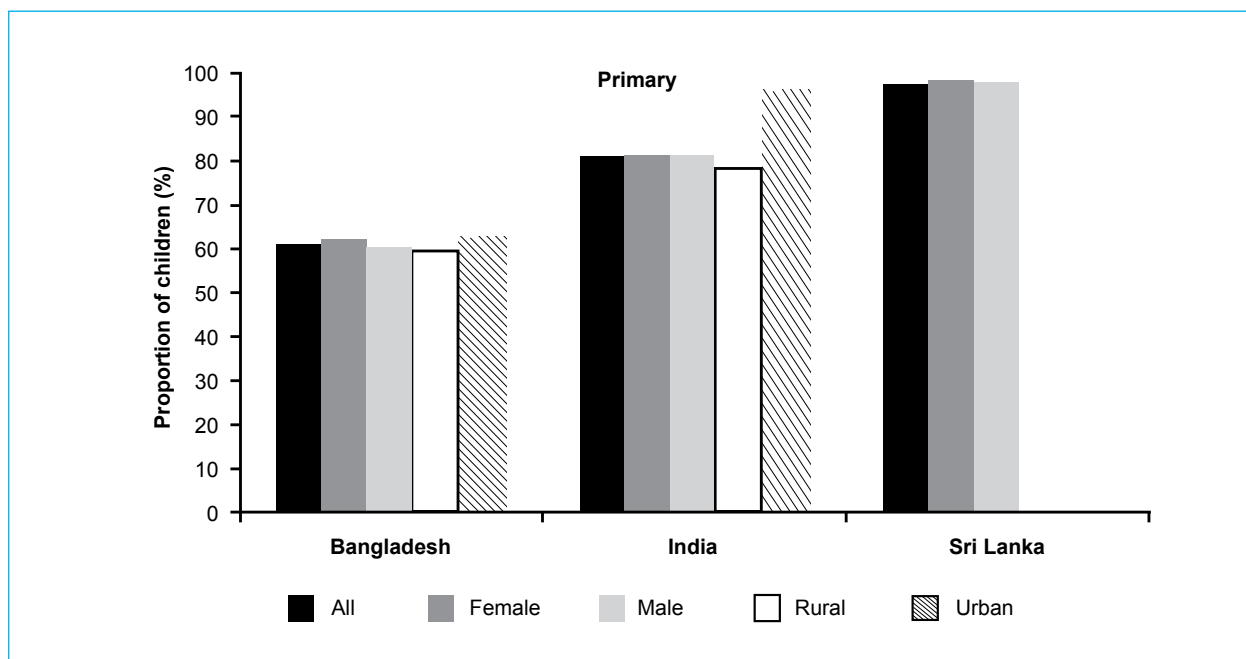
³² This technique calculates the survival rate for a theoretical cohort of children who experience the current promotion, repetition and dropout rates at each grade as they move through the schooling system.

³³ The lower secondary survival rates are calculated as the percentage of a theoretical cohort of children who enter *lower secondary* and reach the final grade. The Sri Lanka and India country studies do not present the same statistic explicitly; instead they present survival rates by grade based on the percentage of a theoretical cohort of children who enter the first grade of primary school.

³⁴ PSLM-HIES 2007-08, as cited in the Pakistan OOSCI study.

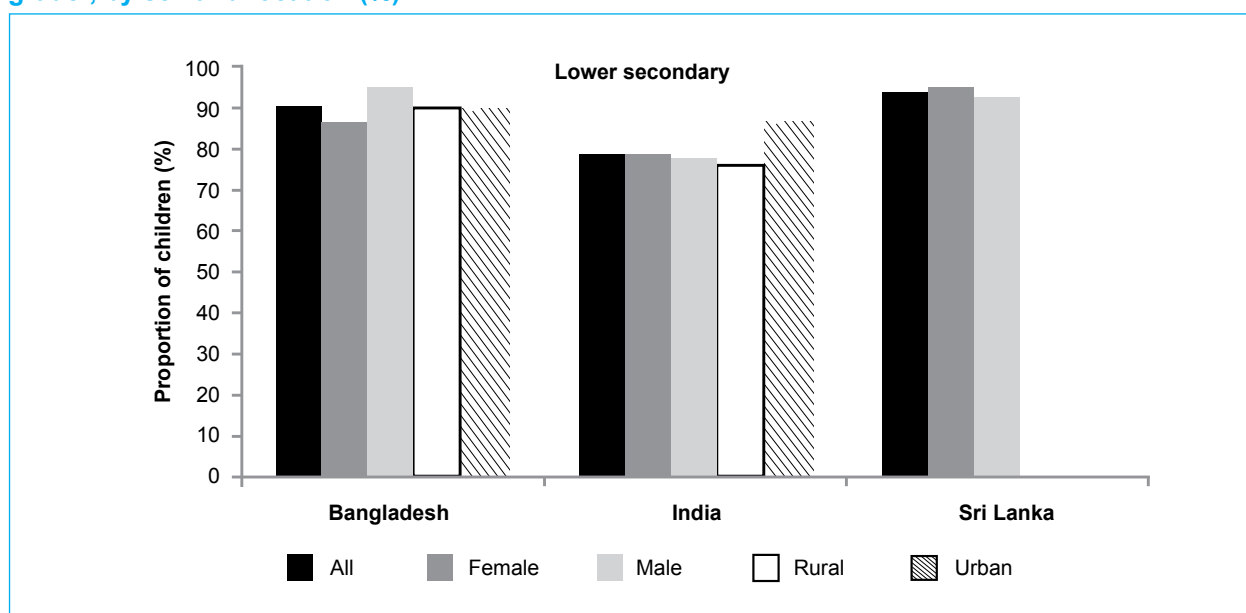
³⁵ PSLM-HIES 2007-08, as cited in the Pakistan OOSCI study.

Figure 2.13 Proportion of children surviving to the last grade of primary education, by sex and location (%)



Sources: Bangladesh annual school census 2009 & Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BANBEIS) 2008-09 post-primary education institutions survey, India DISE school level data 2007-08, Sri Lanka annual school census 2010, as cited in the country OOSCI studies.

Figure 2.14 Proportion of children entering lower secondary education who survive to the last grade¹, by sex and location (%)

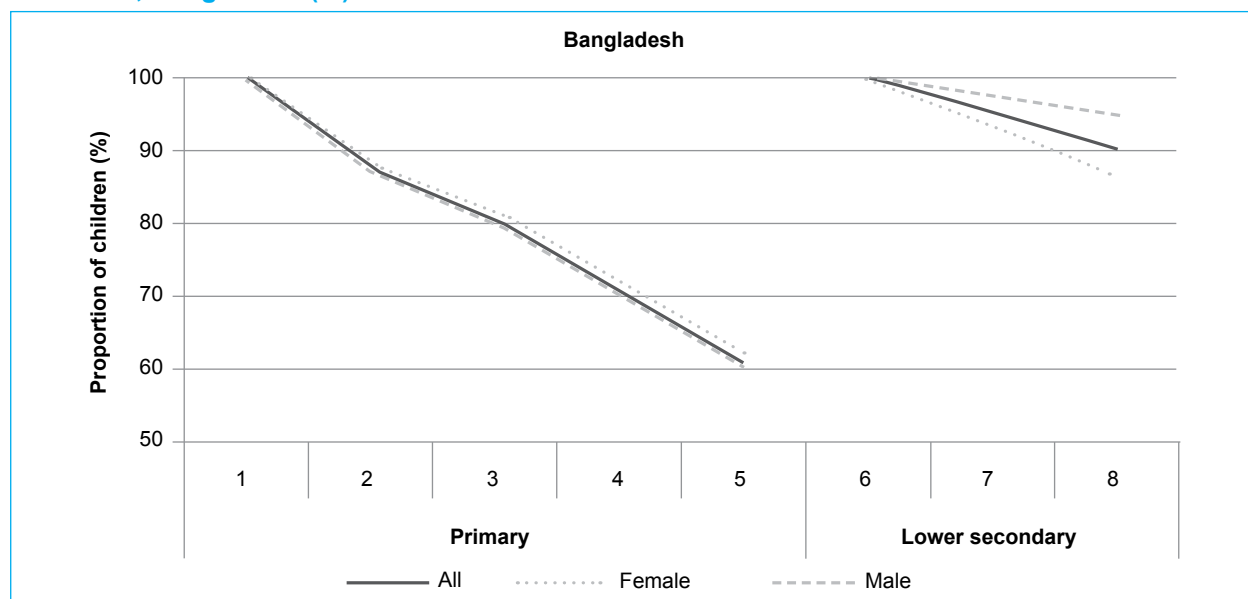


Sources: Bangladesh annual school census 2009 & Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BANBEIS) 2008-09 post-primary education institutions survey, India DISE school level data 2007-08, Sri Lanka annual school census 2010. Note (1): The lower secondary survival rates are calculated as the percentage of a theoretical cohort of children who enter *lower secondary* and reach the final grade. The Sri Lanka and India OOSCI studies do not present the same statistic explicitly; instead they present survival rates by grade based on the percentage of a theoretical cohort of children who enter the first grade of primary school.

It is useful to know at what grade during a school cycle most drop out occurs. Figure 2.15 and Figure 2.16 presents survival rates by grade for Bangladesh and India³⁶; the slope of the line indicates the level of drop out. In Bangladesh, dropout rates are fairly similar between grades — about 11 per cent of students drop out between grades — except between Grades 2 and 3 when this falls to 8 per cent. For lower secondary, about 5 per cent of students drop out between grades — it is clear from the figure that male dropout rates are considerably lower than female dropout rates.

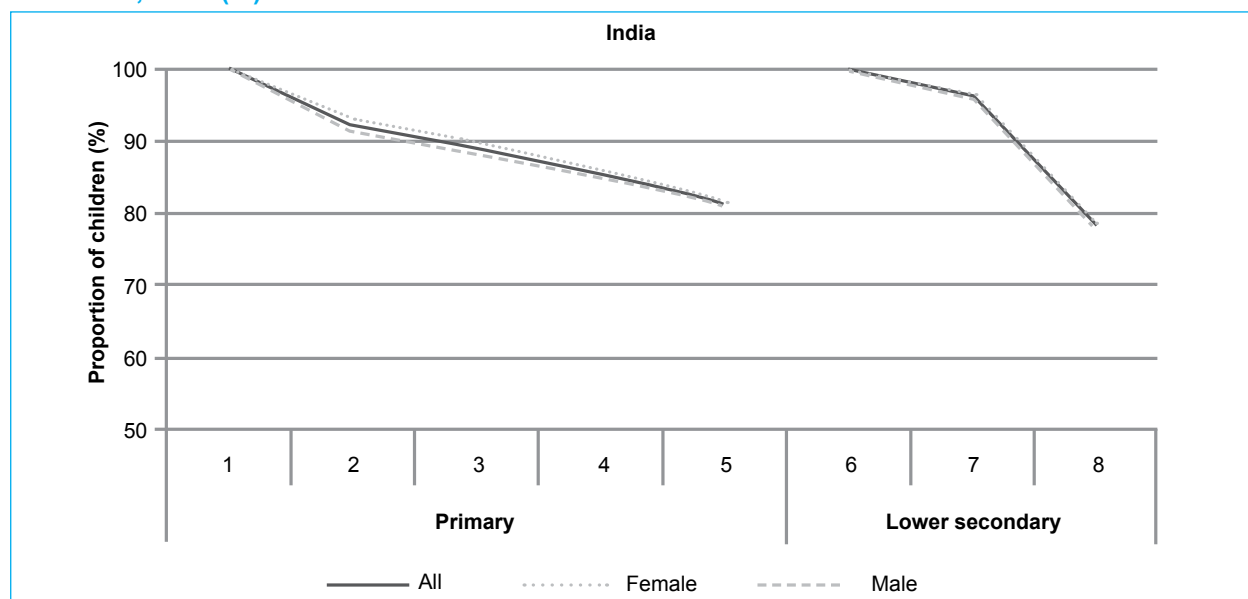
India displays more variation in dropout rates by grade over the two cycles than Bangladesh. The dropout rate between Grade 1 and 2 (about 7 per cent) is notably higher than during the rest of the primary education cycle. At lower secondary school, the middle of the cycle when students move from Grade 8 to 9 appears to be a stage of extremely high dropout (18 per cent).

Figure 2.15 Proportion of children surviving to each grade of primary and lower secondary education, Bangladesh (%)



Sources: Bangladesh annual school census 2009 & BANBEIS 2008-09 post-primary education institutions survey.

Figure 2.16 Proportion of children surviving to each grade of primary and lower secondary education, India (%)



Source: India DISE school level data 2007-08.

³⁶ Data are not available for Pakistan. Sri Lanka has very high survival rates for both cycles and so it is not very informative to break them down by grade.

Transition rates between primary and lower secondary education levels

The transition between the primary and lower secondary education levels is a critical stage where students tend to be more vulnerable to drop out than they are within each cycle. In Bangladesh and India, the available evidence suggests that about 20 per cent of students drop out between these stages³⁷. In India, there is little difference in transition rates by gender, but a staggering 20 percentage point gap in transition rates between rural and urban areas, although this warrants a cautious interpretation. The location gap in transition rates may be somewhat overestimated because it is likely that some rural children join urban schools when they make the transition. The Indian transition rates were estimated using administrative data—the same source is used for estimates of repetition and survival rates above. It was not possible to use administrative data to estimate current transition rates in Bangladesh; instead household survey data was used to estimate actual transition rates from a historical cohort of children (aged 15-19 years)³⁸. These estimates showed that girls had higher rates of transition than boys, but it is important to note that historical estimates may not be a good proxy for current transition rates.



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Almost all boys and girls in Sri Lanka make the transition between primary and lower secondary school — the transition rate is 98 per cent in 2011 (UIS Online Database accessed January 2014). For Pakistan, the Grade 5 (final year of primary education) dropout rate is 43 per cent³⁹.

2.7 Analytical summary

This chapter set out to explore three main questions below:

1. How many children are out of school in the region?

South Asia has a major problem with children being denied schooling. Household surveys estimate that some 27 million children are out of school in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. This comprises 17 million children of primary school-age and 9.9 million children of lower secondary school-age. Children excluded under Dimension 2 (children of primary school-age not in primary or secondary school) make up more than half (63 per cent) of the total number of children out of school.

UIS data which is sourced from administrative data in countries also show an estimated 26.6 million children not in school in the four countries (UIS October 2013 data release). Of this, 1.5 million are in Dimension 1 and 25.1 million in Dimension 2. Based on UIS data, India has the highest total number of out-of-school children at 17.8 million followed by Pakistan with 6.5 million. Moreover, for the eight South Asian countries there are an estimated 7.57 million children between the ages 5 to 10 who are not in either primary or secondary schools. Another 25.29 million children between the ages 11 to 13 should be in secondary education but are not in school at all according to UIS.

³⁷ Sources: Bangladesh MICS 2006, data from 15-19 year olds; India DISE school level data 2007-08 and 2006-07.

³⁸ Transition rate is defined by the CMF as the promotion rate in the last grade. This is only a proxy and will underestimate actual transition if there is a high rate of repetition in the final grade.

³⁹ The Pakistan OOSCI Study also estimates the transition rate between the primary and lower secondary education levels at 93 per cent. It is not clear how this relates to the current Grade 5 dropout rate estimated at 43 per cent.

2. What are the profiles of out-of-school children in the region?

Before presenting the findings below, it is worth highlighting that Sri Lanka has very low rates of school exclusion at an aggregate level and across all of the main groups of children which can be isolated from household data. This means that the findings are mainly confined to Bangladesh, India and Pakistan.

Summarising across all three dimensions, the vast majority of out-of-school children live in India mainly because of its large school-age population; very few live in Sri Lanka because of its relatively small population and high rates of school attendance. The majority of excluded children in each of the three largest countries live in rural areas. Pakistan has the highest urban-rural gap in rates of school exclusion.

The profiles of out-of-school children show considerable heterogeneity across countries. Household wealth is an exception: it is very clearly negatively correlated with school exclusion in the three largest countries, across all dimensions. Gender disparities in school attendance rates put girls at an disadvantage in Pakistan across the basic education cycle, and boys in Bangladesh. Geographical location is important in all of the largest countries: children living Rajasthan, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Arunachal Pradesh in India, Sylhet in Bangladesh and Balochistan in Pakistan are much less likely to be attending school than their counterparts living in other parts of the country. In India, school exclusion is far more prevalent among Muslim children, and among older children from scheduled castes and tribes, particularly girls in rural areas. Excluded children living in Uttar Pradesh in India account for a high proportion of the total number out-of-school children because the state is the most populous in India and the rate of school exclusion is well above the average for all states.

Dimension 1: Excluded pre-school age children

The extent of exclusion of pre-school age children varies widely across the four countries. Just over half (51 per cent) of pre-school age children are out-of-school in Pakistan, 34 per cent in Bangladesh, 12.4 per cent in India and 7.3 per cent in Sri Lanka. Because of the differences in population size across countries, this translates into a very different pattern of numbers of excluded children. In absolute terms, children in Dimension 1 comprise an estimated 6.1 million, of whom 3 million are in India, 2 million in Pakistan, and 1 million in Bangladesh.

Gender differences in access to pre-primary education are fairly minimal at an aggregate level in Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka. In Pakistan, pre-school age girls are nearly 20 per cent more likely to be excluded than boys. Pre-school age children from lower income groups are far more likely to be out of school than their richer counterparts in all four countries. In Bangladesh, India and Pakistan, there is a rural-urban gap in attendance rates which puts urban children at an advantage generally, but there are some notable pockets of high exclusion in urban slums. Sri Lanka too has pockets of high exclusion: pre-school age girls in the estate sector have markedly lower attendance rates than average. Dimension 1 school exclusion rates are also particularly high in some regions within countries: Balochistan in Pakistan, and Barisal in Bangladesh have the highest proportion of OOSC in their respective countries. Among India's social and religious communities, pre-primary age children from Scheduled Castes and from Muslim families have higher exclusion rates.

Dimensions 2 and 3: Excluded primary and lower secondary school-age children

School exclusion is a much more significant problem in the three most populated countries in the region than in Sri Lanka. About one-third (34.4 per cent) of primary school-age children are out of school in Pakistan, 16.2 per cent in Bangladesh, 6.4 per cent in India, and 1.9 per cent in Sri Lanka. The rate of school exclusion is higher for the older group of lower secondary age children (Dimension 3) in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka (3.2 per cent). This rise is particularly marked in Bangladesh, where 30.7 per cent of lower secondary school-age children are out of school. The opposite pattern is seen in India and Pakistan where the rate of non-attendance of lower secondary school-age children (India at 5.7 per cent, Pakistan at 30.1 per cent) is lower than the rate for primary school-age children. This is largely due to overage children studying in primary schools, not because both countries have a higher rate of participation in lower secondary education than in primary education.

In fact, age-appropriate enrolment is a serious problem in the three largest countries in the region, i.e. children are not enrolling at the correct age for each grade. The problem is acute for Pakistan, and appears to be driven largely by children entering primary school late. In Bangladesh, repetition is a major cause of overage students. Research shows that children who are older than others in a class have a higher risk of dropping out and hence do not complete basic education (UNESCO, 2007; Cameron, 2005; Wils, 2004).



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The distribution of absolute numbers of excluded children in the four countries also reflects the population size of the countries. India, which has the highest school age population in South Asia, accounts for nearly half (44 per cent) of the total 27 million primary and lower secondary age out-of-school children. Pakistan accounts for a third (35 per cent) of the total while Bangladeshi children make up 5.6 per cent. Sri Lanka barely features in the aggregate picture because it has a comparatively small population, and close to universal participation in primary and lower secondary education.

The group of out-of-school children in each country have different patterns of previous school exposure. A relatively high proportion of excluded children in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka have dropped out of school, and in Bangladesh this translates into a large number of excluded children reflecting the low internal efficiency of the primary system. While in India and Pakistan, a strikingly high share of out-of-school children are likely to never enter school (given the behaviour of past cohorts⁴⁰). This is the expected situation for some 9.7 million Indian children, and some 4.8 million Pakistani children. The policy interventions to mitigate school exclusion are likely to be different for each of these subgroups.

Turning to profiles based on individual and household characteristics, it is clear that wealth, sex, location, caste and religion are all correlated with being excluded from school. Primary and lower secondary age children who come from households in the lowest wealth groups are much more likely to be out of school than their richer counterparts. This wealth disparity is particularly marked in Pakistan, and for the older group of children in the three largest countries. If children are being excluded primarily on economic grounds, it is not surprising to find that child labour rates are comparatively high among excluded children in Pakistan, and among older children in the three largest countries (further discussion on this below).

Girls are more likely to be excluded from school than boys in Pakistan throughout the basic education cycle, while the reverse is true in Bangladesh where boys are disadvantaged until the last grade of

⁴⁰ Household survey data contains information on the school entry patterns of past cohorts of children. These estimates can be used to predict future patterns of school entry. For full details of the methodology see the OOSCI CMF Annex 2.

secondary education. In both countries, gender gaps in primary school attendance rates are largest for the poorest quintile of households, and these gaps widen for lower secondary age children. In rural India, older girls are more likely to be excluded than older boys, but gender gaps are negligible for primary-age children and in urban areas overall.

Pakistan has the largest gap in rates of school exclusion between urban and rural areas overall, with rural primary-age children 83 per cent more likely to be out-of-school than their urban counterparts. In India the location disparity also puts rural children at a schooling disadvantage, but the difference is small at an aggregated level and when data for urban slums areas are not disaggregated. If this is done, children in rural areas and urban slums are likely to show higher rates of exclusion as other studies already suggest. There is no overall urban-rural divide for Bangladeshi children, but this aggregate picture conceals pockets of primary-age children in urban slums with very high rates of school exclusion. Deprivation in urban areas tends to be highly concentrated in specific groups (mainly slum dwellers), and the schooling situation for these children is similar to the most disadvantaged in rural areas. Sri Lanka too has pockets of high exclusion: older children living on estates have markedly higher rates of school exclusion than average.

School exclusion rates vary considerably by geographical area in each country. Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh in India have significantly higher rates of exclusion compared with the national average. Lower secondary age children from Sylhet in Bangladesh, and Balochistan in Pakistan, have a considerably higher chance of being out of school compared with children from other divisions/provinces.

Children's social and religious characteristics are highly relevant to school exclusion in India. Indian Muslim children from both age groups have far higher rates of exclusion than children from other religions. Similarly children from Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes, particularly girls are more likely to be excluded from school than children from other social groups.

The exclusion of children from school and the practice of child labour are closely related. More than half of the children out of school in Pakistan are engaged in child labour. The prevalence of child labour in the out-of-school group is much lower in the other countries, ranging from 17 per cent in India to 21 per cent in Bangladesh. The characteristics of the group of doubly disadvantaged children (both child labourers and excluded from school) are particularly marked in Bangladesh. Children denied schooling who reside in Sylhet are twice as likely to be involved in child labour than excluded children in Dhaka or Chittagong divisions. Bangladeshi boys who are out of school are three times more likely to be engaged in child labour than their female counterparts. And older Bangladeshi children (age 12-14 years) who are excluded from school are five times more likely to be labouring than their younger peers (age 5-11 years). Amongst out-of-school children in Pakistan and Sri Lanka, boys are much more likely to be in child labour than girls, and the chances of being a child labourer increase sharply with age in all countries.

The patterns of child labour in the group of out-of-school children to some extent correspond to the overall profiles of excluded children. For example, children living in Sylhet in Bangladesh are both more likely to be out-of-school and, if out of school, more likely to be working, than children from other divisions. This type of correlation does not provide evidence of a causal relationship between child labour and school attendance (in either direction), but does signify the need for further investigation of this complex relationship in the region. Chapter 5 presents evidence from some studies in the region which have explored this relationship using more advanced statistical techniques.

3. Which children are at risk of dropping out in the region?

The main evidence on profiles of children 'at risk' in the region comes from administrative data on current rates of dropout and repetition by grade. It is important to note, that in Bangladesh particularly, household survey data produces estimates of dropout which are far lower than the administrative estimates. One possible explanation is that enrolment in early grades is overstated in the administrative data because of misclassification of children enrolled in informal pre-school classes and/or other incentives for schools to overstate enrolment⁴¹.

⁴¹ Bangladesh Annual Education Sector Performance Report 2011, p.16.



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Dimension 4: Primary school students at risk of dropping out

Survival rates, which measure the proportion of a cohort of students entering the first grade of an education cycle who are expected to reach the final grade, are alarmingly low at primary level in Bangladesh, where just under 40 per cent of children who enter the cycle drop out before they reach the final grade. Internal efficiency is also low in India, where about 20 per cent of students drop out over the primary cycle. In Sri Lanka, most children are retained to the end of the primary cycle. Survival rates are not available for Pakistan, but current rates of dropout are more than 10 per cent in Grades 2, 3 and 4, which points to a low survival rate here too. Clearly, early intervention to prevent such a high rate of primary school dropout could have a dramatic effect on the prevalence of school exclusion in the region.

What are the defining characteristics of the children who drop out at the primary education level in each country? In India, students living in urban areas have markedly better survival prospects than rural students, although as mentioned above: 1) when urban slum survival rate lowers is disaggregated, the rate for urban areas would probably be much higher than in rural areas, and 2) it is possible that the urban survival rate is overestimated if children from rural areas move to urban schools during the primary cycle. There is not much variation in primary survival rates by gender or rural-urban residence in Sri Lanka or in Bangladesh (when rates of urban areas and urban slum areas are not disaggregated). In Pakistan, primary dropout rates for rural children are considerably higher than for urban children.

When children move between class one and class two in India, a much higher proportion drop out than between grades further up the primary cycle. Bangladesh displays a fairly even rate of dropout between each primary grade.

Dimension 5: Lower secondary school students at risk of dropping out

The lower secondary cycle is shorter than the primary cycle and so survival rates would perhaps be expected to be higher at this level compared with the primary cycle. This is the case in Bangladesh where cumulative drop out before the final grade is about 10 per cent. Survival rates are similar for both cycles in India and Sri Lanka. Pakistan reports current dropout rates of 14-16 percent for the first two years of lower secondary education pointing to a low survival rate for this cycle too.

Similar to Dimension 4, India's urban children are at an advantage over their rural counterparts in terms of lower secondary survival rates over the cycle. In Bangladesh, contrary to almost all gender disparities described so far, female students are more likely to drop out during lower secondary grades than male



students. In Pakistan, children living in rural areas have markedly higher current dropout rates by grade than their peers in urban areas.

Within the secondary cycle, the dropout rates between different grades are fairly similar in Bangladesh. This is not the case in India where the movement between Grades 7 and 8 is a point of extremely high dropout (about 18 per cent).⁴²

Another critical stage, marked by very high dropout rates, is the transition from the primary to the secondary cycle. The available evidence suggests that about 20 per cent of students in Bangladesh and in India drop out between cycles. Girls have higher transition rates than boys in Bangladesh. The main disparity in transition rates in India strongly favours urban students who have transition rates which are about 20 percentage points higher than rural students, although this may be an overestimate of the gap because it is likely that some rural children join urban schools when they make the transition. From a policy perspective, it is clear that the transition between cycles provides a major opportunity for interventions with the potential to substantially reduce exclusion from schooling in Bangladesh and India.

This chapter concludes with a reference table (Table 2.7 below), which briefly describes the key profiles of children who are excluded from school under Dimensions 1, 2 and 3, and the children at risk of exclusion under Dimensions 4 and 5.

Table 2.7 Summary of profiles of out-of-school children and children at risk of exclusion

| | | |
|---|---|--|
|  | Dimension 1: Pre-school age children | low income families; rural families (Bangladesh, India & Pakistan); girls (Pakistan); girls in the estate sector (Sri Lanka); families living in Balochistan (Pakistan) and Tripura (India) |
| | Dimension 2: Primary school-age children | low income families (India, Pakistan, & Bangladesh (boys in particular)); girls (India & Pakistan); boys (Bangladesh); rural families (Pakistan); metropolitan slums (Bangladesh); urban low income families (India); children in tea estates (Sri Lanka); families living in Balochistan (Pakistan) and Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh (India); Muslim families, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, particularly girls (India); families where mother has low level of education (Bangladesh); child labourers (Bangladesh & Pakistan) |
| | Dimension 3: Lower-secondary school-age children | low income families (all 4 countries; Bangladeshi boys & Pakistani girls in particular); girls (Pakistan & rural India); boys (Bangladesh: all income quintiles except top); rural families (Pakistan); metropolitan slums (Bangladesh); Estates (Sri Lanka); Sylhet (Bangladesh); Balochistan (Pakistan); Rajasthan, Orissa, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh (India); Muslim families, Scheduled Tribes (India); families where mother has low level of education (Bangladesh); child labourers, particularly boys in the four countries |
|  | Dimension 4: Children in primary education at risk of dropping out | rural families (India & Pakistan); children with no pre-school experience in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan are at risk of repeating the early grades of primary education and eventually dropping out; boys in Bangladesh and children from rural families in India are at risk of not making the transition to lower secondary education |
| | Dimension 5: Children in lower secondary education at risk of dropping out | rural families (India & Pakistan); and girls (Bangladesh); boys (Pakistan) |

⁴² DISE school level data 2007-08 as cited in the India OOSCI Study, forthcoming

3. Barriers and bottlenecks to school participation

3.1 Introduction

What factors are driving the patterns of non-participation in schooling, described in the previous chapter? The Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted in 1989 and ratified by the Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, sets out the right of every child to receive an education, which is reflected within legislation in all the focus countries and most countries around the world. However, how a child spends his or her time is the outcome of a series of decisions taken by households and their members. What determines this outcome? It is useful to think about this question within a broad conceptual framework describing the factors that affect household decisions about the use of children's time and of household resources (OPM, 2010). The moral and legal responsibility of parents for their children's development is a key factor, but, as the section below explains, there are many other influences on household decisions about children's schooling and work.

Why might children attend school? First, there are a series of individual, economic and social returns. Going to school can be enjoyable in the short-term, and will build a child's skills and confidence, if the quality of the school is high enough. If labour markets function well, this should lead to better wages as an adult. If education is valued highly in society, children will be attending school instead of being forced to work. These outcomes are good not only for the children but also for their parents. Next, there are legal requirements. Going to school is increasingly mandatory by law, and if this is enforced, parents may face penalties for failing to send their children. Finally, there are norms and responsibilities. As set out in the CRC, parents are normally considered responsible for their child's development, and sending their children to school is an important part of this responsibility.⁴³ Most parents also see this as their role; being responsible for their children's well-being, they must send them to school. At the same time, while in some communities it may be 'normal' for children to attend school, in others, going to work may be the norm. These cultural norms affect individual choices.

Going to school also involves costs. First, there are the direct costs of paying for fees, stationery, uniforms or other costs of school participation. For those on very low incomes, this can be a significant barrier. Second, there are indirect costs, such as paying for transport, which can be significant for those living far from a school. Sometimes, households can be assisted with these costs by social transfer programmes. Third, there are opportunity costs, which reflect the income the child could have earned if not in school. For example, if a child could have earned Rs 60 working during the day but did not because they attended school, the opportunity cost of a day of school could be Rs 60. Households may need this money in the short-term to survive.

Why might children work? First, if the work is for money there is an immediate payoff from the income acquired. In households where per capita incomes are very low and they do not have access to other support from the government, NGOs, family or support systems, children's income can be critical for the consumption of essential goods (such as food, fuel or rent) or services (such as healthcare or schooling for other children). Low wages in the adult labour market and the difficulties that women in particular have in finding paid work outside the domestic setting, mean that households are more likely to need children to earn income for the family as well. This is particularly critical when households cannot access credit at reasonable rates and need money immediately, or where adults have lost their jobs (or experienced other shocks) and do not have access to safety nets. If the work is at home, households may need the task (such as weeding or cleaning) to be done to secure the harvest or keep the household running, and they

⁴³ Article 18 of the CRC stipulates that:

1. States Parties shall use their best efforts to ensure recognition of the principle that both parents have common responsibilities for the upbringing and development of the child. Parents or, as the case may be, legal guardians, have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of the child. The best interests of the child will be their basic concern.
2. For the purpose of guaranteeing and promoting the rights set forth in the present Convention, States Parties shall render appropriate assistance to parents and legal guardians in the performance of their child-rearing responsibilities and shall ensure the development of institutions, facilities and services for the care of children.

may be unable to hire extra help due to inadequate means or a shortage of workers, particularly during peak times.

Moreover, working may build skills and experience useful in labour markets later on, depending on the labour markets. Depending on society, working may also have a payoff for marriages, because in some societies the ability to work either at home or for money – even as a child – is seen as a good prospect. Both children and their parents are likely to perceive these benefits. Some children appreciate the freedom and access to discretionary income for the household that work provides; some parents see this as the start of a useful career.

Children may also work because this is considered socially ‘normal’. If most children from a community work, or if parents believe that it is appropriate for children to work, it is more likely that the next child will work.

Finally, children may work because they are compelled to work. Two clear examples of this (though there are others) are 1) when households take a loan on the basis that their child will work for the creditor (bonded labour); and 2) when children are compelled to work as entire families act as sharecroppers to their landlords. Much more research is required to understand dynamics in these groups of households.

Of course, going to work also involves costs, though these are not necessarily financial (in the short-term). First, children may be exposed to various health hazards, both in the short term (e.g. the physical impact of accidents) and long term (e.g. the effects of working with pesticides in agricultural work), not to mention the emotional consequences. Second, since child work is often illegal, children and their families may face legal sanction. Third, there are substantial opportunity costs from working, particularly when work causes children to miss school or other developmental activities (including play). Parents and children are usually aware of these opportunity costs.

In summary, households weigh up their preferences for schooling and work against the household budget constraint to decide on whether to send a particular child in the family to school. The numerous factors which affect this decision can be grouped into four types of barriers and bottlenecks to school participation: (i) socio-cultural demand side; (ii) economic demand side; (iii) school-level supply side; and (iv) system bottlenecks. The rest of the chapter takes each of these in turn, starts by further elaborating how these might be expected to influence schooling decisions in the context of the framework discussed here, and then presents evidence from the four South Asian country studies, complemented by additional sources. The final section provides an analytical summary.

3.2 Socio-cultural demand-side barriers

Socio-cultural factors influence household decisions on schooling via multiple routes. The perceived (and actual) economic and social gains from schooling are heavily influenced by socio-cultural factors. Expectations of what children could do when they enter the adult labour market vary by gender, social group, disability status, and religion, partly because labour markets are often segmented based on gender or social discrimination. Similarly, social aspirations, particularly related to marriage, vary according to different profiles of children. On the flip side, perceived harm from schooling occurs, for example, when parents/guardians have a strong preference for restricting the mobility of girls for religious or social reasons. Socio-cultural factors also shape perceived future benefits and harm from child work, beyond the immediate economic gain. The strength of social norms around education (who? how much? and why?) and child labour; the perceived negative social consequences from non-compliance; and the awareness of rights and enforcement of legal sanctions, also have a bearing on schooling decisions.

The social context of households and communities matters for schooling decisions. In situations where children suffer neglect or reduced levels of care as a result of violence, harassment, divorce, broken family ties etc., schooling becomes a very low priority. In these types of circumstances, parents may give lower priority to their children’s development, including their schooling. At the other extreme, schooling is often a relatively high priority in households and communities where the education level of adults is high. Educated adults are usually better informed about children’s rights to schooling, as well as the likely returns, and thus place a higher value on education. At a community level, they provide role models to demonstrate potential gains from education.



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Socio-cultural barriers and profiles of out-of-school children

Child marriage

In Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan, given the emphasis on traditional gender roles for girls (early childbearing, childrearing and domestic duties), it is not uncommon for parents to aspire to have their daughters married at an early age. This typically reduces their educational opportunities since in many cultures girls leave their parental home upon marriage, and parents are thus often less interested in investing in the education of daughters (as opposed to sons) because the benefits of girls education will be lost. Marriage and schooling are almost always incompatible. Girls are often married to men who are much older, and find themselves in new homes with greater responsibilities, without much autonomy or decision-making power, and unable to negotiate around decisions relating to education, work, or sexual experiences within marriage (Mathur et al., 2003).

Bangladesh has one of the highest rates of child or adolescent marriage in the world (UNICEF, 2011). This is to the detriment of girls' schooling, especially beyond the primary level. Particularly in rural areas of Bangladesh, unmarried girls are often at risk of being stigmatized by having (or being perceived to have) pre-marital sexual relations, thus early marriage is critical to preserve their and their family's honour. In addition, child marriage can reduce the financial burden on families, as dowry⁴⁴ increases with age (Amin and Huq, 2008). Similarly in India (typically for girls from the rural North, especially in large size families), child marriage is a very common tradition and is a way to keep the dowry demand low (Jha and Jhingran, 2005). And often among girls from Indian Muslim families, families aspire to have their daughters married at a young age and withdraw girls from school when they attain puberty (Jefferey et al., 2007, Hasan and Menon, 2004)⁴⁵.

⁴⁴ A custom whereby the bride's family gives money/gifts to the groom's family.

⁴⁵ In some cultures in South Asia, a woman's sexuality is not her own to control, but the property of her father, husband, family, or ethnic group. Because of this, the decision to marry — and to initiate sexual activity — is often not a young woman's but that of family members, whose honour and shame are defined by whether or not she is a virgin before she marries. Once a girl has menstruated, fears of potential pre-marital sexual activity and pregnancy become the major concern among family members who are accountable for "protecting" her sexuality. Thus, in many settings, the timing of a girl's first menstruation is associated with the first steps toward marriage (Dowsett et al, 1998 cited in Mathur et al., 2003).

In India, child marriage is often a factor leading to drop out for lower secondary school-age children (ages 11-13), especially in rural areas. Since 1929 the Child Marriage Restraint Act mandated the minimum age of marriage for males as 21 years, and for females as 18 years. The India National Family Health Survey in 2005-6 found more than half the women in India are married before the legal minimum age of 18 years.⁴⁶ The states with the highest incidence of child marriage in the country are Bihar, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, and Karnataka.⁴⁷ Though no systematic study is available exploring the relationship between age of marriage and education participation of girls, all these states with the exception of Karnataka are the ones with a large proportion of children of lower secondary school-age who are out of school.

In Pakistan, among highly patriarchal and conservative communities (typically found in rural areas), parents aspire towards early marriage for girls as a way of preserving the honour of the community and family. Child marriage is a serious deterrent to girls' transition from primary to secondary education in such communities (Government of Pakistan MDG Report, 2010).

In some circumstances, marriage market compulsions can encourage the education of girls. Evidence from Bangladesh (Mahmud and Amin, 2006) and India suggests that an increasing desire to bridge the gap between an educated groom and less educated wife has made households keener to educate girls, in order to improve the match they can make. However, this does not imply an appreciation of the value of education for the girls' own development (Sudarshan, 2000 in Bandopadhyaya and Subrahmaniam, 2008)⁴⁸.

Restricted physical and social mobility for older girls

Related to the above, in communities where family and community life is characterised by patriarchy and there is restricted physical and social mobility for older girls and women, parents perceive schooling as 'harmful' because it demands greater mobility outside the home. The strong patriarchal tradition of *pardah* (seclusion) in Pakistan means that schooling is seen as harmful for older girls⁴⁹. This is particularly true in rural areas and among particular conservative tribal groups and religious sects who strongly believe that schooling for girls goes against traditional tribal laws (Zafar, 2010). Similarly, in India, in some Muslim communities, the *pardah* system makes parents reluctant to send their daughters to school, especially co-educational schools. *Purdah* refers to the practice of seclusion and the wearing of veils by women. Mandelbaum (2010) notes this is a practice in a "large" part of South Asia including in Pakistan, Bangladesh and northern India, including Punjab, Rajasthan, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh as well as Madhya Pradesh, Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh although these parts of India are not exclusively Muslim.

The perceived 'harm' from schooling is amplified when schools are far from home, and when there is no secure school transport. Journeys to school are considered unsafe for girls (especially older girls), partly because of a fear of sexual harassment. In Bangladesh, public sexual harassment (known as 'eve teasing') has devastating consequences for the victims who suffer shame and humiliation, and was shown to be a major reason for dropout, particularly for older girls (Action Aid, 1999, 2009). There is evidence that safety concerns for older girls are an impediment to school participation to some extent in all four countries⁵⁰.

Violence at home, the community and the school environment is also a major factor affecting children's participation in education, both boys and girls. A report by UNICEF indicates that between 27 and 69 million children are exposed to domestic violence in India.⁵¹ According to the report such violence can adversely affect the development of children's brains and impair their cognitive and sensory growth. Primary school-age children who have been exposed to domestic violence show poor concentration and focus in studies. At the same time, public spaces do not provide adequate security to women and sexual harassment along with domestic violence hamper school attendance of girls, especially adolescents.⁵²

⁴⁶ IIPS, 2007.

⁴⁷ UNICEF, 2011.

⁴⁸ Parents see education as an 'investment' in daughters' marriage capital, not human capital (so once married, girls drop out of school).

⁴⁹ Findings from the Pakistan OOSCI study field survey in flood and non-flood affected communities show that the tradition of *pardah* with restricted mobility is widely practiced in Sindh and Punjab.

⁵⁰ See OPM, 2010, and Bandopadhyay and Subrahmaniam, 2008 for evidence from India.

⁵¹ UNICEF, 2006.

⁵² Bandopadhyay and Subrahmaniam, 2008.

Norms

Norms related to schooling and child labour are key influences on household schooling decisions in South Asia. Though child labour is primarily driven by poverty, in parts of Bangladesh, India and Pakistan there are also norms that support such behaviour, with cultural expectations that boys, especially those from poor families, should work to support the family, and that older girls have a duty to care for younger siblings. In Pakistan, typically parents don't send children (especially girls) to co-educational schools because of the normative expectation that girls and boys should not mix in school. Outside the wealthiest groups where pre-school enrolment rates are relatively high, there is little social compulsion to send a child to pre-school in Pakistan, because it is not a widely held social norm. Social norms strongly impact on decisions on girls' education in Pakistan in some conservative tribes/sects. Tribal laws, which govern normative behaviour, strongly discourage girls' education beyond a certain age (Zafar, 2010)⁵³.

3.3 Economic demand-side barriers

Household wealth affects schooling decisions in variety of ways: mainly through the budget constraint side of decision-making, but through more complex routes too. Poorer families are more likely to face an absolute budget constraint in relation to education, such that the direct costs of schooling are unaffordable regardless of how high they perceive the benefits of education to be. Opportunity costs too are relatively important for poorer families, who value the additional consumption possible from child wages or unpaid child work more highly than richer households. Less wealthy households are more vulnerable to shocks, which can tip their balance of preferences away from schooling when their economic situation worsens. Often they have no access to credit or insurance to mitigate risk, and use children as buffers against shocks (Guarcello et al., 2010).

Household economic status can also influence preferences for education. Investment in schooling has immediate benefits, but also reaps future benefits. Poorer households tend to place a comparatively low value on future benefits because of immediate survival needs. Household wealth also has a bearing on family health status. Children from poor families are more likely to be undernourished, which can have a negative impact on learning outcomes as children struggle to concentrate. They are also more likely to suffer from other health problems related to impoverished living conditions, such as unsafe water and lack of sanitation. Children who are frequently sick are likely to find learning more difficult, and in turn perceived (and actual) gains from schooling may fall to such an extent that households withdraw them from school.

Economic factors combined with socio-cultural factors together drive the education deprivation for certain groups in India: the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes, and Muslims. Poverty levels are very high in these three groups. The India Human Development Survey conducted in 2005⁵⁴ shows the incidence of poverty is highest among the STs (49.6 per cent), followed by the SCs (32.3 per cent), and then the Muslims (30.6 per cent). It has also been observed that in areas with a concentration of SC, ST or Muslim



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⁵³ In specific tribal groups, there are stringent laws that dictate women's fate is to be exchanged, sold, and bought in marriage, with girls and women being given limited opportunities or rights to choose to change or control their lives (Zafar, 2010).

⁵⁴ NCAER – IHDS, 2010



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communities, civic services like electricity supply, water supply, etc. are poor. The provision of schooling facilities is also deficient.⁵⁵

Future employment: role models and discrimination

Perceptions around benefits and harm from schooling are also related to labour market aspirations and the potential for gainful employment opportunities resulting from completed schooling. In Bangladesh, labour market aspirations are partly shaped by the presence or absence of positive role models from the community who have benefited from education by securing good jobs (Hossain and Tavakoli, 2008). A study in India found a similar role-model effect, with evidence of more limited labour market aspirations for children from communities with little history of formal education (OPM, 2010).

For some social and religious groups, formal sector job opportunities are limited by discriminatory employment practices. Compounding this, the marginalisation of specific groups in relation to livelihoods goes even further: in India, some low caste communities face physical and well as social segregation from mainstream society, limiting informal economic opportunities too – as well as discrimination in education systems.⁵⁶ One report in India concluded that high unemployment rates among low caste communities reduced motivation to send children to school because of the little economic benefit expected from schooling (Sachar Committee Report, 2006). In Sri Lanka, high dropout rates are seen in communities that have been historically marginalised from employment opportunities—especially the Indian Tamils who worked in estate plantations (Jayaweera and Gunawardene, 2004). Discrimination in the labour market contributes to low labour market aspirations for children from these communities and reduces the perceived benefits of schooling.

Aspirations about future social and economic roles for children also influence the perceived benefit of child labour. Particularly in communities where formal employment is likely to be limited, some types of child labour provide an opportunity to acquire useful skills for the future. In Sri Lanka, domestic work among girls is not uncommon among economically and socially marginalised plantation Tamil families, where formal employment is an unlikely prospect (Kannangara et al., 2003).

⁵⁵ Jha and Jhingran, 2005. See also Jha and Shahjahan (2010) for Muslims.

⁵⁶ The *Arzals* from the Muslim community face similar historic and current marginalisation to the Hindu scheduled castes and are 'cumulatively oppressed' (Sachar Committee Report, 2006).

Economic barriers and profiles of out-of-school children

It seems likely that some, if not all, of these economic barriers are constraining participation in schooling in South Asia. One of the clearest results from the profiles analysis is that children from poorer families, in the three largest countries in South Asia, are less likely to attend school than their richer peers, across all age-groups. This leads to the question: which economic barriers to schooling are most relevant to poorer households in South Asia? The section below examines poverty in relation to various direct and indirect economic barriers: direct schooling costs, opportunity costs, credit and labour market failures, child health and nutrition, and vulnerability of children to schooling exclusion in emergency situations.

Direct and indirect cost of schooling (private costs)

Direct costs of schooling cover non-discretionary items such as fees, as well as discretionary items such as supplementary textbooks and private tuition. An example of indirect costs is the time taken by a parent walking children to school—these costs are difficult to quantify and little evidence is available. The extent to which the direct costs of schooling act as a barrier to participation is likely to depend largely on adult income. Put simply, are the costs of schooling affordable? Poor households may have insufficient cash to pay for non-discretionary costs or need this amount for basic subsistence. They may also hold the view that unless they pay for discretionary items, incurring further expense which may be unaffordable; the returns from schooling are not likely to be high enough to justify the payment.

So how high are the costs of schooling in the four countries, relative to income (ignoring indirect costs)? Is there evidence to suggest that costs affect schooling decisions for some groups? Are the main costs discretionary or non-discretionary?

Despite a legal or Constitutional guarantee for free primary education in all four countries, in reality there are still substantial costs associated with sending a child to school. Financing education is reported to be a constraint by many parents in Bangladesh, particularly at secondary level, but also at primary level where fees are often still charged. Survey evidence finds that spending on primary and secondary education respectively accounts for 2 per cent and 4 per cent of household consumption expenditure on average (FMRP, 2005, 2006). At first sight, this suggests that education costs are not unduly high, although the averages probably mask higher proportions for lower income households. Also, these spending figures are for households with children in school, the share could be much higher for those families who cannot afford schooling. Other household survey evidence suggests that schooling costs are a constraint, at least for some profiles of children. Parents of out-of-school children cited finance ('child labour' was a separate category) as the main reason for non-participation of primary age children in 13 per cent of cases, rising to 48 per cent for excluded secondary age children (CAMPE, 2009, 2006). This finding is consistent with the fact that education gets more expensive for parents as children move up grades, and make the transition between primary and secondary school. There is a particularly large jump in cost between grades one and two, which may help to explain the comparatively high dropout rate at this initial stage. Schooling costs are considerably higher in urban areas than rural areas, and for government schools compared with non-government schools and madrasahs.

The richest quintile of Bangladeshi households spends nine times more per student on primary education than the poorest quintile of households (Al-Samarrai, 2007). The difference falls to four-fold at the secondary level, partly because so many poor children from the bottom two quintiles have already dropped out of school. These findings are a fairly strong indication that the cost of education in Bangladesh is driving differences in schooling choices between rich and poor households. Spending differences are partly related to school type. Asadullah and Chaudhury (2008), show that madrasahs are more common in poor areas, and that children from poorer households are more likely to enrol in madrasahs. Other types of schools, particularly government schools, tend to be far better resourced in terms of physical classroom conditions, and qualified teachers, than madrasahs (FMRP, 2005, 2006). This suggests that cost barriers may be contributing to the self-selection of poorer children into comparatively low quality schools, where learning prospects are worse and the chances of dropping out higher.

The bulk of schooling costs in Bangladesh are discretionary. Fees account for less than 10 per cent of household spending on primary education, and less than 15 per cent on secondary education (FMRP, 2005, 2006). The single largest spending item is private tuition: parents spend between a quarter and just under a half of total schooling costs on this, depending on the type of school and level of education (CAMPE, 2007). Children in madrasahs are less likely to take private tuition, probably partly because poorer parents find it difficult to afford. Sometimes private tuition is not supplementary: teachers offer

private tuition to their own students, and use this time to deliver part of the core syllabus. For those who miss out—likely to be among the poorest—the chances of success in school are likely to be diminished.

The profiles analysis showed that far more boys than girls are out of school at lower secondary level in Bangladesh. Up until 2008, non-discretionary costs of secondary education were higher for boys than girls because all girls were exempt, or received support for, certain fees, under a nationwide stipend programme (operating in non-metropolitan areas). It was widely recognised that secondary school fees represented a barrier to participation for poorer boys, and the stipend scheme has been adjusted to try to mitigate this.

As the discussion above for Bangladesh shows, it is difficult to assess the extent to which the cost of schooling acts as a barrier to school participation, but numerous studies and surveys from all four countries indicate that costs are a constraint, particularly for some profiles of children. In India, the most frequently reported reason for children dropping out of school is financial constraints, according to a nationally representative household survey (NSS 64th round). It is therefore not surprising to find that the costs of schooling for households in India increase markedly with level. The cost of schooling a lower secondary student is about 50 per cent higher than for a primary student, and this gap varies by type of school. The disparity is wider in government and local body schools, where poorer students disproportionately enrol, than in private schools. The cost of sending a child to a private primary school (aided or unaided) is between six and nine times higher than if the child attends a government or local body school⁵⁷. Given this situation, it seems highly likely that schooling costs in India are acting as a barrier for many poor children in making the transition from primary to lower secondary levels, as well as restricting their school choice.

The 2009 SRI-IMRB survey indicated that poverty/economic constraints was the most frequently cited reason for children dropping out of school (27 per cent of respondents) in India. Although government schools are not supposed to charge any fees, there are other costs of pursuing school education, which can act as a major barrier to school participation for children from poor families. These costs which include examination fees, books and stationery, uniform and private tuition, etc. have been analysed using NSSO data for 2007-08⁵⁸ (see Table 3.1). It shows that the cost of schooling is much higher than school fees. So while some costs are incurred in government schools which have zero fees, costs incurred in low - fee private aided schools and unaided schools are very high. While the lower financial costs of government and local body schools have indeed made schooling more affordable, it may be kept in mind that for poor families with two to three school-going children, the burden may still be heavy. The substantial increase in per student expenditure in government schools at the upper primary stage which is equivalent to lower secondary education should also be considered as it may be a big deterrent for parents compared to the lower costs at the primary level.⁵⁹

Table 3.1 Average annual household expenditure per student by type of institution and level of education, India, 2007-08

| Type of Institution | Expenditure at | | Ratio of Expenditure at Upper Primary Level to Expenditure at Primary Level |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| | Primary Level (Indian Rupees) | Upper Primary Level (Indian Rupees) | |
| Government | 473 | 1,074 | 2.3 |
| Local Body | 521 | 976 | 1.9 |
| Private Aided | 3,137 | 2,915 | 0.9 |
| Private Unaided | 4,175 | 5,557 | 1.3 |

Source: NSSO National Sample Survey 64th Round, 2007-08.

As children get older, parents/guardians in Pakistan increasingly report school expenses as a reason for their children not attending school. This financial cause of exclusion from school is more commonly cited in urban areas than in rural areas. Schooling costs would appear to present more of a barrier to participation in some provinces than others. Balochistan stands out, because other reasons for exclusion from school are much more prevalent than the cost of education, compared with Punjab, Sindh and KP⁶⁰.

⁵⁷ All the data on the private cost of schooling in India comes from NSSO, 2010.

⁵⁸ NSSO National Sample Survey 64th Round, 2007-08.

⁵⁹ India OOSCI Study, forthcoming, Chapter 3.

⁶⁰ The survey results are drawn from the PSLM, 2008/09.

A study of children from low-income communities in Sri Lanka found that the majority of school dropouts attributed their exclusion to an inability to meet schooling costs, specifically direct contributions to schools, such as facilities fees, contributions for school furniture and sports (Jayaweera and Gunawardane, 2004). The recent field study (part of the OOSCI country study) which focused on areas of relatively high exclusion, is consistent with this. Some 68 per cent of caregivers cited financial difficulties as a major reason that their child had dropped out. There is also a fairly striking disparity between the spending on the schooling of children from poor and rich households. Households from the richest quintile spent more than four times the amount on schooling per student as households in the poorest quintiles (Sri Lanka Integrated Survey data 2005 as cited in the Sri Lanka OOSCI study). A high proportion of schooling expenses are discretionary: clothing, stationery, private coaching and books. It seems probable that this degree of extra spending gives richer students some advantage in school performance over poorer students. Although it is important to note that in the international literature, there is little robust evidence to suggest a strong link between education expenditure and student performance.

Opportunity cost of schooling

The opportunity cost of schooling depends on the options available for children not attending school. One option is paid work in the labour market. Child wages tend to vary by geographical area, gender, age—with older children commanding higher wages because of physical stature and prior education—and sometimes children from certain social or religious groups do not have wage parity. Similarly the value of unpaid household labour varies according to children's characteristics. In other words there is considerable variation in opportunity costs which may partly explain the profiles of child labourers and out-of-school children who work. Where opportunity costs are higher, this is more likely to act as a constraint on school participation, particularly for low income households, where the additional income or household labour is particularly valuable. The critical role of opportunity costs in decisions about child labour and schooling in the four countries are discussed in more detail in chapter five.

Credit and labour market failures

Even when families have a relative preference for schooling and sufficient wealth to meet costs, a lack of liquidity can leave them unable to send their children to school. This situation can arise if the wealth of the family is tied up in fixed assets (such as land) that cannot easily be converted into cash to pay direct schooling costs or pay outside labour to help with household production. The lack of affordable and available credit is a barrier to participation in these circumstances. Labour market failures are also a problem for some households in exercising their desired trade-off between schooling and consumption. If households are unable to hire sufficient labour to assist with production, they may have no choice but to withdraw their children from school to do the work (OPM, 2010).

Economic vulnerability and shocks

Poor households are particularly vulnerable to shock events with economic consequences that result in children being withdrawn from school. At a micro-level, family incidents such as death, illness, accidents and disability (which can be catastrophic for households which rely on manual labour), a daughter's marriage (dowry costs), and migration of a family member abroad for work (upfront costs), can suddenly change a family's economic circumstances such that the direct costs of schooling are no longer affordable and/or children are needed to earn or contribute to household production. The absence of credit or insurance to help mitigate the economic effects of shocks, limits options for poor families to keep their children in school.

Case studies which ask respondents for detailed reasons why children are not in school can pick up the root cause of 'financial constraints' or the 'need to work' — often cited in quantitative surveys as the main reasons for non-participation. In the Sri Lanka as part of the OOSCI field study, several children described unexpected family illness (cost of an operation; care needs of a sick father) as the main reason they dropped out of school.

Children from families who migrate seasonally for work are particularly susceptible to school exclusion, partly because of economic vulnerability. These families often have a fluctuating and uncertain household income which makes decisions about schooling more risky. Agricultural seasonal work is particularly unpredictable because it relies on certain weather patterns.

As well as distinct family shocks, macro-level emergency events, which drive thousands of children out of school, are very prevalent in South Asia, and disproportionately affect poor households. Chapter six is devoted to emergencies and exclusion from schooling. It cites recent cases from South Asia where a dramatic reduction in enrolment has occurred in the wake of natural disasters and violence. Poor

households suffer particularly in these situations; partly because the areas where they live are often more prone to emergency events. For example, households living on the flood-prone chars in Bangladesh, are much poorer than average (this is not a coincidence; wealthier households are more able to migrate out of environmentally vulnerable areas than their poorer neighbours). The economic fall-out on households from emergency events, such as the loss of household assets, pushes more families into poverty and leaves more families with little choice but to withdraw their children from school.

Another devastating consequence of some emergencies is forced displacement—within or across national borders. There are millions of refugees in South Asia, and poverty among these households is widespread, presenting economic barriers to schooling for refugee children on top of other serious constraints to participation. Chapter six provides more details.

3.4 Other demand-level barriers

Social neglect and abuse

Children who suffer social neglect and abuse are very vulnerable to being excluded from school. In Bangladesh, children living and working on the streets are perhaps the most socially and economically vulnerable and exploited group of children (CAMPE, 2005). For these children, some form of economic activity is a key priority so that they can meet their basic survival needs. But they face other barriers to schooling too. Often they are at risk of violence, abuse, and extreme neglect, and are forced to sleep in public spaces (often far removed from their original neighbourhood) (de Benitez, 2007). This unstable environment is not conducive to regularly attending school, and education is far removed from their worldview of options. More generally, domestic violence and ruptured family relationships can have very detrimental effects on the care and protection of children (Giani, 2006; Conticini and Hulme, 2006). If children end up without the support of an adult who is concerned with their future prospects, schooling is unlikely to be a high priority. In Sri Lanka, the migration of mothers to the Middle East for work is associated with adverse effects on the attendance and academic performance of the children left behind. This has been partly attributed to a gap in care and support for the children, which fathers (who are jointly responsible for the well-being and schooling rights of their children) and extended family members are not always able to fill (Pinto-Jayawardena, 2006).

Child health and nutrition

Extreme poverty can have a devastating effect on child nutrition and health as children from poor families are more likely to receive insufficient nutrients and healthcare, and their parents are likely to be less knowledgeable about appropriate diet and health interventions. In Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, large proportions of under-five children suffer from under-nutrition. In Bangladesh, 18 per cent of under-fives suffer from moderate to severe wasting compared to 20 per cent in India, 14 per cent in Pakistan, and 12 per cent in Sri Lanka, underlining the scale of the problem (WHO, 2012⁶¹).

Poor nutrition in the early years has far reaching effects on children's later schooling outcomes primarily through its effects on cognitive development (Abadzi, 2006, pp.12-15). Studies from India show that undernutrition in under-fives has a negative effect on later schooling outcomes, and that the effect is worse among children from marginalized communities (IIPS, 2007 as cited in the India OOSCI study).

Children who suffer from undernutrition and/or frequent or chronic health problems tend to have more irregular school attendance. They are also more susceptible to dropping out since children that regularly miss school due to sickness find it difficult to catch up on the material missed (Hossain, 2010). Some studies also find that undernutrition can be associated with a lack of motivation/desire of the affected children to attend school (Gira, 2004, based on the 1996 Matlab Health and Socioeconomic Survey, as cited in the Bangladesh OOSCI Study).

In Bangladesh, poor health is associated with lower levels of enrolment and school attendance (Hossain, 2010). Health risks are magnified among children engaged in the worst forms of child labour ('hazardous' forms) as lack of protective gear in some factories leads to high rates of illness and injury. Combined with fatigue from long hours of work, the incompatibility of work and school schedules, and even alienation from their peers, means that even children who want to attend school may not do so.

⁶¹ WHO Global Database on Child Growth and Malnutrition



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Similarly, in the Sri Lanka OOSCI field study, health emerged as one of the factors affecting drop-out and regular attendance. Almost 60 per cent of children in the study who were considered to be 'at risk' of dropping out as a consequence of high absenteeism, gave ill health as a reason for their irregular attendance. Some of the common illnesses mentioned in the study were asthma and rheumatism which appeared to have developed into chronic illnesses likely to disrupt regular schooling, making children fall behind in their studies, and predisposing them to drop out of school.

Poor health and hygiene are major problems in Indian urban slum life where inadequate water, sanitation, and living facilities, and living in close proximity, is related to undernutrition and general malaise (Awasthi and Agarwal, 2003; Ghosh and Shah, 2004). In addition, young children in the slums are commonly exposed to alcoholism, loitering, and gambling, which can particularly affect young boys' school-going attitude negatively (Jha and Jhingran, 2005). Children living in urban slums in the other countries face similar barriers. A report on the State of the World's Street Children argues that poor health, resulting from poverty-related undernutrition is one of the numerous barriers to schooling that affects children living and working on the streets in urban areas (de Benitez, 2007).

To sum up, existing evidence shows that children suffering from undernutrition are not only much less likely to start school than their peers but even if they do enter school, they perform comparatively poorly (Alderman et al., 1997; Pakistan MICS Studies 2003-2004 in Sindh and 2007-2008 in Punjab). Undernutrition in children makes them more likely to suffer from weak cognitive skills and learning abilities (Huda et al., 1999) and lack of concentration when in school (IFPRI 2001 Micronutrient and Gender Study). They tend to perform worse in school for two key reasons: they generally start school later, receive relatively less instructional time, and they appear to have lower learning productivity (Glewwe, Jacoby, and King, 2001), with adverse effects on schooling achievement, and later in life, productivity and earnings (Maluccio et al., 2006). Some evidence also finds that post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), in particular combined with undernutrition, negatively affects short-term-working-memory of children, thereby restricting their ability to learn (Neubourg and Neubourg, 2012).

Barriers for children with disabilities

According to the World Disability Report 2011 children with disabilities are less likely to enrol and complete a full cycle of basic education. This makes children with disabilities one of the most excluded groups in education, despite countries signing the CRC and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The report estimates the number of children 0–14 years living with disabilities range between 93 million and 150 million globally. The UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) in a 2012 publication⁶² estimates the average disability prevalence in South and South-West Asia⁶³ at 3.2 per cent with Bangladesh having one of the highest rates at 9 per cent (of whom 15 per cent are aged 0 to 14).⁶⁴ The report estimates the disability prevalence rate for Pakistan at 2.5 per cent, India at 2.1 per cent, Sri Lanka at 1.6 per cent.

Furthermore, the 2011 EFA Global Monitoring Report estimates that children with disabilities make up one-third of children not in school. At the same time, an estimated 90 per cent of children with disabilities in the developing world do not go to school and hence are absent in the school data sets and invisible in national planning and policy setting.

The SRI-IMRB (2009) study on out-of-school children in India identified 1.53 million 6-13 year old children as physically or mentally challenged. Out of these children, 38 per cent were found to be out of school. Furthermore, a study conducted by the World Bank found that children with special needs in India rarely progress beyond primary school, and that educational attainment is poor across all levels of severity of disability.⁶⁵ The World Bank study based on 2002 NSSO data show that attendance at school for the 5-18 year age group does not go beyond 70 per cent for boys with disabilities and 66 per cent for girls. A 2009 survey also estimated the share of disabled children not enrolled in school at more than five times the national rate, even in the more prosperous states. In Karnataka, the best performing major state, almost one quarter of children with disabilities were out of school (around 22 per cent), and in poorer such states as Madhya Pradesh and Assam, more than half. An estimated 55 per cent of children with disabilities in Assam were out of school while the average out of school rate in the whole state was only 9 per cent. In Madhya Pradesh, 51 per cent of children with disabilities were out of school but again the average exclusion rate for the whole state was only 9 per cent.⁶⁶

For children with disabilities, as for all children, education is important for participating in employment and other areas of social activity. A World Bank study found that in Bangladesh the total cost for the economy due to forgone income from a lack of schooling and employment of people with disabilities and their caregivers, is estimated at US\$ 1.2 billion annually, or 1.7 per cent of GDP⁶⁷.

3.5 School-level supply side barriers

The supply of schooling influences household preferences for schooling (demand) because it affects perceived (and actual) returns from schooling. All other things being equal, households will favour schools which are closer to their homes, and provide a good learning and social environment for their children. Supply side barriers to participation therefore have access and quality components.

Access to schooling

Overall supply of school places, teachers and classrooms

This section presents some simple indicators of overall supply of school places (defined below), teachers and classrooms, compared with the target school-age population. Having an adequate aggregate supply of these basic inputs is a necessary condition for ensuring universal access to schooling but it is not sufficient. Barriers related to the distribution of teachers and classrooms, and their quality, are considered in subsequent sections.

⁶² UNESCAP, 2012.

⁶³ The UNESCAP sub-regional grouping includes the eight South Asian countries plus the Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey.

⁶⁴ The disability prevalence rate, which covers all age groups, is based on national definitions and data collection methodologies.

⁶⁵ World Bank, 2007.

⁶⁶ World Bank, 2009.

⁶⁷ Project appraisal document on a proposed credit to the People's Republic of Bangladesh for a disability and children-at-risk project. Washington, World Bank, 2008

Gross enrolment ratios (GERs) provide a simple indication of whether there is sufficient capacity (school places) in the schooling system to accommodate all children of school age with classrooms, chairs, desks and teachers, leaving other quality and distributional issues aside⁶⁸. Put simply, if the GER is 100 per cent or above, the existing school system contains a significant number of children in the target population but also captures children who are younger or older than the target school-age population. By this measure, Table 3.2 implies that that overall supply of primary school places is adequate or better in Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka, but there may be a shortage of primary places in Pakistan. Only Sri Lanka has a lower secondary GER close to 100 per cent, which suggests that there may be insufficient capacity in the lower secondary education system in the other three countries. It is not possible draw a definitive conclusion about inadequate capacity because demand-side factors also drive GERs. At the same time, GERs over 100 per cent also indicate prevalence of over- or under-age enrolment.

Table 3.2 GER, PTR and PCR, primary and lower secondary education, 2012

| | Bangladesh | India | Pakistan | Sri Lanka |
|---------------------|------------|-----------------|----------|-----------|
| GER primary | 114.2 | 112.6 | 92.3 | 98.6 |
| GER lower secondary | 66.5 | 86.5 | 45.9 | 98.8 |
| PTR primary | 40.2 | 35.2 | 39.8 | 24.1 |
| PTR lower secondary | 32.9 | 32 | n/a | n/a |
| PCR primary | 67 | 32 ² | n/a | n/a |

Sources: UIS Online database accessed on 10 January 2014, except for PCR for India (DISE Flash Statistics 2009-10), PCR for Bangladesh (calculated using annual school census data 2010). Notes: n/a means not available.

A primary pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) of 40:1 has been used as a minimum benchmark for quality and efficiency by the Global Partnership for Education (formerly called the EFA Fast-Track Initiative), based on the average PTR for a group of low income countries with high primary completion rates (Bruns et al., 2003). By this measure, there appears to be an adequate supply of primary school teachers overall in the four countries. However, the ratio is much lower in Sri Lanka at 1:24.1. National PTR averages, however, mask disparities at the sub-national level where in some parts of the country, the ratios could be very high or very low.

The overall supply of lower secondary school teachers appears adequate for the existing levels of enrolment in Bangladesh and India (PTRs at 32.9). However, large numbers of additional teachers would be needed to accommodate universal access to lower secondary because GERs are well below 100 per cent, and there is more limited scope for raising PTRs at this level. Generally, as the education level increases, PTRs tend to fall because of the need for subject specialist teachers which introduces less flexibility in teacher deployment. Sri Lanka has sufficient lower secondary teachers at an aggregate level to serve the target school-age population.

Overall classroom supply in India appears to be adequate at present: the pupil-classroom ratio is 32:1 for primary and lower secondary levels combined. More classrooms would be required to expand access to lower secondary education, but land availability is a problem (14th JRM, 2011). There is an acute shortage of primary classrooms in Bangladesh — on average, there are 67 students per classroom. Double shifting of classrooms is used to mitigate overcrowding and bring class sizes to a reasonable level, but this comes at the cost of reduced lesson time (discussed below under quality). No data on classrooms is available for Pakistan, but the undersupply of lower secondary infrastructure is evident from a simple comparison of the number of primary schools (156,000) and lower secondary schools (41,000) (AEPAM, 2008/09).⁶⁹ The country OOSCI studies all found that the supply of pre-school facilities and teachers is inadequate to serve the pre-school age population. In India and Sri Lanka the country reports also highlight the lack of appropriate infrastructure, and specialised teachers, for children with disabilities.

Distribution of school infrastructure and teachers

Even with an adequate supply of school infrastructure overall, an unequal distribution of schools (and classrooms) in relation to the school-age population can leave some communities underserved completely

⁶⁸ The gross enrolment ratio is calculated as: number of children enrolled in a given level of education as a proportion of the total number of children in the target population/ age group for a given level of education.

⁶⁹ Of which 17,512 are private primary institutions, and 25,224 are private lower secondary institutions: the role of the private sector is much more significant at secondary level, illustrating demand unmet by public institutions.

or with long distances, or difficult journeys, to the nearest school. Distance to school is not commonly cited by households as a reason for dropping out of primary or lower secondary school in Bangladesh or India (CAMPE, 2009, 2006; IIPS, 2007). For primary students in India this is not surprising since in rural areas some 99 per cent of primary school-age children live within one kilometer of a primary school⁷⁰. By contrast in rural areas of Pakistan, households cited distance to school as a major reason for non-participation in school of children of primary and lower secondary school-age (PSLMS, 2008/09). Another study found that this barrier is particularly acute for girls: those living 500 meters from school were 15 per cent less likely to attend than those living next door (Andrabi et al., 2007). In rural areas of Pakistan there are about twice as many boys' schools as girls' schools (AEPAM, 2008/09), which suggests that distance to school is a particularly acute barrier for parents/guardians of rural girls with a preference for single-sex schooling.

Moving away from the general picture, there is little doubt that in all four countries there are profiles of excluded children who are particularly affected by barriers related to the proximity of schools. It is not simply distance to school which presents a barrier; difficult terrain, transport options and costs, and security all emerge as issues affecting decisions over participation. Various geographical features in parts of India make journeys to school time-consuming and sometimes hazardous, particularly in bad weather. The India country report highlighted some of the groups affected: rural Scheduled Castes children who live in segregated tolas, tribal children living in remote, hilly or forested areas, and children living in desert regions. Indian households living in urban slums, and road-side villages, identified busy roads, railways and open drains as a serious hazard for their children in getting to school (Banerjee, 2000). Inaccessible rural areas of Bangladesh (char areas, hoar wetlands, and hilly areas) are underserved by schools, and the school supply response to the substantial migration of households into metropolitan areas of cities is inadequate.

In Sri Lanka, plantation estate communities are commonly served by schools which only have primary education grades (type 3 schools), while schools covering primary and secondary education grades are common elsewhere. Clearly this makes the transition from primary to lower secondary schooling grades comparatively difficult for children living on plantations. The closure of small schools serving relatively small populations, as part of a rationalisation programme, led a few hundred children to dropout, suggesting that distance to school is a barrier for some households (NEC, 2003). The Sri Lankan OOSCI field study is inconclusive regarding barriers related to journey to school. Almost 20 per cent of the children who had dropped out claimed that transport problems were a major reason, while this did not feature in the response of parents/guardians — although this may have been subsumed in their most frequent response which was financial constraints.

Teachers are often unwilling to serve in remote rural areas and in some marginalised communities (particularly if they were not born in these areas or communities). This is one of the problems underlying inefficient and unfair teacher deployment which leads to shortages in some areas and over-supply in others. A nationally representative survey in Bangladesh found a very wide range of PTRs in both government primary schools (37:1 to 102:1) and registered non-government primary schools (31:1 to 83:1) (FMRP, 2006)⁷¹.

Quality of schooling

Ultimately households are only likely to keep their children in school if they are satisfied with what they perceive their children learn in school. Qualitative evidence from Bangladesh which examined school choice in-depth in selected communities showed that few parents/guardians were entirely uninformed or apathetic about school quality. But, there is a lack of effective mechanisms for parents/guardians to hold schools to account for poor teaching, which means that withdrawing children becomes their only option (Hossain and Tavakoli, 2008).

Learning achievement in the region is characterised by substantial variation across different groups of children. In Bangladesh, the National Student Assessment 2008 which tested a large sample of primary school students in core subjects found significant differences in mean student scores by geographical division (Khulna and Barisal the highest, and Sylhet usually the lowest); location (urban higher than rural); and gender (boys higher than girls—although it is not clear if this difference is statistically significant).

⁷⁰ MHRD, 2011.

⁷¹ The range of values shown is for the first and ninth deciles of the distribution rather than the highest and lowest values to mitigate the problem of outliers.

In another representative survey carried out a few years earlier, secondary school students were tested in Bangla and mathematics; again girls performed slightly worse than boys, particularly in mathematics (FMRP, 2005). In Pakistan, a survey found that less than three-quarters of lower secondary graduates could read a story in the main national languages (SAFED, 2011). Learning achievement in Pakistan was found to vary across provinces, with students from Punjab scoring comparatively well. Public school students from urban areas also fared better than their rural counterparts (SAFED, 2011). A consistent pattern of regional variation in learning achievement was also detected in Sri Lanka. Grade 4 students from the Western province considerably outperformed their peers from the Northern (and sometimes the Eastern) province in core subjects. On average urban students scored higher marks than rural students in the same tests (NEREC, 2003). None of the four countries have formally participated in internationalised standardised tests (such as the Programme for International Student Assessment, and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study), so it is not possible to place the region in an international context.

What explains the level and variation in the quality of schooling? Research on schooling systems around the world has shown that multiple factors act together at the school level (reinforced by support from the system, including public financing — considered under bottlenecks in the next section) to influence the quality of schooling (UNESCO, 2004). A widely applied analytical framework, consistent with this finding, groups the characteristics of effective schools into four reinforcing areas—the following analysis shows that constraints are evident in each of these areas in South Asia⁷².

Supporting inputs

All four countries highlighted supporting inputs as a major constraint on the quality of schooling generally, and for particular groups of children. Lack of water and sanitation facilities, especially separate toilets for boys and girls and access to safe water, especially in rural areas, are commonly mentioned factors that inhibit schooling⁷³. Table 3.3 reveals that Bangladesh lags far behind India and Pakistan in the provision of separate toilets for girls in primary schools. In fact, the majority of primary schools in Bangladesh do not have designated female toilets. Rural primary schools in both India and Pakistan are considerably less likely to have separate girls' toilets than urban schools. Findings in Bangladesh (CAMPE, 2006), Sri Lanka (MOE Sri Lanka, UNICEF and MG Consultants, 2009) and Pakistan (Zafar, 2010) indicate that separate toilet facilities for boys and girls is positively associated with school attendance, especially for older, adolescent girls. Some of the underlying reasons are explained below.

Table 3.3 Proportion of primary schools with resources (%)

| Resources | Bangladesh | India ¹ | | Pakistan ² | | Sri Lanka ³ |
|---------------------------|------------|--------------------|-------|-----------------------|-------|------------------------|
| | All | Urban | Rural | Urban | Rural | All |
| Separate toilet for girls | 38 | 79 | 57 | 84 | 72 | n/a |
| Water ³ | 60 | 82 | 80 | 74 | 59 | 83 |
| Electricity | - | 83 | 37 | 60 | 31 | n/a |

Sources: Bangladesh annual school census 2009, India (DISE school level data, 2007-08), Pakistan (AEPAM, 2008-09), Sri Lanka (MoE, SHN Branch, 2010), as cited in country studies. Notes: (1) Covers elementary schools. (2) Public schools only. (3) All schools (not just in primary education). (4) Type of water source included is: safe tap or tube well (Bangladesh); hand pump or tap water (India); Running water (Pakistan); Well/tube well, tap water, water from mountains, bowser (Sri Lanka). (5) n/a is not available.

In many parts of South Asia the onset of menstruation is viewed as a sign of readiness for marriage and girls may be withdrawn from school (Ten, 2007). For example, a study in South India found that half of girls attending school were taken out of school to be married when they reached menarche, (Caldwell, Reddy and Caldwell, 1983). Even if girls are not withdrawn from school to be married they may drop out due to the lack of adequate sanitation (Ten, 2007; WaterAid, 2008). For girls who do stay in school after they begin menstruating, the lack of resources for menstrual hygiene management tends to reduce attendance (Ten, 2007). In a study from India, more than half of girls interviewed responded they that did not attend school during menstruation because there were no private facilities for cleaning and washing (Fernandes, 2008).

⁷² Based on the framework for school effectiveness given in Heneveld and Craig, 1996.

⁷³ Even when the schools have toilets, the condition of these toilets is unsatisfactory-dirty, broken, bad location (UNICEF, 2009b; 11th and 14th JRM, 2010).

Less than two-thirds of primary schools have access to water in Bangladesh and rural Pakistan, and coverage is far from universal even in urban India. This raises serious hygiene and health concerns for students in schools without water. In Bangladesh, unsafe water is a major problem in some areas. Arsenic levels in water have been shown to be associated with low test scores for boys; this suggests that the effect of arsenic on health status (a problem in itself) can undermine learning ability (Asadullah and Chaudhary, 2008).

In Pakistan, unsafe water and poor/inadequate sanitation facilities have been shown to discourage parents from sending their children to school because they are concerned for their children's safety and wellbeing (Zafar, 2010). In India, poor or absent water and sanitation facilities have a more significant negative effect on schooling for children from marginalized communities such as those belonging to the low caste, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes groups (NEGFire Seminar, 2011 as cited in the India OOSCI Study). In Sri Lanka, inadequate water and sanitation facilities present more of a barrier to children living in the provinces affected by conflict (NIE and UNICEF, 2003).

Inadequate teaching and learning materials was mentioned as a cause for concern in the Pakistan country study, especially for pre-schools (Shahida, 2008 as cited in the Pakistan OOSCI Study), and also for children in lower secondary schools. The content of lower secondary textbooks was singled out as being poorly organised since it does not systematically progress in difficulty level. In India, the material in textbooks has been criticised for not recognising the context of the learner (especially rural children), not being age-appropriate, and being too technical and detailed to be readable (PROBE, 1999).

Teaching and learning process

An effective learning process requires that children spend a high proportion of their time engaged in learning activities. Classroom observation in Bangladesh, in a representative sample of government and non-government primary schools, found that between 10 per cent and 15 per cent of lesson time was spent on processes unrelated to learning (depending on the type of school and the subject) (FMRP, 2006). Furthermore, in terms of the content of the learning material, there is concern that the curriculum currently being used is not relevant to the likely future livelihoods of the children being taught. The Pakistan country study cited the absence of linkages between what is taught in school and the job market as one of the reasons children fail to make the transition from primary to secondary education.

Use of a non-mother tongue language as the medium of instruction is a major barrier to learning for particular groups of children in the region. In India, children from marginalised Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes communities in remote areas, migrant children, and children residing in inter-state border areas are particularly affected by this barrier (Jhingran, 2005; NEGFire Seminar 2011 as cited in the India OOSCI Study). Studies have shown that differences between a child's mother tongue and the language in school has an adverse impact on student attendance in India (SAFED, 2011). This barrier is important in Pakistan too for the many children in Punjab and Baluchistan who do not speak Urdu or English at home, and are forced to try to learn in an unfamiliar language at school (children in Sindh and KP have more language options). There is evidence that language barriers hamper learning achievement in Pakistan (Action Aid, 2011).

The pedagogical approach to supporting children's learning in classrooms in the region is often ineffective, particularly for the weakest learners. In Bangladesh, classroom observation studies have shown that teaching is often a one-way communication, often in large and crowded classrooms, with minimal learning aids, and a stick as a tool for discipline. Teachers made little effort to help children who lagged behind (CAMPE, 2005). Similarly in India, the teaching process has been heavily critiqued (De et al., 2011; SAFED, 2011 for primary schools). It is characterised by failure of teachers to identify and explain mistakes, lack of emphasis on problem-solving skills, and difficulties arising from multigrade teaching. Teaching practices are marked by emphasis on rote, complete reliance on textbooks, failure to view learning as relevant and useful for daily life (PROBE, 1999), and few if any 'child friendly' practices (ASER, 2011).

School climate

The approach to discipline and reward in a school, and the attitude and behaviour of teachers and peers, can make a major difference to how much children enjoy and succeed in school. Sadly, corporal punishment, violence, and abuse in school characterise the climate in many schools in the region—and



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some groups of vulnerable children are particularly badly affected.⁷⁴ In India, studies have shown that corporal punishment contributes to dropping out (Reddy and Sinha, 2010). Humiliation, harassment and abuse by upper caste teachers towards children from Scheduled Castes have been shown to undermine their motivation to stay in school (Nambissan, 2000). And teacher prejudice towards weak learners has been shown to de-motivate students, who are often from marginalised communities (PROBE, 1999).

In Pakistan, boys at lower secondary education level face regular corporal punishment and abuse, making them more susceptible to dropping out of school⁷⁵. In 2005, the first in-depth survey set out to determine the scale of corporal punishment in schools in Pakistan (GOP/UNICEF/STC, 2005 as cited in the Pakistan OOSCI Study). All 3,582 children interviewed said they had been beaten at school, and 7 per cent said they had suffered serious injury as a consequence⁷⁶.

In Sri Lanka, punishment and teacher attitudes (that is, lack of teacher effort to understand learning difficulties or to understand children's personal problems) was highlighted as a reason for children dropping out (MOE Sri Lanka, UNICEF and MG Consultants, 2009). One of the most vulnerable age groups facing harassment are older females; and the fear of harassment and abuse in schools, leads parents to withdraw or not send their children to school (UNFPA, 2000). Children with disabilities in mainstream schools also suffer from negative teacher attitudes in Sri Lanka, and elsewhere. A study in Sri Lanka found that teachers were commonly of the opinion that children who have a disability should be placed in Special Education Units, arguing that there is no place for them in the normal classroom (Ahuja and Mendis, 2002). Another study found a similar negative attitude by teachers and principals towards including children with disabilities in regular schools (Gunawardena, 2009).

⁷⁴ SAIEVAC (2011) details progress towards ending corporal punishment in South Asia, and suggests that corporal punishment was prohibited in schools in Bangladesh under a Supreme Court ruling (but not in legislation), prohibited in schools in most of India except Jammu and Kashmir, while there is no legislation prohibiting corporal punishment in schools in Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

⁷⁵ The argument is that mostly male teachers have been trained to practice tough disciplinary methods in class as a way to preserve the patriarchal culture where boys/men are supposed to be tough, assertive and aggressive. Thus punishment may be seen as one way to make boys capable of living effectively in patriarchal societies.

⁷⁶ See <http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?reportid=78275>

Enabling conditions

There are various overarching conditions which drive the overall performance of a school. The number of instructional hours available is the foundation for classroom learning; the leadership and management of a school, and the capability of the teaching force, both create conditions for learning to take place.

Evidence on actual instructional hours is not routinely available in any of the four countries. Survey evidence from Bangladesh found a sizable discrepancy between official and actual number of days that schools were open. Primary schools should be open for 242 days per annum, but were found to be open for 228 days on average (FMRP, 2006). And when schools are open, much of the first and last month of the year are taken up by administrative activities (registration and exams). In the case of secondary schools, they should be open for 208 days but on average were open for 166-189 days (FMRP, 2005). Part of the reason for school closures are natural disasters, particularly cyclical flooding which more frequently affects poorer communities and their schools. Even when schools are open in Bangladesh, the vast majority of primary school students study in double-shift schools where the official learning hours are low by international standards: two and half hours for lower classes, and three and half hours for upper classes.

High levels of teacher absenteeism and lateness reflect badly on school management to some extent, even though head teachers have limited authority over teacher management in publically subsidised schools in all four countries. In Bangladesh, teacher absenteeism and lateness are not uncommon — a nationally representative survey found between 11 per cent and 16 per cent of primary education teachers were absent during unannounced visits, and 15 per cent teachers were late by at least 30 minutes (FMRP, 2006). Teachers were more likely to be late if they lived relatively far from school. Another study in Bangladesh found that teacher absenteeism is almost twice as high in rural than in urban areas (Chaudhury et al., 2004). In India, teacher absenteeism is higher in government than in private schools (Probe, 1999; Probe Revisited, 2011; Kremer et al., 2004), as is the case in Pakistan. A recent survey found a teacher absence rate of 22 per cent in government primary schools across five India states (ASER, 2011). In Pakistan, a study estimated the absenteeism rate in government and private schools to be 15 per cent and 8 per cent, respectively (Leach, 2007). In Sri Lanka, the incidence of teacher absenteeism varies from 15 per cent in the North-Western province to 20 per cent in the North-Central and Uva provinces (World Bank, 2005). Overall, it is clear that teacher absenteeism is high enough in the region, particularly in government schools and in some geographical areas, to frequently disrupt learning.

With respect to teacher capabilities, there is evidence to show that many primary education teachers in Bangladesh have not mastered some of the key literacy and numeracy skills that they are required to teach (FMRP, 2006). Various studies have also shown that using teacher qualifications (academic and teaching) as an indication of teaching competence appears to be misguided. In India a large scale survey showed that for primary education level learners, academic qualification and teacher training had little impact on learning outcomes (ASER, 2011).

3.6 Other supply level barriers to access

Administrative barriers

The need for official documentation, such as a birth certificate, is still a barrier to school entry for some poor and vulnerable children, despite policies and regulations which outlaw this. Although the numbers of children affected are small in Sri Lanka, some households respondents to the OOSCI field study reported that they had not enrolled their children for this reason, citing affordability and lack of knowledge of how to obtain documents as the root cause. Children who live in slums illegally in India and elsewhere, also face difficulties in getting official documents, sometimes forcing households to limit school choice according to admission policies. This type of administrative obstacle is also a serious deterrent to enrolment for families who migrate seasonally for work and need to weigh up the costs of temporary schooling. (This type of migration operates on a large scale in South Asia, and many migrant families face numerous other barriers to school participation too; they appear to be a large and under-researched group). Another marginalised group are displaced families, who may have lost crucial documents in fleeing an emergency situation, and are thus particularly susceptible to administrative barriers to school entry. Admission procedures which require written forms to be completed can put children with poorly educated parents/guardians at a disadvantage.

3.7 Governance, financing and policy bottlenecks

There are many system-level factors (bottlenecks) which ultimately shape household decisions on education. The most direct of these are the politics, policy and legal framework, governance, management and financing of the education system itself. These will have a direct influence on the supply of schooling and on the non-discretionary costs of schooling, and potentially some influence on social norms around education. The social protection system affects household budget constraints and incentives, and is particularly important in mitigating the impact of some types of emergencies on household budgets.

Moving further from the education and social protection systems, it is clear that economic and financial sector policies and legal frameworks (affecting economic growth, labour markets for adults and children, credit and insurance markets) potentially affect both household preferences and budget constraints in relation to education. The overall composition of the public budget partly dictates the level of public subsidy of education costs. Education has to compete with other sectors for public funds, and its share will largely depend on whether it is a high political priority compared with other sectors. This in turn will partly depend on overarching factors such as violence, other emergencies and the broader political situation facing a country.

From this complex array of potential macro-constraints, it is striking that the four country studies highlighted very similar bottlenecks.

Governance and management

All four countries have a policy of decentralisation to delegate decision-making to lower levels of the education administrative system, and to school-based management (SBM) bodies. The aim is to promote decision-making and resource allocation based on local needs, and to strengthen accountability for school performance at lower levels, particularly between schools and communities.

The implementation of the decentralisation policy has been partial in all four countries. Little real authority has been delegated to SBM bodies: key decisions which strongly affect the performance of a school such as teacher appointment are still taken at higher levels. SBM bodies are often not representative of school communities, and many suffer from interference from local political elite. Skills gaps are often identified as a problem—to carry out SBM functions, but also to earn the respect of the teachers. But even where appropriate training has taken place, the incentive for SBM bodies to plan holistically for school development is undermined by a lack of regular discretionary funding.

Above the school level, some powers have been delegated from the centre. In Pakistan, under the 18th amendment to the constitution in 2010, provinces now have full responsibility for education policy and strategic planning, and, below this, districts are largely responsible for implementation. Serious capacity constraints exist at lower levels to carry out the new functions effectively; a problem identified in Bangladesh and India too. Across the region, decentralisation has contributed to an unclear division of responsibilities between various tiers of government and the administrative hierarchy, resulting in overlap, duplication and a basic lack of coordination of functions. All this serves to undermine accountability, ultimately for student achievement, by blurring lines of responsibility and reporting.

Fragmentation characterises the delivery and management system of schooling to varying degrees across the four countries. Different streams of schooling (secular and religious; formal and informal; public and private), with separate management and financing arrangements are common in the three largest countries⁷⁷. There are obvious coordination problems with these arrangements for sector planning and resource prioritisation, and there is concern that, under current circumstances, this perpetuates inequity in learning outcomes for students. Systems for ensuring common standards of school quality across the streams are weak. Private schools which receive no public funds are particularly poorly regulated. For children attending non-formal programmes, the equivalence to the formal system, and future paths into formal schooling, are often ill-defined.

The system of teacher management is a major bottleneck in all countries. The deployment of publically funded teachers does not reflect relative needs of schools, resulting in large variation in PTRs (and class sizes or learning hours). Teacher appointment and deployment tends to be fairly centralised, although

⁷⁷ Sri Lanka has separate streams of national and provincial schools which have different funding mechanisms.

recent decentralisation initiatives have moved this function downwards, notably in Pakistan. Political interference in teacher management is a problem in all the countries, hindering rational deployment. Systems are slow to respond to movement in the teaching body. Pakistan has a large number of head teacher vacancies, for example.

Financial bottlenecks

In a global context, public spending on education as a share of GDP in the three largest countries in South Asia is comparatively low, ranging from 2.2 per cent in Bangladesh and Pakistan, to 3.2 per cent in India). The public financing commitment to education is markedly worse in Sri Lanka, where it accounts for only 2 per cent of GDP—one of the lowest figures in the world. Education commands only 10.1 per cent and 11 per cent of total public spending in Pakistan and India, respectively compared with the international recommendation of 20 per cent of total public expenditure. The rate also remains low in Sri Lanka at 12.9 per cent and Bangladesh at 14.1 per cent (see Table 3.4).

Sri Lanka’s comparatively low public spending and high education performance is well documented. It is rooted in a number of factors which are not necessarily easy or quick to replicate in other countries. First, the profession is able to attract good graduates because teaching remains a prestigious and reasonably well-managed profession which helps to maintain supply, despite the relatively low pay received by teachers (about half or less as a proportion of GDP per capita than teachers in India and Bangladesh (Aturupane, 2009)). Second, the majority of schools cater for primary and secondary education grades which results in economies of scale, and more flexibility in the deployment of teachers between primary and secondary education grades. Third, Sri Lanka is experiencing a demographic dividend such that its secondary school-age population is falling, so that pressure on the education system is falling. Conditions are not the same in the other three countries, and here comparatively low public spending on education is a serious bottleneck.

Table 3.4 Key education expenditure indicators

| | Bangladesh | India | Pakistan | Sri Lanka | South and West Asia | World |
|---|------------|-------|----------|-----------|---------------------|-------|
| | 2010 | 2012 | 2012 | 2012 | 2010 | 2010 |
| Total public exp. on education as % of GNP | 2.3 | 3.2 | 2.2 | 2 | 4.4 | 4.8 |
| Total public exp. on education. as % of total govt. exp. | 14 | 11 | 10.1 | 12.9 | 14.1 | 14 |
| Primary education exp. as % of total govt. education exp. | 44.7 | 24.8 | n/a | 24.2 | n/a | n/a |
| Public exp. per student as % of GDP per capita-primary | 8.9 | 6.9 | n/a | 5.8 | n/a | n/a |

Sources: UIS Online Database accessed 14 January 2014; Regional and World averages are medians from EFA GMR 2012. The GMR use GNP not GDP in the calculation of the first and last indicator; n/a means not available.

The country studies provide more detail on education expenditure trends in the past few years. The overall picture is of stagnating government priority for education in India and Bangladesh, with little movement in the percentage of public expenditure that is devoted to education, as set out in Table 3.4. Although absolute levels of spending per student have risen, high and sustained economic growth has meant that when expressed as a percentage of overall expenditure, public expenditure has not increased. (In India, GDP has grown at a rate of 7 per cent per annum in real terms over the last decade.)

In Pakistan and Sri Lanka, public expenditure commitment to education is declining. Federal and provincial education budgets in Pakistan have been cut in relative terms in recent years. There is also a concern that shifts in the composition of expenditure may well be undermining the effectiveness of education spending in Pakistan. Teachers’ salaries increasingly dominate recurrent spending, leaving little for essential non-salary inputs such as routine maintenance of school infrastructure. Development budget spending is increasingly squeezed by the recurrent budget, making expansion of the public system more difficult to finance. Strong economic growth in Sri Lanka (about 5 per cent per annum in real terms over the last decade) has kept public spending per student roughly constant, but the key education spending ratios (e.g. public spending on education as per cent of GDP) have all fallen noticeably since 2006.

There are some clear weaknesses in the public financial management cycle in each country. Strategic planning is, at best, partly based on evidence of previous years' performance, yet expenditure data is often not easily available in an appropriate format for comprehensive analysis. Often, the budget process does not ensure co-ordination and consistency between recurrent and development budgets. In the countries with multiple external aid partners, the comprehensiveness of the budget has been improving with sector-wide approaches, but off-budget externally funded projects still exist, which undermines the overall prioritisation process for public resources. A lack of consistency between strategic planning and budgeting is evident in India, where significant education commitments made in the 11th five-year plan were not translated into budget provision. Budget execution is hampered by delays—caused by cash rationing in some cases, and administrative complexity in others. Low budget utilisation was cited in the country studies as a problem in India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, particularly affecting the development budget. Ultimately these weaknesses in public financial management systems, matter at school level. A public expenditure tracking survey carried out in Bangladesh (FMRP, 2006) highlighted delays in both the payment of teachers' salaries (in Registered Non-Government Primary Schools), and releases for regular maintenance of schools, as two key problems for school management.

Although the State is primarily responsible for ensuring that free and compulsory education is provided to all children, there are admittedly financial and institutional constraints to such provision. This has led to the mushrooming of different forms of partnerships with non-state partners to fill the gaps in service delivery in the four countries. Some of these partnerships fall under public-private partnerships which generally can be considered as a formal arrangement between a government and the private sector (e.g. corporations, philanthropic entities) which share the responsibility for service provision with the government. Under PPPs, the government leads by providing policies and targets, and the non-state entity delivers the services with private or public funding. This is different from privatization wherein the private provider maintains all control. At the same time, given the mixed results, it is difficult at this stage to conclude whether PPPs do benefit the most disadvantaged groups.⁷⁸

Political bottlenecks

The competition for public resources in the four countries is clearly not being won by the education sector. In Sri Lanka, political priorities include defence, where public spending has grown at twice the pace of education spending in recent years. Moreover the conflict in Sri Lanka, which has political roots, has been a major bottleneck itself, preventing many children in the affected areas from participating in education. Conflict generates demand- and supply-side barriers, for example by disrupting economic activities, displacing families, destroying infrastructure, making the journey to school insecure, and causing psychological trauma. These barriers work together to, at least partly explain, why children from conflict-affected areas (particularly girls and displaced children), and Tamil children (who are more likely to live in these regions than other ethnicities) are profiles of OOSC in Sri Lanka⁷⁹. Violence is also a serious bottleneck in parts of both India and Pakistan—more details are given in chapter six.

3.8 Analytical summary

This summary highlights the barriers which the evidence suggests are most relevant to particular profiles of OOSC, under each dimension looking across the four countries:

- Dimensions 1,2 and 3 cover children who are not participating in formal schooling in three age groups: pre-primary, primary and lower secondary school age; and
- Dimensions 4 and 5 cover children who are attending primary or lower secondary school respectively but at risk of dropping out.

This is a somewhat simplified picture: in reality, profiles and characteristics of out-of-school children often consist of multiple characteristics each associated with a reduced likelihood of attendance. The barriers related to these multiple characteristics, reinforce each other to lead to exclusion. For example, the evidence suggests that certain barriers specifically affect children living and working on the streets, but it is also highly likely that street children are impoverished and thus the barriers related to poverty are relevant too.

⁷⁸ UNESCO and UNICEF, 2013.

⁷⁹ Central Bank Survey, 2005; Kularatne, 2003, De Silva, 2003; Gunawardane and Jayaweera, 2004 as cited in the Sri Lanka OOSCI Study.

Dimension 1: Pre-primary school-age children not in pre-primary education

The dominant barrier to inclusion in pre-schooling is on the supply-side in the three largest countries, although there are demand-side constraints too. There is a serious shortage of pre-school facilities in Bangladesh. Current provision is fragmented across different type of providers and programmes, and favours urban areas. Places in multi-grade classrooms for pre-primary students are insufficient in Pakistan, and there are few stand-alone pre-primary schools. Many rural communities are particularly underserved. Coverage of pre-school programmes is inadequate in India, and there are concerns about the lack of regulation of growing private provision. Coverage of pre-school programmes is high in Sri Lanka, but a lack of affordable early childhood centres in rural areas is still a barrier facing the minority of children who are excluded.

Dimensions 2 and 3: Primary and lower secondary school-age children not in primary or lower secondary school

Poverty profiles of out-of-school children and barriers to school participation

Being from a poor household substantially increases a child's chances of being excluded from school in the three largest countries, and to some extent for lower secondary aged children in Sri Lanka. The main barriers facing poor children are economic demand side, but these are reinforced by other types of barriers. Direct costs of schooling (mainly discretionary costs, not fees) are unaffordable for some, but schooling costs also lead indirectly to exclusion via other mechanisms. In Bangladesh and India, the poor are more likely to self-select into the lowest quality type of schools, partly on the basis of cost. There they face various quality-related supply side barriers, such as poorer infrastructure in Bangladesh, and higher rates of teacher absenteeism in India, which probably increase the likelihood of dropout. The high cost of private tuition, which is pervasive, puts poor children at a further disadvantage in terms of learning if they cannot afford to pay. Direct costs rise substantially as the schooling level increases—this includes higher transport costs because of quantity-related supply side constraints for lower secondary places. Thus schooling gets less affordable the longer children stay in school.

All four country studies highlighted that the opportunity cost associated with child labour rises as children get older. For poor households particularly, this can gradually tip the schooling decision towards exclusion, particularly when additional benefits from schooling in improving future livelihoods are perceived to be minimal (as was reported in some poor communities in urban India). Various studies show that poor child health, often an indirect consequence of being poor, makes it more likely that a child will drop out of school. Other indirect reasons for the exclusion of poor children from schooling are social marginalisation effects in Bangladesh (such as children of migrant women) and the neglect that some poor children suffer in Sri Lanka when their mothers migrate for economic reasons and their fathers (who are equally responsible for their care) and extended family are not able to provide appropriate care.

Gender profiles of out-of-school children and barriers to school participation

Amongst primary school-age children, poor boys in Bangladesh and poor girls in Pakistan are particularly susceptible to exclusion from schooling. The interaction between gender and household wealth suggests that economic barriers may be related to gender or vice-versa. In Bangladesh the costs of secondary schooling for girls is heavily subsidised, and it is plausible that this has negative effects on demand for primary schooling for poor boys⁸⁰. Cultural norms of male children as prospective income earners also help to push poor boys into working, even at an early age. Cultural norms, this time for girls to eventually take up traditional gender roles (child marriage, early childbearing and domestic duties) reduces perceived benefits from educating girls and partly explains why girls are less likely to be in school than boys in Pakistan. The gender gap is wider for poorer children: it is possible that cultural norms which militate against girls' schooling are relatively strong in poorer communities generally, and a shortage of girls' schools limit options particularly for poorer girls.

Older girls in Pakistan and in rural India are more likely to be excluded than their male counterparts, regardless of household wealth. Social aspirations related to child marriage and motherhood for girls clearly plays a part in this. Concerns about the safety of older girls travelling to school, and being outside the home, are reinforced because there is a shortage of secondary school places in both countries, and longer distances to school.

⁸⁰ An assessment of primary education enrolment trends in Bangladesh in 2006 concluded that 'boys... appear to be enrolling in fewer numbers when compared to the beginning of the decade' (Al-Samarrai, 2006).

Barriers to participation in schooling for older boys and girls in Bangladesh appear to be different depending on household wealth. Similar to their younger counterparts, poor older boys are more likely to be excluded than poor older girls. The economic barriers mentioned above are even more relevant for poor older boys: comparatively high direct schooling costs, and rising opportunity costs of work. For wealthy households, older girls are more prone to exclusion than older boys. Clearly economic barriers are less relevant here, and quality-related supply-side barriers may play a part: for example, poor sanitation facilities are a serious problem in Bangladesh and are particularly detrimental to the attendance of teenage girls. On the demand side, gender differences in aspirations can mean that perceived gains from additional schooling of girls are lower than for boys.



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Urban-rural location profiles of out-of-school children and barriers to school participation

Pakistan is the only country where school participation rates are markedly lower in rural areas compared with urban areas. Rural children in Pakistan face more severe supply-side constraints both in terms of quality and quantity, than their urban peers. Children living in Bangladesh's metropolitan slum areas, a pocket of the urban setting, have very high school exclusion rates. This has been attributed largely to the failure of supply of schools to keep up with demand, driven by migration from rural areas.

Selected other profiles of out-of-school children and barriers to school participation

The country analysis reveals relatively high rates of school exclusion related to specific barriers for particular groups of children in each country.

- Children living in Sylhet in Bangladesh are both more likely to be out of school and, if out of school, much more likely to be working than children from other regions. Barriers related to child labour — for example opportunity costs, cultural norms and non-pecuniary gains related to work — would appear to be comparatively important in schooling decisions in Sylhet.
- Indian Muslim children have relatively low rates of school attendance, partly because of supply-side barriers including the medium of instruction not being a child's mother tongue. On the demand-side, sociocultural norms regarding compulsory school attendance are weaker than in other communities.
- Older children from Scheduled Tribes in India are more likely to be out of school than their peers. Some of these children face humiliating social discrimination at school from students and teachers. Some children from Scheduled Tribes also have to cope with being taught in a language which is not their mother tongue, and if they live in remote and hilly communities, the journey to the nearest school is often long or difficult due to a shortage of schools.
- Children living or working on the streets in urban slums face daily survival challenges, and even if economic barriers are alleviated, many will struggle to attend school. They are susceptible to violence and exploitation; and at a more basic level, they are unlikely to possess official documentation required to gain access to some schools. The latter is also a problem for displaced children. In Sri Lanka, children from conflict-affected areas have comparatively high rates of school exclusion as a result of both supply- and demand-side barriers which can be traced to the conflict, such as psychological trauma in children, and damage to infrastructure.

The inflexibility of the education system including with the language of instruction puts other children who could not speak the official language at a disadvantage, making them likely to drop out or not enrol in school at all. Children with disabilities are also among the most excluded and even when they attend school are more at risk of dropping out.

Dimensions 4 and 5: Primary and lower secondary school-age children in school but at risk of dropping out

Once children have entered school, the chances of surviving to the end of the primary cycle are alarmingly low in Bangladesh and Pakistan, and only about 80 per cent in India. The transition between cycles is a particular risk point: roughly one-fifth of those students who survive primary education grades in Bangladesh and India do not make it to lower secondary education grades. Groups with higher risk profiles for dropout include: rural students in Pakistan and India, female students in Pakistan and older female students in Bangladesh. What are the main barriers to staying in school in the three largest countries, and how do these relate to the higher risk profiles?

Households often report financial constraints as the main reason for dropout, signalling that economic demand side barriers are important. But another common response indicates that the preference of the child to leave school drives the decision⁸¹. The overwhelming evidence about the poor quality of schooling seems a likely driver of children's preferences.

Evidence on learning achievement from across the region reveals that rural students tend to do worse in core subjects than their urban peers, and there is marked regional variation in test scores within each country. Several surveys in Bangladesh have found that lower secondary school-age male students outperform their female counterparts on learning achievement tests on average. It is logical to assume that students who struggle to learn in school are more susceptible to dropping out. The quality of schooling makes a major contribution to learning achievement and to other less tangible gains that parents and students expect schooling to bring. Quality schooling is particularly important for some groups of poorer and more vulnerable students who have little support at home and can't afford supplementary materials or private tuition. Some of main impediments to quality schooling in the region are:

- a lack of supporting inputs: poor classroom infrastructure, a lack of water and sanitation facilities (particularly separate toilets for older girls), and inappropriate learning materials;
- ineffective pedagogy which fails to support the weakest learners;
- some schools where the climate is characterised by corporal punishment, and sometimes violent abuse, and discrimination against particular groups of children; and
- overarching conditions which undermine learning: low instructional hours, teacher absenteeism and lateness, and low capacity in the teaching force to deliver effective lessons.

These school-level supply-side barriers are linked to system bottlenecks. The overall public financing of the system is insufficient, and public financial management systems are not geared towards school improvement. Governance and management is over-centralised, and schools have little autonomy over their main human and physical resources.

⁸¹ In household surveys in the three countries the following responses are common: "child is not willing" (PSLSM 2008/09, Pakistan); "Child dislikes school" (CAMPE, 2006 & 2009, Bangladesh); "not interested in studies" (NFHS 3, 2005/06, India).

4. Policies and strategies to reduce exclusion from schooling

4.1 Introduction

This chapter summarises the main interventions that government and non-governmental partners have put in place to address the main barriers to schooling identified in the previous chapter. It highlights some of the key successes, where there is evaluation evidence, and also points out the main gaps — where interventions have been unsuccessful or little has been tried.

The chapter starts by describing the main thrust of current education policy (from pre-school to lower secondary stage) across the countries. It then discusses programmes and legislation aimed at addressing each group of barriers in turn: socio-cultural demand, economic demand, school-level supply, and bottlenecks. These programmes are broad in scope, encompassing interventions from the education, health, social care, and social protection sectors. The chapter concludes with an analytical summary.

4.2 Policy context

Overall policy direction

All four countries recognise the fundamental right of children to education and have ratified the CRC. Each has a policy of free, compulsory education over part, or all, of the basic education cycle. The *compulsory* education policy applies to primary age children in Bangladesh and Pakistan, and primary and lower-secondary age children in India and Sri Lanka. This is backed by legal guarantee in Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, and in Pakistan⁸². School fees have been abolished for primary and lower secondary age children in India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Bangladesh has also signalled its intention to increase the scope of its compulsory education policy to cover lower secondary age children; indeed girls have been exempt from lower secondary fees for many years. Sri Lanka is also on the brink of a policy change to bring children aged 14 to 16 years (upper secondary) into compulsory schooling. For younger children, expanding participation in pre-schooling, within a framework of early childhood care and development, is a clear policy intention in all of the countries. Education system information is summarised in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Education system information by country

| | Official Primary School Entry Age | Duration of Primary Education | Compulsory Education Age Coverage | Compulsory Education includes Lower Secondary? | Legal Guarantee of Free Education |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| Afghanistan ¹ | 7 | 6 | 7-15 | Yes | Yes |
| Bangladesh ¹ | 6 | 5 | 6-10 | No | Yes |
| Bhutan ¹ | 6 | 7 | ... | ... | Yes |
| India ¹ | 6 | 5 | 6-10 | Yes | Yes |
| Maldives | 6 | 7 | 6-12 | Yes | Yes |
| Nepal ¹ | 5 | 5 | 5-10 | No | Yes |
| Pakistan | 5 | 5 | 5-16 | No | Yes |
| Sri Lanka ² | 5 | 5 | 5-14 | Yes | No |

Notes: 1) Some primary school fees continue to be charged despite the legal guarantee of free education; 2) Some information on compulsory education comes from the reports under the United Nations Human rights Treaties. Source: 2010 EFA Global Monitoring Report except for Pakistan which is from the National Education Policy 2009 and the 18th Amendment of the Constitution.

⁸² Compulsory primary education throughout Pakistan is mandated under the National Education Act of 2009 and Article 25a of the 18th Amendment of the Constitution.

The other major policy, common across the countries, is decentralisation of authority and accountability in the education system. The degree of decentralisation intended varies across the countries, but some have recently passed major pieces of legislation to this effect (e.g. Pakistan's 18th Amendment to the constitution, 2010).

Programmes and legislation discussed in this chapter

Policy intentions are not always translated into action. Even legally binding policies can falter on implementation, particularly where there is no credible enforcement mechanism. For this reason, this chapter will focus on programmes and interventions, and mention key legislation as the strongest signal of intent. There is no attempt to provide a comprehensive list of programmes, but to concentrate on those that the country studies have identified as having major coverage or focus on particular groups of children highlighted in the profiles. The details of these programmes are found in the country studies. There are two important points to note about the analysis which follows:

- *Holistic programmes*: programmes which target a particular group of excluded children tend to contain a range of interventions to address different types of barriers simultaneously. To avoid excessive repetition, these programmes are discussed in the barrier section related to the main thrust of the intervention (often a supply-side in response to demand-side barrier—see next bullet).
- *Interaction of demand-side barriers and supply-side responses*: the demand for schooling is affected by the characteristics of supply. One implication of this is that certain demand-side barriers can be addressed using a supply-side response. For example, parents who are concerned about the safety of their daughters, primarily for cultural reasons, may be willing to send a girl to school if it is single-sex and has female teachers.

4.3 Programmes and legislation to address socio-cultural demand-side barriers

Overview

Programmes and legislation with roots in education, health, labour, and child protection sectors, have been used in the past decade to try to combat socio-cultural barriers to participation in education. Table 4.2 presents an overview of the main type of programmes and related legislation. Community mobilisation campaigns, and direct involvement of community bodies, have been key interventions aimed at fostering positive attitudes to education and changing cultural norms (related to gender roles and tolerance of child labour). Considerable effort has been devoted to trying to stop early marriage of young girls, including reproductive health programmes, and financial incentives to households conditional on their children staying in school. Apart from specific awareness programmes designed to change attitudes to child labour (which would only be effective when the socio-cultural – and not the economic – barriers to schooling are binding), there has been a proliferation of legislation prohibiting various forms of child labour—partly driven by international activity in this area. Child protection programmes provide care and welfare services for children deprived of a safe family environment, including street children and children orphaned by natural disasters.

Selected successful interventions

The **Meena Communication Initiative (MCI) in Bangladesh** (part of a regional initiative) is a community mobilisation intervention focused on the rights, understanding, life skills and practices of the girl child. Through popular entertainment, centred on a nine year old South Asian girl called Meena and her family and village community, it conveys behavioural development messages. One of the aims of the initiative is to bring about increased awareness and behaviour change related to the rights and benefits of schooling for girls. An internal evaluation of the initiative found “evidence of changes in practices that mirrored the Meena messages”. It concluded that that “the MCI has the potential to communicate children’s rights, particularly girls’ rights...and in so doing, to create awareness, promote acquisition of life skills, and encourage change in life skills practices” (UNICEF, 2004).

India’s Mahila Samakhya (MS) was launched in 1988 to empower women in rural areas, from socially and economically marginalized groups to demand for education. The initiative aims to challenge the barriers of the traditional female role that often leads girls to drop out of school in favour of doing household chores such as taking care of their siblings. Under MS, education is seen as more than just attaining basic literacy skills but rather equipping women with critical analytical, problem-solving and other

life skills. A key strategy under MS is to organize and mobilize women into sanghas (collectives) to allow poor and marginalized women to overcome barriers in articulating their problems with the support of other women. MS thus strengthens the capacities of these women to effectively participate in, and support, village-level educational processes. MS is now implemented in 10 states spread over 121 districts. According to the recent JRMs in 2008, 2009 and 2010-11, MS has been quite successful in empowering women (India OOSCI Study).

In **Sri Lanka**, the revival of **Compulsory Education Committees (CEC)**⁸³ has been credited with an increase in enrolment of children in NFE programmes of several thousand. CECs were originally established under compulsory education regulations issued at the end of 1997, aiming to implement the compulsory education regulations through awareness-raising⁸⁴. CECs are school-level committees with a mandate to ensure enrolment and to monitor attendance of students. By 2000, the majority of these committees were inoperative, but they were given new impetus in 2006 under the Education Sector Development Framework and Programme (ESDFP) with the result that about half are now active (Sri Lanka OOSCI Study).



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The Female Secondary School Stipend Programmes (FSSPs) in Bangladesh aim to increase female enrolment and concurrently to delay the age of marriage for girls — there is an explicit condition that girls must remain unmarried in order to receive the stipend.⁸⁵ The evidence on the effect of FSPs on delaying marriage is not conclusive. A World Bank report from 2002 (cited in Schurmann, 2009) presents evidence that the oldest FSSP (which started in 1982) led to a fall in early marriage rates (and that this effect was stronger for girls aged 13-15 years). There is also qualitative data which suggest that the stipend does enter into parents' decision making and calculations of when to have their daughters married. But looking overall, the decline in early marriage rates is only modest (the proportion of women aged 20-24 years who were married by the age of 18 fell from 73 per cent in 1993-94 to 66 per cent in 2007 (DHS data cited in NIRPORT et al., 2009 as cited in the Bangladesh OOSCI Study). It is difficult to robustly assess how much of this downward movement can be attributed to FSSPs. Schurmann (2009) suggests that it may take some time for the full effect of FSSPs on child marriage to become apparent, partly because of the influx of first-generation learners.

The Pakistan Lady Health Worker Programme (LHWP) is a nationwide community health intervention which aims to increase awareness of reproductive health, and rights to and benefits of contraception. An independent qualitative evaluation of the LHWP looked at the unanticipated benefits of this programme for the community health workers themselves, their families and their communities. Results showed a positive effect on women's social and economic empowerment, which was reflected in their bargaining power in the household and their ability to make decisions about school attendance and delaying marriage for their children (OPM, 2009).

Some key gaps in programmes and legislation

For some of the socio-economic barriers to schooling discussed in the previous chapter, there appear to be only a small number of promising interventions in place. The gaps include the following:

⁸³ Previously Compulsory Attendance Committees.

⁸⁴ Sri Lanka Gazette Extra Ordinary Notification No.1003/5 dated 25 November 1997.

⁸⁵ Some phases of this project – running since 1994 – have included public awareness objectives and activities as well (see Schurmann 2009 for more details).

- Efforts to change cultural attitudes to child marriage for girls in Pakistan need to be strengthened, including further legislation and stricter enforcement.
- Actions to eliminate discriminatory employment practices affecting minority communities in India. Wider employment opportunities would be expected to increase perceived (and actual) benefits from sending children from minority communities to school.

Table 4.2 Programmes and legislation to address socio-cultural barriers to participation

| Socio-cultural demand-side barrier | |
|---|--|
| Country | Types of Programmes/Interventions |
| Parental and children's attitudes to schooling: low perceived gains from education | |
| Sri Lanka | Community mobilisation (e.g. Community Awareness Pilot Programme; Programmes for parents of children with disabilities); Community bodies (e.g. Compulsory Attendance Committees). |
| India | Community mobilisation. <i>Legislation: Person with Disabilities Act 1995 (includes requirement to provide free education in an appropriate environment for all children with disabilities up to age of 18 years)</i> |
| Pakistan | Community mobilisation (e.g. component of Rural Support Programmes) |
| Cultural norms for girls: traditional gender roles (child marriage, childbearing, domestic duties); security concerns outside home | |
| Bangladesh | Community mobilisation (e.g. Meena Campaign); Stipend programme conditions (e.g. secondary school girls must remain unmarried). <i>Legislation banning child marriage</i> |
| India | Reproductive health (e.g. PRACHAR); Community mobilisation (e.g. DISHA programmes); Community bodies (e.g. participation of women in school committees) |
| Pakistan | Reproductive health (e.g. Lady Health Worker Programme). <i>Legislation: Child Marriage Restraint Act 1929; International Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women</i> |
| Sri Lanka | Legislation: Amendment to Marriage Ordinance 1995 to raise minimum age to 18 years (not applicable to Muslim community) |
| Neglect and abuse of children | |
| Bangladesh | CL Programmes ¹ (e.g. Urban Informal Economy Project). <i>Legislation: UN CRC; ILO Convention on Worst form of Child Labour, 2001; Labour law on minimum age for admission to work, 2006</i> |
| India | CL Programmes ¹ (e.g. National Child Labour Project). <i>Legislation: Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation Act), 1986 (children less than 14 years engaged in hazardous work)</i> |
| Pakistan | CL Programmes ¹ . <i>Legislation: UN CRC; ILO Convention on Minimum Age of Employment, 2006; ILO Convention on Worst form of Child Labour, 2001</i> |
| Sri Lanka | Enforcement of labour legislation (by local labour, probation and child care officers & police). <i>Legislation: UN CRC; ILO Convention on Minimum Age of Employment, 2000; ILO Convention on Worst form of Child Labour, 2001; Amendments to Empowerment of Women, Young Persons & Children Act 1956.</i> |
| Bangladesh | Child protection programmes (e.g. Protection of Children at Risk --social services for -children living or working on the streets; Amader Shishu project conditional family-based care to orphans) |
| India | Legislation: Commission for Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005 |
| Pakistan | Legislation against trafficking of young children |
| Sri Lanka | Legislation establishing National Child Protection Authority (includes remit on enforcing compulsory education), 1998 |

Notes: (1) Child labour programmes tend to be holistic encompassing demand- and supply-side interventions. It is not clear to what extent these programmes have specific interventions to address cultural norms related to child labour. The UIE project in Bangladesh had a small-scale advocacy and awareness raising component. The NCLP in India had a component on family and community awareness on harm caused by child labour.

4.4 Programmes and legislation to address economic demand-side barriers

Overview

Poverty is at the root of multiple, often reinforcing, barriers to participation in schooling; Table 4.3 gives an overview of the type of programmes in the region which aim to mitigate these barriers. There are large-scale poverty alleviation programmes (PAPs) in place in all four countries. These generally take the form of social transfers (in cash or kind, and conditional or unconditional) or micro-credit. PAPs tend to be targeted at vulnerable population groups or households which become vulnerable following an emergency situation. The level of coverage varies, but it is strikingly high in some cases (for example the Sri Lanka Samurdhi programme covers 35–40 per cent of the population; the India National Rural Employment Guarantee Act operates in rural areas in all states, and is the largest public works programme in the world⁸⁶).

With the aim of offsetting the direct costs of schooling, Bangladesh and Pakistan have various large-scale cash transfer programmes which are conditional on school attendance (as well as other conditions linked to success in school). An education voucher programme in Pakistan subsidises private sector schooling for poor families. On a smaller-scale, there are programmes which target subsidies at groups of children who incur additional direct schooling costs (for example, children with disabilities), and child labourers who face high opportunity costs. Scholarships, which exempt children from some or all direct schooling costs, are another mechanism for supporting selected groups of children.

Major efforts to drive down the direct cost of schooling for households include fee abolition, free textbooks, free uniforms, and transport subsidies. Large-scale programmes of school feeding, and take-home rations, aim to improve child health and nutrition and increase school attendance. Some countries also have school health programmes in place.

Selected successful interventions

The **Challenging the Frontiers of Poverty Reduction — Targeting the Ultra Poor (CFPR—TUP)** programme in **Bangladesh** provides households with food transfers, social awareness, health services and technical training, as a precursor to asset transfers to support long-term income-generation. It was developed by BRAC and has covered about a million households. The selection process is intensive, involving participatory rural appraisal techniques to identify the poorest households. An evaluation of the second phase of the programme, based on a randomised trial, found sizeable positive effects on food security, income and wealth (and is therefore at least partially successful), but crucially was unable to find evidence of any impact on school enrolment (reported on in Das and Shams, 2011).

Some of the schooling conditional cash transfer (CCT) schemes in Bangladesh and Pakistan have demonstrated positive effects on participation. The **Punjab CCT scheme** for rural lower secondary school-age girls is reported to have increased enrolment and reduced dropout rates for girls (Chadhury and Parajuli, 2008). The **Female Secondary School Stipend** programmes in **Bangladesh** are widely considered to have played a substantial part in the jump in female secondary school enrolment from about 1 million in 1991 to over 4 million by 2006. A quantitative impact assessment found that the probability of enrolment of girls during the first year of implementation rose by 12 percentage points (Khandker et al., 2003 as cited in the Bangladesh OOSCI Study). Other analysts have pointed out the difficulty of separating the effects of the stipend programmes from the abolition of tuition fees for lower secondary girls which took place in 1990 (World Bank, 2003).

Some 31,000 poor households located in urban slum areas of **Punjab** are the beneficiaries of the **Punjab Education Foundation (PEF) Education Voucher Scheme (EVS)**. Vouchers are redeemable against tuition payments at participating private schools. It is administered by the PEF (an autonomous body headed by a board of directors under a public–private partnership initiative⁸⁷) who also regulate the participating private schools. Participating schools are directly accountable to parents who can transfer their children if they are not satisfied. A report listing the achievements of the EVS states that enrolment in

⁸⁶ The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act is the flagship poverty reduction scheme in rural India, guaranteeing 100 days of work at minimum wages to each household that demands it. This should support household incomes and improve adult labour market conditions as firms need to compete with the government wages. This should in theory reduce the need for children to work and improve their school attendance. There is no robust evaluation evidence available yet.

⁸⁷ The Punjab Education Foundation was established through the Punjab Education Foundation Act of 1991 by the Punjab Assembly. It aims to support the efforts of private schools to provide education to the poor.

partner schools has risen sharply — the implicit assumption being that at least some of these children would not otherwise have been able to attend school (Malik, 2010).

The advent of **fee free education** in 1945 in **Sri Lanka**, combined with a raft of measures over the decades to reduce the direct costs of schooling (**free textbooks and uniforms**, and **subsidised transport**), has been widely credited as a key driving force behind the decline in the number of non-school going children from 68 per cent in 1940 to 8 per cent in 2004 (figures from ESDFP, 2007) although given this timespan, it is likely there are other factors at play.

A Supreme Court directive in 2001 requires all states and Union Territories in **India** to provide a **cooked mid-day meal (MDM)** for all primary school children. By 2006-07, 120 million children were benefiting from the MDM intervention. Various independent evaluation studies of MDM in different states have found evidence of its positive effect on enrolment and attendance rates. Several studies have found the effect to be larger for girls and for children from Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes (Pratichi Trust, 2005 (West Bengal); Jyotsna et al., 2005 (Madhya Pradesh)).

Some key gaps

A fairly comprehensive set of interventions aimed at mitigating economic barriers to schooling are in place. There are gaps, but perhaps more importantly, evaluation studies have shown that there is considerable scope for improving the effectiveness of some of the existing large-scale and costly programmes. The Primary Education Stipend Programme (PESP) in Bangladesh is a prime example. PESP covers about 4.8 million students (over a quarter of children enrolled in formal primary education schools), and is one of the most expensive development budget programmes. It is a CCT programme, conditional on school attendance and examination performance, targeted at poor households. An evaluation, based on a longitudinal survey, found no evidence of impact on primary education enrolment. It put this down to poor targeting and the declining value of the cash transfer over time (Baulch, 2011). Various analysts have proposed relatively simple measures to improve the targeting of the programme.

While there is some evidence that poverty alleviation programmes improve school attendance (see above but also more evidence from Latin America), more research is needed to confirm this works in South Asia and to understand why and whether conditionality is needed to raise school participation⁸⁸. If the latter turns out to be true, then this has implications for the design of poverty implementation programmes if improved social outcomes are part of the goal. More generally, a holistic approach to the design and implementation of social protection and education interventions would bring more clarity in cross-sectoral objectives and would likely result in gains in targeting and effectiveness.

There are few programmes specifically designed to mitigate the opportunity cost of schooling for child labourers. One innovative approach might be to target this group with a CCT.

Providing regular, timely and flexible direct cash grants to schools (as has been attempted in several countries) to pay for running costs, would reduce the need for schools to levy additional (non-fee) charges on parents. The possibility of varying the level of the public subsidy according to community poverty levels is an approach that has served to narrow differences in total spending on education (public and private) in some countries⁸⁹.

There are some pioneering small-scale programmes, some implemented by non-government actors, which are improving the participation of vulnerable groups of children in schooling. In order to make inroads into supporting the large number of vulnerable children who are currently excluded, these type of innovative approaches are needed on a larger scale.

Amongst the gaps that do exist are:

- Prominent social welfare programmes targeted at specific groups of neglected children in Pakistan need to be strengthened to support child protection legislation. Nonetheless, the Benazir Income

⁸⁸ To conduct a rigorous evaluation of the impact of conditionality on school attendance, a randomised evaluation design would be needed to compare households receiving conditional cash transfers with those receiving unconditional cash transfers.

⁸⁹ For example, South Africa has a system whereby schools are grouped into poverty quintiles, based on the poverty status of their catchment communities. Schools in the lower quintiles receive much higher level of public non-salary funding than schools in the richer quintiles.

Support Program (BISP) has taken some important steps in reaching out to the poorest children from the most remote districts of every province in the country, and bringing them (back) to school through financial support covering the cost of textbooks, uniforms and stationery.

- Social welfare interventions targeted at Sri Lankan children from families where the mother has migrated abroad for work, and the father and extended family are unable or unwilling to provide appropriate care.

Table 4.3 Programmes and legislation to address economic barriers to participation

| Economic demand-side barrier | |
|--|--|
| Country | Types of Programmes/Interventions |
| Poverty (transient and persistent) & Credit Market Failures | |
| Bangladesh | Cash transfers (e.g. Employment Generation Programme for Hard-Core Poor); In-kind transfers (Food transfers e.g. Vulnerable Group Development; Food for Work; Asset transfers e.g. Challenging the Frontiers of Poverty Reduction); Microcredit programmes |
| India | Cash transfers (e.g. National Family Benefit Scheme; National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme); In-kind transfers (e.g. Targeted Public Distribution System) |
| Pakistan | Cash transfers (e.g. Benazir Income Support Programme; Watan Card Scheme (flood-affected areas); Zakat Programme); Microcredit programmes (e.g. Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund); Multi-intervention (e.g. Rural Support Programmes) |
| Sri Lanka | Cash transfers (e.g. Samurdhi Poverty Alleviation Programme); In-kind transfers |
| Direct costs of schooling (private costs) | |
| Bangladesh | Fee abolition (primary & female lower secondary students); Free textbooks (primary); Stipend/CCT ¹ programmes (e.g. Primary Education Stipend Programme, Female Secondary Student Stipend Projects, Reaching Out-of-School Children (ROSC) stipend component) |
| India | Fee abolition (primary & lower secondary students); Free textbooks (primary & lower secondary); Free uniforms; Scholarships for disadvantaged groups (girls, Muslim children; ST/SC); Financial support for children with disabilities at attend mainstream schools (e.g. IED allowances for uniforms, transport etc.) |
| Pakistan | Fee abolition (all levels of schooling); Free textbooks (govt schools); Stipend/CCT programmes (e.g. Punjab CCT (lower secondary girls), Sindh Stipend Scheme (lower secondary girls), Sindh Differential Stipends Programme, Zakat stipends); Education vouchers (e.g. Punjab EVS (urban slums)) |
| Sri Lanka | Fee abolition (all levels of schooling); Free textbooks; Free uniforms; Subsidised transport to schools; |
| Opportunity cost of schooling for child wage labourers | |
| Pakistan | Compensation for lost earnings (e.g. Bait-ul-Mal scheme: stipend, clothing, footwear for former CLs attending National Centres for Rehabilitation of Child Labour) |
| Child health and nutrition | |
| Bangladesh | School feeding (e.g. Primary School Feeding Programme; BEHTRUWC ² 'school' feeding component (non-formal centres)) |
| India | School feeding (e.g. mid-day meal scheme (MMS)); School health services (e.g. annual deworming & vitamin supplementation); Pre-school age health & nutrition interventions (e.g. Integrated Child Development Services) |
| Pakistan | School feeding (e.g. Food for Education Programme (girls' schools), Tawana Pakistan Programme (primary school-age girls), High energy biscuits (flood-affected areas)) |
| Sri Lanka | School feeding (Free school meals for poor children); School health services (e.g. System of regular medical inspections for children in various grades; Provision of iron foliate to children in Grades 7-10 for 6 months in poor communities); Free health care in extensive network of public clinics/ hospitals |

Notes: (1) CCT means conditional cash transfer; (2) BEHTRUWC means Basic Education for Hard to Reach Urban Working Children



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4.5 Programmes and legislation to address school-level supply-side barriers

Overview

Efforts to expand the supply of formal school places centre on large-scale construction of ‘standard’ schools, complemented by programmes to deliver formal schooling using alternative models. Alternative schools are typically designed with a particular target group of marginalised children in mind. Single-sex residential schools, for example in India, are intended to attract girls from Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Castes. Policies to mainstream children with disabilities have also led to adaptations in formal school infrastructure. Various teacher incentive and recruitment schemes have been put in place to try to address geographical inequalities in teacher distribution, to attract teachers from under-represented groups, and to improve teacher attendance. Non-formal basic education programmes run by NGOs are widespread in some countries, and provide innovative and flexible learning programmes in many cases. Government programmes of NFE for particular vulnerable groups of children (for example child labourers) are also in place, but on a smaller scale. Increasingly, where appropriate, there is equivalency between non-formal programmes and the formal system, making it possible for NFE graduates to join for the first time the formal education system or re-enter for those who have dropped out. Public private partnerships (PPPs) are another tool for alleviating supply constraints. The most common type of PPP is a public subsidy to directly support private provision — this forms the backbone of the secondary education delivery system in Bangladesh, for example. Interventions to encourage Madrasahs to deliver core curriculum subjects are another example of PPPs which can increase the supply of formal schooling places. In Pakistan, a local NGO – the Cooperation for Advancement, Rehabilitation and Education – manages public schools in Lahore, an example of private management of public schools. In India, the RTE has a provision mandating all schools managed by the private sector to allot at least 25 per cent of the total admissions to children from disadvantaged groups.⁹⁰

At the heart of efforts to improve the quality of schooling are interventions designed to improve the teaching and learning process in the classroom. Learning programmes based on child-centred pedagogy are being implemented on a variable scale in the four countries. There are also a handful of programmes

⁹⁰ UNESCO and UNICEF, 2013.

which promote multilingual teaching in an attempt to reach children whose first language is not the medium of instruction. Curriculum and assessment reforms have taken place in all the countries to some extent. Linked to this, standard educational materials have been revised; often with the explicit remit to make materials more inclusive (gender sensitive, multi-lingual, for example). The other significant measure to improve supporting inputs have been water and sanitation interventions, covering construction (safe water sources, separate toilets for girls) and sometimes a hygiene education component.

Moving beyond inputs, corporal punishment is a serious barrier to schooling in all of the countries, and is prohibited by law in India with legislation at various stages in the other countries. Various directives have been issued to schools and local administrators in an attempt to crack down on these practices. Instructional time for primary school students is exceptionally low in double-shift schools (the majority) in Bangladesh. Interventions to provide more single-shift places attempt to address this. There appears to be a fairly similar approach to improving teacher capability in the four countries. Regular in-service programmes are delivered to teachers at a local level, supported by local resource centres. Inclusive educational practice has been a key theme of training programmes. India has introduced a more carefully designed entry test for prospective teachers to try to better assess aptitude for teaching, as a means of improving the quality of the teaching body over time.

Some key successes

Under the **construction component of Primary Education Development Programme II (PEDP II) in Bangladesh**, more than 40,000 classrooms were built between 2004 and 2011, increasing the stock of formal school classrooms by almost one quarter (DPE, 2011). In **India**, large-scale **construction under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)**⁹¹ has contributed to growth in the number of primary and lower secondary schools of 30 per cent and 66 per cent, respectively between the mid-1990s and the mid-2000s. Private sector provision has also been a major driver of the observed growth in supply.

India has also had considerable success in improving the **representation of female teachers and teachers from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes communities**. Part of this movement can be attributed to the widespread recruitment of **para teachers** on local contracts, under different terms and conditions to civil service teachers. There is mixed evidence on the performance of para teachers, but widespread agreement that they have helped to ease teacher shortages and bring down pupil-teacher ratios. Some studies have found para teachers to be more committed and less absent than their regular counterparts (SSA, 2009 as cited in the India OOSCI study).

In **Seva Mandir single-teacher schools in rural Udaipur in India**, a pioneering incentive programme to reduce teacher absenteeism was tested. Schools were randomly assigned to a monitoring and incentive programme using digital cameras with a date and time stamp. Teachers were instructed to have their picture taken each day with students and were paid only when the cameras recorded them present. The evaluation found that the camera programme improved teacher attendance and raised test scores, without having a significantly negative impact on teacher morale and motivation (that might result from feeling monitored) (MIT AJPAL, 2008).

Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBVs) in India are an example of an alternative formal schooling model which caters for a particular group of vulnerable children. KGBVs are lower secondary schools, located in rural areas with high rates of non-attendance, with a mandate to enrol out-of-school girls. They are explicitly designed to mitigate some of the demand-side barriers which prevent girls, especially those from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and Muslim communities, from attending school. As a means of addressing concerns about girls' safety, they are single-sex and have residential facilities for a proportion of their students. The programme has a diverse curriculum (including dance, music, theatre, and karate) to attract and interest girls. The Government of India has carried out a national evaluation of KGBV in two rounds in 2007 and 2008 in 12 states⁹². Its assessment is that KGBVs have

⁹¹ The SSA is Government of India's flagship programme for achievement of Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE) in a time bound manner, as mandated by the 86th amendment to the Constitution of India that makes free and compulsory Education to the Children of 6-14 years age group, a Fundamental Right. SSA seeks to provide quality elementary education including life skills. SSA has a special focus on girl's education and children with special needs. SSA as a programme officially commenced in 2000-01 but its roots date back to 1993-94 when the District Primary Education Programme was launched to achieve UEE (see <http://ssa.nic.in/>).

⁹² National Evaluation of KGBV, February 2007 (see SSA Website)

successfully drawn in out-of-school girls, particularly those from ST and SC communities. The most recent estimates suggest that nearly 200,000 girls in 27 states/Union territories were enrolled in 2,565 KGBVs (Planning Commission, 2011).

The state of **Tamil Nadu in India** has pioneered a programme of **Activity Based Learning (ABL)** to improve the quality of learning in the classroom. ABL is based on pedagogy of graded learning materials, self-paced learning and frequent assessment by student and teacher. Introduced on a small scale in 13 urban schools in 2003, it has now been implemented all over the state (Little, 2010). A research mission by a joint World Bank and European Commission team to observe ABL in action reached a positive verdict. The team reported that 'the use of the ABL methodology has...constituted a paradigm shift in the process of learning in the classrooms'⁹³.

Children from tribal communities in **Andhra Pradesh in India** are benefiting from a **Multi-lingual education programme (MLE)** operating in about 2,500 schools. Over time children are exposed to instruction in four languages: their first language, a second language (the state's medium of instruction), English and Sanskrit. The key principle is that children attain key competencies in their first language before the second language is introduced, orally at first. MLE materials support the programme. Reviews of MLE conducted by the Tribal Cultural Research and Training Institute and SSA during the mid-2000s found that students were actively engaged in learning, and generally performed well in achieving literacy and numeracy competencies. Student attendance and punctuality also increased⁹⁴.

In **Punjab, Pakistan**, a **Child-Friendly School (CFS)** programme has supported 300 government schools to create a supportive and child-orientated environment with the intention of improving primary education enrolment and retention, especially for girls. CFS interventions are holistic covering child health and living, child safety and protection, child-centred learning, teacher professional development, school management and planning, student participation and community engagement in school improvement. An internal evaluation of schools under the programme found that enrolment had risen in these schools, partly as a result of efforts by school councils to persuade out-of-school children to attend school. Learning achievement was also found to be higher in child-friendly schools compared with a group of schools not under the programme, but is not clear if the latter is a robust control group. Evidence based on school self-assessment indicators shows the first phase of participating schools performing well (UNICEF, 2008).

A **CFS** initiative also operates in **Sri Lanka**. A CFS pilot started in 2002 in 125 schools in the North Western Province, and was scaled up to cover 1,400 schools (400,000 students) during the first five years. The core principles of the programme are similar to the Punjab CFSs described above, but the interventions are slightly different. Sri Lankan CFSs received support for water and sanitation infrastructure, for example. No robust evaluation evidence is available on child-friendly schools, but there are many documented examples of positive change. According to an internal review: 'most child-friendly schools made visible improvements in their school environment and facilities, and many schools report improvements in attendance; relationships between children and adults; and involvement of parents and communities in the life and well-being of the school' (UNICEF, 2009a). Following concerns about the limited scope and sustainability of the CFS initiative, the CFS approach has been integrated into the national strategy for school development Sri Lanka (ESDFP).

Pakistan established a **Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) coalition** in 2003. It is coordinated by the Pakistan Institute for Environment-Development Action Research, and works closely with the Ministry of Environment, provincial and local governments, international agencies, civil society organizations, and 166 partner schools across Pakistan. The school programme includes education, training and research activities, and is underpinned by advocacy and policy development at national and provincial level. The coalition claims positive results in WASH schools: improved health, leading to less absenteeism among children. It puts this down to well-maintained filter water dispensers, functioning and clean school toilets, and more hygienically managed school canteens⁹⁵.

⁹³ See www.ssa.tn.nic.in/Docu/World_Bank_Team%20_Report.pdf last accessed 14 January 2014.

⁹⁴ National Multilingual Education Resource Consortium, India see www.nmrc-jnu.org/nmrc_img/Andhra%20Pradesh-%20MLE%20status%20report.pdf last accessed 14 January 2014.

⁹⁵ Water Supply & Sanitation Collaborative Council see www.wsscc.org/countries/asia/pakistan/wash-coalition-overview



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Key gaps

There are clearly a number of gaps in addressing supply side constraints, since few prominent interventions exist to address important barriers. However, the apparent lack of efficacy of some of the existing programmes needs attention too.

Interventions to eliminate corporal punishment are lacking: despite the prohibition by law of corporal punishment in India, and legislation at various stages in the other countries, efforts largely consist of issuing official directives, and some small-scale enforcement. There is a clear absence of effective intervention on a scale commensurate with the problem, particularly with respect to applying other forms of effective positive reinforcement.

There are a range of gaps relating to teacher training, deployment and performance. First, strikingly little of the evidence gathered to date shows that the regular system of pre- and in-service training of teachers is having a positive impact on teaching and learning processes in the classroom. Second, some incentive schemes and contractual changes have demonstrated success in improving teacher deployment, but geographical inequality in the distribution of teachers remains a major problem in all four countries.

Third, some innovative incentive schemes have led to reduced teacher absenteeism, but further research is needed to establish if such specific interventions are likely to be scalable and sustainable. The underlying principle of having an objective monitoring system, which is not mediated by supervisors that may also suffer from problems of management and motivation and is linked to clear credible incentives for teachers, merits wider consideration. Different types of reforms are needed to deal with some of the structural features of the system which lead to high rates of officially sanctioned teacher absence in some countries.

There are some excellent examples of effective learning programmes with a child-centred pedagogy in all four countries, but a typical student does not experience this type of learning experience at present. The transformation of the process of teaching and learning system-wide remains a challenge.

There are many examples where reforms in curriculum and assessment have been seriously stalled or have not been as effective as intended. There are numerous reasons, but one common problem appears to be a failure to sequence reforms with other related processes, including teacher education and educational materials development.

Adapting the provision of formal education to address some of the prominent demand-side barriers to schooling for vulnerable groups of OOSC, has proved to be a successful approach in various programmes in the four countries. The challenge is to scale-up this type of tailored provision of formal schooling in a cost-effective way, to reach many more out-of-school children.

Table 4.4 Programmes and legislation to address school-level supply-side barriers to participation

| School-level supply-side barrier | |
|---|---|
| Country | Types of Programmes/Interventions |
| Overall supply & distribution of school places | |
| Bangladesh | School construction (e.g. PEDP II civil works; Secondary school civil works); Alternative school places (e.g. ROSC Ananda; Pre-primary para centres); NFE places (Government: e.g. BEHTRUWC, MoLE Child labour programmes; Non-government: e.g. BRAC, GSS; DAM; FIVDB, UCEP); PPPs (e.g. Mainstreaming madrasahs) |
| India | School construction (e.g. SSA civil works); Alternative school places (e.g. EGS schools; KGBV; MPEGEL); Mainstreaming children with disabilities (e.g. IED adaptation of infrastructure); Teacher recruitment shift towards local, female, SC/ST teachers (e.g. Para-teachers); NFE places (Government: e.g. AIE centres; NCLP); PPPs (e.g. IDMI; SPQEM (mainstreaming madrasahs)); Pre-school places (e.g. ICDS) |
| Pakistan | School construction (e.g. Secondary girls' schools in Punjab and Sindh); Teacher incentives and recruitment (e.g. programmes to encourage females/rural posting in Balochistan, KP, Sindh; Contract teachers); NFE places (Government e.g. Co-ed NCHD feeder schools; Non-government programmes); PPPs (e.g. Punjab and Sindh Education Foundations; Rural Support Programmes); Pre-school places (e.g. Sindh Early Learning) |
| Sri Lanka | School construction (e.g. Isuru secondary schools in 100 poorest divisions); Mainstreaming children with disabilities (e.g. adaptation of infrastructure, provision of specialised equipment & educational materials); NFE places (e.g. Second chance programmes for OOSC) |
| Supporting inputs | |
| Bangladesh | Water, sanitation & hygiene (e.g. PEDP II; Sanitation, Hygiene, Education and Water Supply in Bangladesh or SHEWA-B); Educational materials (e.g. PEDP II teaching aids; New textbooks each year for all primary students; MLE materials; Secondary textbook reform). |
| India | Water, sanitation & hygiene (e.g. SSA civil works; SSHE; Separate toilets for girls); Educational materials (e.g. Teacher allowance for materials; District grants for computer-aided learning; Textbooks in tribal languages & cultural content) |
| Pakistan | School rehabilitation (e.g. ESR civil works); Water, sanitation & hygiene (e.g. WASH in schools); Educational materials (e.g. gender-sensitive materials) |
| Sri Lanka | School rehabilitation (e.g. Development of Navodaya schools as centres of excellence in each division) |
| Teaching and learning process | |
| Bangladesh | Medium of instruction (e.g. Bilingual instruction (BRAC schools)); Curriculum & assessment (e.g. Secondary curriculum & assessment reform) |
| India | Medium of instruction (e.g. MLE in AP & Orissa); Urdu medium /Urdu-speaking teachers); Pedagogy (e.g. ABL in Tamil Nadu; LEP); Curriculum & assessment; (e.g. National Curriculum Framework & State curriculum revisions; Comprehensive & Continuous Evaluation of students; Automatic promotion) |
| Pakistan | Pedagogy (e.g. Punjab Child-friendly schools); Curriculum & assessment (e.g. Pre-primary curriculum; Primary & Secondary education curriculum reform); |
| Sri Lanka | Pedagogy (e.g. Child-friendly schools); Curriculum & assessment (e.g. Curriculum reforms) |

| School climate | |
|---------------------|---|
| Bangladesh | Corporal punishment (<i>unlawful under 2011 Supreme Court ruling, not yet confirmed in legislation</i>) |
| India | Corporal punishment (<i>ban endorsed as part of RTE, 2009</i>) |
| Pakistan | Corporal punishment: (e.g. Official directives banning corporal punishment (Punjab, Balochistan); Maar Nahi Pyar awareness campaign; <i>legislation which would prohibit under discussion</i>) |
| Sri Lanka | Corporal punishment: (e.g. MOE circular prohibiting corporal punishment; NPCA complaints mechanism/legal action, & drop-in centres; <i>legislation which would prohibit being drafted</i>) |
| Enabling conditions | |
| Bangladesh | Instructional time (e.g. PEDP II single shift primary schools); Teacher capability (e.g. Primary education in-service training (incl. inclusive education) & cluster support system, upazila resource centres, pilot SEN screening programme; Secondary teacher training & academic supervision reforms) |
| India | Teacher capability (e.g. Teacher Eligibility Test; In-service training (including inclusive education), block support system, resource centres; Janshala (tribal areas)) |
| Pakistan | Teacher capability (e.g. Strengthening Teacher Education in Pakistan (STEP) & (Pre-Service STEP); Punjab Education Foundation's Continuous Teachers' Development Programme & School Leadership Development Programme (low cost private schools); Teacher incentives (e.g. Level of teachers' salaries & allowances) |
| Sri Lanka | Teacher capability: (e.g. In-service teacher training (including inclusive education), local level teachers' centres) |

Notes: PPP is Public-Private Partnership



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4.6 Programmes and legislation to address system bottlenecks

Overview

The main programmes in place to mitigate bottlenecks are governance and management initiatives, and, partly related to this, public financing reforms. Actions to address political bottlenecks related to violence, such as disaster preparedness, are dealt with in the thematic chapter on emergencies (chapter six).

As discussed in chapter three, all four countries have a policy of decentralisation to delegate decision-making to lower levels of the education administrative system, and to school-based management bodies. Various capacity building programmes have been instigated to help lower level education managers, head teachers and school management bodies, to take on their new responsibilities. At the school level there has been a lot of emphasis on school improvement planning, and community involvement in the school planning and management process. This has been accompanied by public financing reforms, which delegate financial authority to lower levels of the system, and in some countries by fiscal decentralisation. Schools in some countries have started to receive direct grants, covering a small part of their costs, and have some level of freedom over how to spend them. There have also been efforts to strengthen centralised procurement systems for key educational inputs such as textbooks.

Some successful interventions

In **Bangladesh** a PEDP II initiative to channel funds directly to schools to implement **School Level Improvement Plans** has enabled almost two-thirds of formal primary education schools (at the peak of programme coverage) to plan and implement small-scale activities in their area of priority (Bangladesh OOSCI Study).

The **decentralised funding mechanisms** for schools in **Sri Lanka** are based on nationally-agreed formulae which target resources partly based on need. The formulae take account of children with special educational needs, the location of the school (schools have been classified into five types for this purpose) and other variables to promote equity.

There have been dramatic improvements in the **timeliness of textbook distribution** to schools in **Bangladesh** and **India** since the mid-2000s. In India, 99 per cent of schools reported that the textbook scheme was working well, compared with less than 50 per cent of recipient schools a decade earlier (India OOSCI Study).

Key gaps

Currently, Education Sector Plans do not sufficiently invest in programmes focusing on alternative pathways for children that are out of school. The Education Sector Wide Approaches in spite of the name often do not include alternative pathways to (basic) education components as a major strategy to provide education opportunities for out-of-school children. Moreover, even if there are programmes to provide children and adolescents with education outside the formal system (e.g. accelerated learning) the investment in unit cost and capacity of facilitators/teachers is less than for children in the formal system. In addition, the equivalency of these programmes are not well-defined making the alternative pathways modalities second rank in terms of funding, attention and image. Efforts to promote school-level planning, and participation and oversight from community bodies could be an important step towards more effective local decision-making. But, unless more **financial authority is vested at school level**, accompanied by appropriate capacity building, oversight mechanisms and management capacity, it seems unlikely that this will lead to a step-change in school improvement. Also experience has shown that school management improvement will not automatically lead to improved teaching-learning process in the classroom. Hence, if learning achievement is the aim of school-based management, more pedagogical guidance for teachers, including on-the-job coaching need to take place.

Rational and increased accountability in teacher management (recruitment, deployment, transfer, promotion, discipline, etc.) in public schools exists to some extent in some of the countries, but the school managing committees that should control these issues have in practice little, or no, say in these decisions. This makes day-to-day teacher management at the school level difficult, and no doubt contributes to the high levels of absenteeism seen in the region. At the same time, when schools have the discretion of hiring and firing teachers directly, the selection process often gets very political. It is also unclear if there are major efforts to curb the practice, found in some schools, of teachers delivering part of the core syllabus via private tuition to their own students.

Overall, **investment should be progressive** with excluded and marginalized children and areas receiving more support. This in itself is a cost-effective measure to get more children to school, and have all children in school learning, and have more effective and efficient education systems. The use of an **equity-driven formula** in Sri Lanka to **allocate public resources** to schools aims to ensure an equitable distribution of public funds across the eligible population. It is somewhat thwarted in this because it is not applied directly to a national budget; it is applied after provinces have decided on the proportion of the budget to allocate to education, and this differs across provinces. Nonetheless, it promotes transparency and accountability in public financing of education, and this type of funding mechanism merits consideration in the other countries

If **budget priority for education** is the yardstick, then political commitment to education in the four countries appears to be waning. Key education public expenditure indicators have stagnated in the past few years in Bangladesh and India, and appear to be worsening in Sri Lanka and Pakistan although the commitment of the Government of Pakistan to increase the budget to education from 2 per cent to 4 per cent to achieve the MDG of universal primary education is very promising. This is of particular concern in Pakistan which has the highest rate of school exclusion in the region, and significant expansion is needed to accommodate universal provision of primary and lower secondary education.

There have been some **reforms to public financial management systems** in the four countries, but these do not appear to have (yet) improved some critical bottlenecks, particularly in the procurement of infrastructure often leading to low development budget execution rates.

Table 4.5 Programmes and legislation to address system bottlenecks

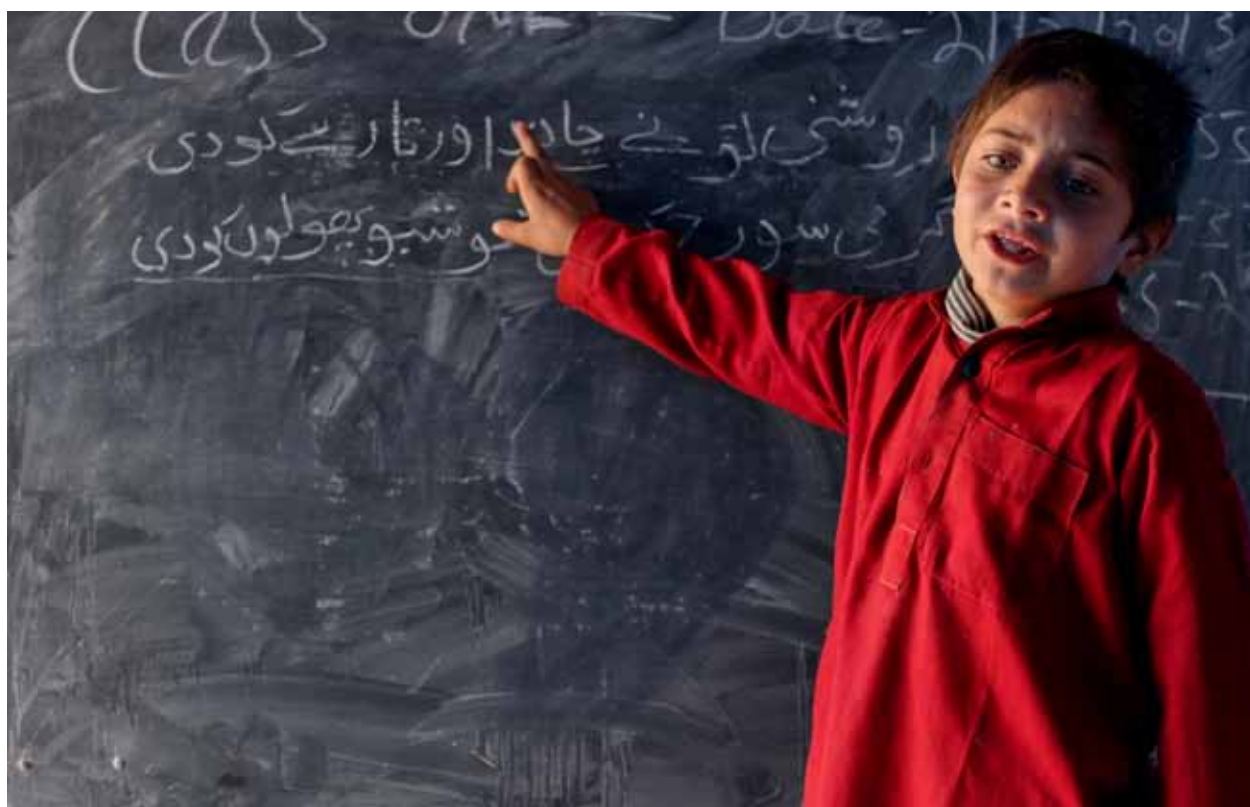
| System-level bottlenecks | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Country | Types of Programmes/Interventions |
| Governance and management | |
| Bangladesh | Decentralisation & capacity building (e.g. Upazila primary education plans; School level Improvement Plans; School Managing Committee training); Procurement systems (e.g. textbooks) |
| India | Decentralisation & capacity building (e.g. SSA school improvement plan & budget, Involvement of Community based bodies (VEC, SMC, PTA, MTAs) in school planning and management; Streamlining community bodies); Procurement systems (e.g. textbooks) |
| Pakistan | Decentralisation & capacity building (e.g. Revival of SMCs & PTAs; Decentralisation of authority from Provinces to Districts to plan, finance, & deliver education; Decentralisation of authority from National to Provinces for education policy, curriculum & standards); Support & regulation of private sector. <i>Legislation: Local Government Ordinance 2001 (decentralisation); 18th Amendment to Constitution 2010 (decentralisation)</i> |
| Sri Lanka | Decentralisation & capacity building (e.g. ESDFP bottom-up approach to planning via annual school development plans; Child-friendly Schools community participation in planning & management) |
| Public financing | |
| Bangladesh | Decentralised funding mechanisms (e.g. Direct small grants to schools to support School Level Improvement Plans); Public financial management (e.g. external and domestic sources comingled (using a treasury model) to fund third primary education development programme) |
| Pakistan | Fiscal decentralisation (e.g. National & Provincial Fiscal Commission Awards based on formulae); External financing (e.g. Debt-Swap Initiative) |
| Sri Lanka | Decentralised funding mechanisms (e.g. Direct funding of schools via norm-based unit costs; School-based grants to secondary schools for specific subjects); Public Financial Management (e.g. Public Expenditure & Quality of Education Tracking system); |

4.7 Analytical summary

Programmes designed to address barriers to participation in schooling in the past decade have centred on mitigating economic demand-side barriers, and on quantitative expansion of the schooling system. Flagship 'free education' programmes have abolished fees, and provided a raft of free inputs on a vast scale. Beyond this, large-scale CCT programmes have attempted to offset the remaining direct costs of schooling. There is some evidence to suggest that many of these economic interventions have reduced poverty and improved attendance, although there is much scope to improve the efficiency of some of these programmes. On the quantity supply side, large-scale construction programmes, and PPPs, have delivered a large number of additional places in regular formal schools. At the same time, private sector provision in Pakistan and India (to a large extent unregulated) has driven much of the growth in schooling places. Alternative pathways to basic education have proved to be an important way of reaching some groups of vulnerable out-of-school children, but these interventions are not on a scale commensurate with the number of excluded children and adolescents.

Interventions to address socio-cultural demand-side barriers have been relatively neglected (although there are some successful examples), probably partly because it is clear that cross-sectoral approaches are needed – between education, health, and child protection – and cross-sectoral work requires complex and difficult coordination across ministries.

Numerous fragmented initiatives have taken place in efforts to improve the quality of schooling — some with success — but systemic quality reforms which impact at classroom level on learning have remained elusive. Important bottlenecks constrain attempts to improve the quality of schooling; most notably the governance and politicisation of teacher management.



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5. Child labour and out-of-school children in South Asia

5.1 Introduction

Efforts to enrol all children in school in South Asia and actions to eliminate child labour are closely linked. On the one hand, education has been identified as a key element in preventing child labour: there is broad agreement that improved access to education of good quality is one of the most successful ways in which governments can control and reduce the number of child labourers (UCW, 2010).

On the other hand, child labour is a relatively common obstacle to children's education in South Asia. Most countries in the region still have high proportions of out-of-school children, most notably in Pakistan, India and Bangladesh. Just over half of the out-of-school children (age 10-14 years) in Pakistan are child labourers, and around one-fifth of the out-of-school children (age 5-14 years) in India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka are engaged in child labour (for further details, see section 2.5). Apart from being an obstacle to children's school attendance, child labour also has adverse effects on school performance. This chapter will show that efforts to reach the goals of education for all and elimination of child labour go hand in hand, and that seeking to reach one without the other is unlikely to be successful (Guarcello et al, 2008).

Estimates for this report show that child labour remains significant in scope, engaging some 34 million children in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. Table 5.1 below provides estimates from different years of child labourers. (Note that data from Sri Lanka is not presented further in this chapter because only a few key statistics, presented earlier in section 2.5, are available in the country study based on the most recent source.) Child labour takes a large variety of forms and its highly dynamic nature contributes to the complexity of the child labour phenomenon. In a recent description by the ILO, the following forms of child labour are presented as common in South Asia (ILO, 2009)⁹⁶:

- Child domestic labour
- Children in hazardous child work
- Children in export oriented industries, much of it home-based
- Child trafficking and migration (both internally and across borders)
- Child bonded labour, particularly in agriculture
- Child labour in the informal economy

Table 5.1 Estimates of the number of child labourers age 5-14 in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan*

| Country | Number of child labourers (millions) | Percentage male (%) | Percentage female (%) |
|------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Bangladesh | 2.7 | 75 | 25 |
| India | 28.2 | 50 | 50 |
| Pakistan* | 3.1 | 48 | 52 |

* Data from Pakistan cover children aged 10 to 14.

Notes: Estimates of the number of child labourers are based on data on child labourers in the sourced surveys below, applied to the population data in the 2010 Revision of the UN's World Population Prospects. The estimate for India is higher than in some other sources, partly explained by different definitions of child labour. Sources: Bangladesh LFS 2005-06; India NFHS-3 2005-06; Pakistan LFS 2007-08; United Nations 2012

The aim of this chapter is to contribute to a better understanding of the interplay between child labour and school attendance in South Asia. The chapter starts by examining some of the most influential causes of child labour in the region, then moves over to the direct impacts of children's work on schooling. It ends with a review of policies and strategies which have been adopted to address child labour in the region over the past decade.

⁹⁶ As explained in section 2.5, the definition of child labour is not straightforward. Note that ILO has a different definition to the one developed by UCW for use in the OOSCI which is applied in this report.

5.2 Causes of child labour

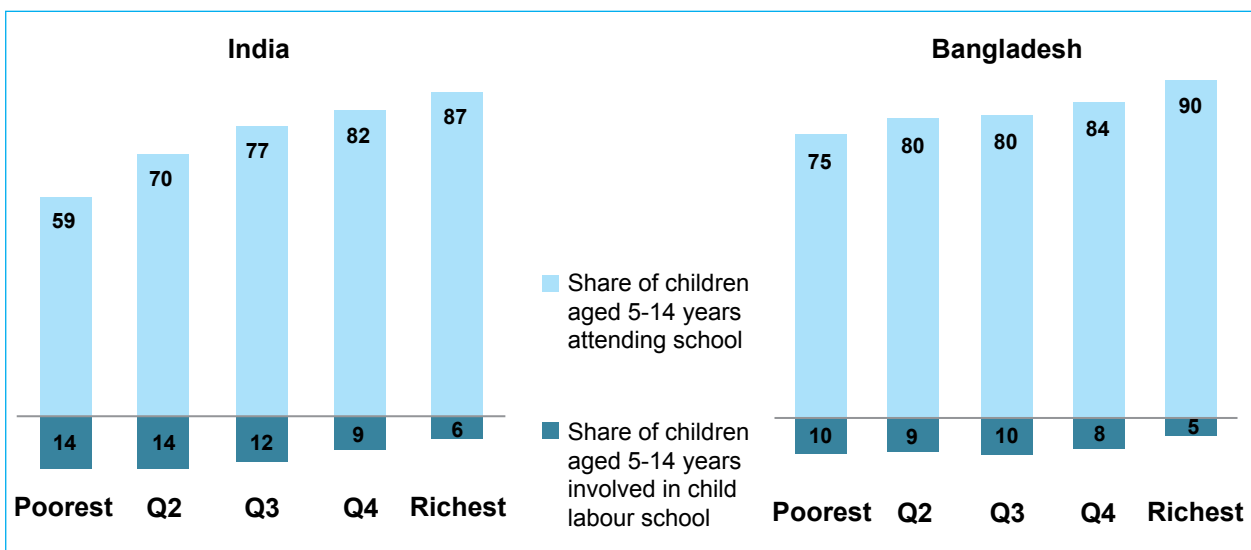
There is substantial evidence that shows that one of the main factors keeping children out of school is their engagement in child labour. This holds globally, as well as in the South Asia region. From a policy perspective, therefore, it is important to consider ways of reducing child labour as a means of reducing the incidence of out-of-school children. To do so, it is necessary to understand why children engage in economic activities and household chores.

The past decade has seen a growing body of literature on the causes, often called determinants, of child labour. By using data from an increasing number of national household surveys, most existing studies apply a diverse set of economic models to estimate the determinants of child labour in different countries. Such economic models are based on the basic theoretical idea that within households, each child divides his or her time between school, work and leisure. Decisions on how to allocate children's time are based on existing budget constraints within the household, as well as household preferences for schooling, work and leisure (OPM, 2010). In families where children contribute economically, the opportunity cost of school attendance can be high. Hence, household's preferences for schooling are strongly influenced by the perceived returns to education. What follows is a brief summary of the main causes (i.e. determinants) of child labour in our countries of interest.

Economic causes are at the heart of child labour

Throughout the three largest countries in South Asia, household poverty acts as a strong determinant of child labour. The lower the household income, the higher is the likelihood that children work. Figure 5.1 presents a clear inverse relationship between household income and the incidence of child labour. In Bangladesh and India, children from the poorest 20 per cent of households are at least twice as likely to work compared with children from the richest households. At the same time, children's school attendance increases with household income. The difference in school attendance is sharpest in India, with a remarkable difference of 28 percentage points between the richest and the poorest.

Figure 5.1 Incidence of child labour and school attendance per income quintile



Sources: Bangladesh LFS 2005-06; India NFHS-3 2005-06.

For households living under severe budget constraints, child labour forms an integral part of livelihood strategies. To make ends meet and get immediate returns, families are frequently forced to give up children's schooling and thereby sacrifice their long-term development. The older the child, the more likely he or she is to work. Or put differently, they 'use child labour to borrow from the future for present consumption' (Betcherman, 2004 as cited in ILO, 2005). One study, based on household survey data covering the whole of Pakistan, found that when a Pakistani household falls into poverty, it increases each child's involvement in outside, paid employment by approximately 500 hours annually. Those households also reduce the schooling of their children, with the reduction being much larger for Pakistani girls than boys (Ray, 2000).

Nazia Iliyas worked as a labourer until she was rescued. She now attends a bridging school run under the National Child Labour Project (NCLP) in Pallakode, Dharmapuri district in Tamil Nadu, India.

National Child Labour Protection teachers are trained to look for child labourers in the district of Dharmapuri and work to counsel and persuade them to re-start their education. UNICEF, working closely with the state government, has jointly run this programme since 2009.

According to the ILO, India has the highest number of working children in the world - an estimated 29 million children between the ages of 5 and 14 go to work. Child labour is illegal in India for children under 14 years of age. Girls often work in informal sectors such as domestic work or as paid house helps, which are not counted in official statistics. Most of these children belong to the poorest, most marginalized communities, including Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.



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Income shocks, caused by illness, bad harvest, or dramatic changes in the price of commodities, can increase the incidence of child labour. In Andhra Pradesh in India, temporary income shocks in the early 2000s were found to significantly increase children's workload. Girls living in rural areas were particularly affected, and experienced an average increase in their weekly workload of nearly three hours (Krutikova, 2009). In response to the severe droughts in Pakistan in the beginning of the 2000s, the incidence of child labour among the poorest reached a peak in 2001 and 2002, but has since then declined (Huo, 2009).

Several studies in South Asia point to economic growth and improved living standards as a strong driver behind the reduced incidence of child labour in the region. Trend data from Bangladesh, India and Pakistan indicate reductions in child labour from the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s, with children's employment in India declining by nearly 50 per cent (Guarcello et al., 2010; Huo, 2009; UCW, 2011)⁹⁷. The decline in child labour in India has been particularly strong in Andhra Pradesh, the state with the highest incidence of child employment in 2005. Over the 11 year period from 1994 to 2005, children's employment in Andhra Pradesh dropped from 18 per cent to 8 per cent. The decline was accompanied by a steep increase by one-third in the share of children attending school, to reach 87 per cent in 2005 (Guarcello et al., 2010).

An insightful study on the reasons behind the important changes in children's employment and schooling in Andhra Pradesh identifies better living standards as the most important factor in explaining the decline in child labour amongst poor children in urban areas. The study finds that the share of the population living below the poverty line in urban areas declined by nearly one-tenth over the period. The reduced incidence of poverty was found to account for about half of the reduction in child labour. However, at the same time, the more favorable economic climate increased the demand for labour in urban areas in Andhra Pradesh, including the demand for child labour. As a result, the positive effect of improved living standards for children from poor families was partly offset by the impact of a rising demand for labour (Guarcello et al., 2010).

⁹⁷ Because the methodologies and definitions of child labour tend to differ between different surveys, caution is needed in interpretation of changes in the incidence of child labour over time, as well as across countries.



Twelve-year old Jibon works at a fish market in Dhaka, Bangladesh. He carries baskets of fish for the market sellers. He lives alone with his mother. He dropped out of school after completing only Grade 2. Jibon is one of the millions of children in South Asia who are out of school and engaged in child labour.

The negative impact of high local labour market demands on child labour has also been noted in Bangladesh. A recent study suggests that families' decisions about children's work and schooling are strongly influenced by the conditions in the local labour market. In areas in Bangladesh with high demand for labour, the likelihood of children working full time is much higher, and with negative effects on school attendance. The effects are particularly strong among the poorest households (UCW, 2011).

It can perhaps be easy to assume that children's work and schooling are pure substitutes to each other. However, several researchers have cautioned against such thinking by showing that a change in the incidence of child labour may not automatically be followed by a similar change in school attendance. For instance, a comparison of the composition of children's activities in Bangladesh in 2002/03 and 2005/06 finds that the relatively large decline in children's employment over the period (5 percentage points) was not accompanied by an increase in school attendance (UWC, 2011). Along the same lines, Ravallion and Wodon (1999) studied how households responded to the introduction of the Food for Education programme in Bangladesh the mid-1990s. The value of the programme's in-kind transfers to families was well below what children earned from working. The researchers found that

while the transfers reduced the incidence of children's employment, school attendance increased more in relative terms. Hence, in this case, other factors beyond the economic elements helped to increase school attendance. One important conclusion from these findings is that child labour is not the only barrier to children's schooling and that other factors also influence household decisions (Bangladesh OOSCI Study).

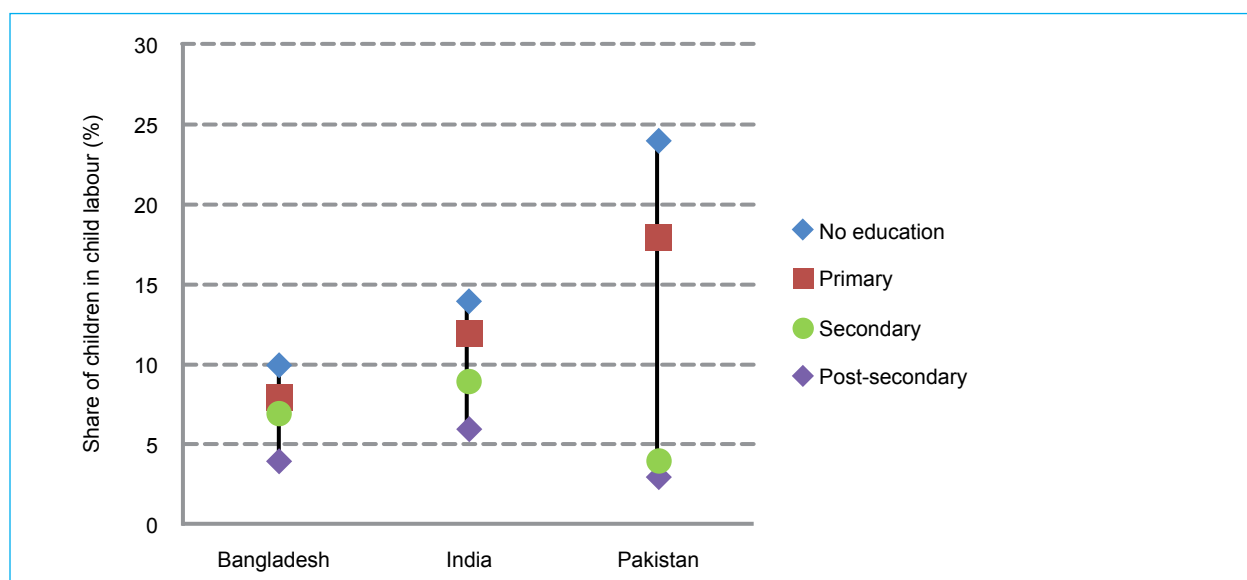
Socio-cultural reasons for child labour

Decisions about children's schooling and work is not solely about economics. Just as schooling is perceived to have social as well as economic benefits, some researchers have argued that work can contribute positively to a child's development under certain circumstances, and that this is a factor in the tradeoff between schooling and work. More generally, deeply rooted socio-cultural factors which have been there for a long time and are resistant to change also play a role in household's decision-making. While it is difficult to draw firm and general conclusions across such large and diversified countries as those in South Asia, three socio-cultural factors stand out as particularly influential with regard to parents preferences and decisions about the allocation of children's time:

1. *Households' education matters for child labour:* The level of education of household members act as a prominent determinant of child labour. Figure 5.2 shows (without controlling for other factors though) that across Bangladesh, India and Pakistan, children in families where the household head has post-secondary education are rather unlikely to work. Only between 3-6 per cent of children with household heads with post-secondary education are child labourers. By contrast, children from families where the household head do not have any education are much more likely to work. This is particularly the case in Pakistan, where nearly one-quarter of these children work.

Most existing studies on the determinants of child labour stress the importance of the education of the household head, which in most cases is the father. However, in estimating the determinants of children's schooling and work in rural India, Kurosaki et al., (2006) found the mother's level of education to be more important than the father's for raising school attendance and reducing child labour. It is worth stressing that the positive effect of parents' education holds after controlling for household income and other relevant factors. One implication of this finding is that educating this generation will probably improve the chances of education for the next, creating an upward spiral. Limited explanations seems to be available to understand exactly why parents' level of education matter. One study in Pakistan suggests, however, that parents who are more educated are better able to see the value of their children's education and to resist the temptation to pull them out of school (Ray, 2000).

Figure 5.2 Incidence of child labour and level of education of household head



Note: For Pakistan, the category for primary education also include the category called 'below intermediate'. The age group of Pakistani children is 10-14 years, compared with 5-14 years for Bangladesh and India.

Sources: Bangladesh LFS 2005-06; India NFHS-3 2005-06; Pakistan LFS 2007-08

2. *Decision-making within the household:* Some research in South Asia points to different preferences for children's schooling and work among male and female household members. In Bangladesh, children in male headed households have been found to be more likely to work than households headed by women (Amin et al., 2004). This research suggests that the greater bargaining power of the father in the household increases the likelihood that a child works. Similarly, based on household survey data in rural India, one study finds that children from male-dominated households are considerably more likely to send their children to work. Strong domination by men was measured through such factors as whether women needed permission of a man to visit a doctor, or where male members were violent (Sakamoto, 2006).

Until recently, most studies have assumed that adult household members (typically the household head) are the only ones to decide how children should allocate their time. However, some recent research help in nuancing this picture. A major qualitative research project on the behaviour, practice and patterns of child labour in the cotton sector in India is particularly revealing. It shows that decision-making structures differ between social groups and geographic areas. In the tribal areas of Rajasthan, children tend to play an active role in decisions about their work. In cases where parents are reluctant to let their children work, children sometimes decide to leave the home and migrate to areas that offer better opportunities. However, children's migration for work in Rajasthan reduces the chances of school completion and tends to be associated with major education disadvantages (OPM, 2010).

- 3 *Different attitudes to girls and boys:* Social norms and cultural perceptions about the role of girls and boys in society influence parents' decisions about children's work and schooling. The country studies in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka all stress the importance of gender for explaining the kind of work children undertake:

- In Bangladesh, researchers have argued that girls' education has been promoted ostensibly to strengthen their roles as mothers and care-givers, with an implicit acceptance that education is less worthwhile than for boys. Boys' early entry into work is tolerated because society views it as an opportunity to dilute tensions by turning the energy of poor young boys into productive activities. While child labour is driven by poverty, certain cultural norms allow the phenomenon to take root (Tariquzzaman and Hossain, 2009; Bangladesh OOSCI Study).
- For older children in India, especially in rural families, the traditional norms of early income-earning for boys in order to shoulder the family responsibilities, and early marriage and motherhood as well as household duties for girls, still apply. This is particularly in view of a lack of visible linkage between education and livelihood potential, and because working as a child can build skills in that sector and lead to faster career progression compared with staying in school. Boys from poor families, be it in the rural or urban areas, are always under pressure to earn and are tempted by the earning opportunities that are present due to lax enforcement as well as limited scope of child labour laws. There is hitherto a deeply entrenched and tacit acceptance of all players in the Indian society that some amount of child labour is inevitable (India OOSCI Study).
- In Pakistan, older children – girls more than boys – are often entrusted with the task of looking after their younger siblings and doing household chores while their parents are busy with other work. Since girls are unlikely to become employed, there is little economic incentive for them to continue their education. This tends to push them out of school and into domestic duties. These gender differentials can be partly attributed to the socio-cultural context of Pakistani society that is predominantly patriarchal. As women in Pakistani society are not viewed in the role of producers or providers, they lack social value and status. Male members of the family are given better education and are equipped with skills to compete for resources in the public arena, while female members are taught domestic skills in order to fulfil their reproductive roles as wives and mothers (Pakistan OOSCI Study).
- Certain groups in Sri Lanka, such as Muslims or Tamils or conflict-affected communities, are more likely to withdraw girls from school, especially when they reach secondary level. The issue of early marriage in conflict-affected districts may be diminishing now that the conflict is over. Amendments have recently been made to the Marriage Ordinances 1995 to raise the minimum age of marriage to 18 years. However, this does not apply to the Muslim community. Preventing child labour of older girls, often used as domestic workers, is highlighted as a policy priority (Sri Lanka OOSCI Study).

Poor supply of education as a cause of child labour

The direction of causality between child labour and children's non-participation in education is not always clear. We have seen that demand side factors linked to households economic and socio-cultural situations play a role in 'pulling' children from school to work. But children can also be 'pushed' into work by inadequate supply of education (Guarcello et al., 2006). When education is inaccessible, of poor quality or when it does not seem to promise any long term gains, parents and/or children decide to opt out of the education system.

In examining the linkages between household wealth, child labour and schooling in Pakistan, Huo (2009) finds that although wealth is critical, it is far from a sufficient factor in determining child activities. This is particularly the case for girls living in rural areas. By using three rounds of time-series, cross-sectional data, Huo detects that other factors than wealth stand out as important for determining girls' activities in rural areas. Most notably, the presence of girl schools in the community significantly reduces the likelihood that rural girls work or remain inactive. Distance to school is also of great importance. One explanation of the importance of having girl schools close to where girls live has to do with the *pardah* norms for unmarried girls in Pakistan and the restrictions for girls to travel without the company of a male member of the family.

Overall, from 1998 to 2006, Pakistan experienced a period of economic growth, with a universal increase in education enrolment. The incidence of child labour also declined over this period. Yet the country faces some major challenges in terms of child labour and continues to have a high number of out-of-school children population. The policy implications of the findings of this study points to the crucial role of supply



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Sixteen-year old Sumi and other girls her age work at a tailor shop in Dhaka, Bangladesh. They found the work after receiving a livelihood skills training through apprenticeship modality run by BRAC under the Basic Education for Hard-to-Reach Urban Working Children (BEHTRUWC) Project of the Bureau of Non-Formal Education. The project is supported by UNICEF Bangladesh.

side interventions and further strengthening of the education system for drawing girls in rural areas in Pakistan into schooling.

5.3 Impact of child labour on school attendance

Child labour is widely perceived to impede the educational attainment of children in a multitude of ways. As mentioned previously, both working and schooling activities require time, so work competes with time devoted to education related activities such as attending classes and completing homework. Left with less time for school and study, working children are not able to derive the same educational benefit as their non-working counterparts. Child labour may also be strenuous, causing exhaustion and leaving children lacking energy, impeding their ability to focus in the classroom or on homework. Even if they devote the same amount of hours to attendance and study as children who do not work, their lack of energy could hamper their ability to gain the same returns from the learning process.

There is a clear school attendance gap between children engaged in child labour and other children of the same age. Earlier in this report, Figures 2.8 and 2.9 (chapter 2) showed that child labour is associated with lower levels of school attendance, particularly for older children age 12-14 years. It also revealed that very few child labourers in Pakistan attend school. These findings are supported by the broader research literature, with the overwhelming majority of empirical studies concluding that child labour is harmful to school attendance (Blanco Allais and Hagemann, 2008).

However, the precise impact on school attendance depends on the length of children's work day⁹⁸. From a policy perspective, investigations on the effect of the number of child work hours is particularly important. As it is pretty well accepted that eliminating child labour (under various definitions) will be difficult in the immediate future, several studies have attempted to identify the number of hours of work beyond which children's school attendance are negatively affected. Yet, the central messages from these studies – which include but are not limited to countries in South Asia – is that even limited amounts of child work do affect school attendance adversely (Ahmed, 2011; Ray and Lancaster, 2004; UCW 2005). One exception to this rule has however been identified in Sri Lanka. Here, one study found that children of age 12 to 14 were able to combine school and work without an adverse effect on school performance. The results

⁹⁸ Indeed the OOSCI definition of child labour as opposed to a child work (which almost every child undertakes), is partly related to the number of hours of work, as well as the type of work. See Annex A.1.1 for full details.

suggest that a child at this age can work up to 15 hours per week without any loss in school attendance or number of years of schooling. Nevertheless, work hours exceeding this amount were found to be detrimental for children's school performance (Ray and Lancaster, 2004).

Child labour seems also to be associated with less smooth progression through the education system. In Pakistan, Rosati and Rosi (2003) shows that working children are more likely to fall behind in terms of grade attainment relative to age. On average, an additional hour of work per day increased the probability of falling behind by 1.6 percentage points. The impact was marginally higher for initial hours of work compared to subsequent ones. Similar findings have also been found in rural Bangladesh, where work reduced the probability of progress at each level of education. Interestingly, the study detected that the earlier the exposure to work in rural Bangladesh, the more adverse the effect on school progress. If work begun in primary school, the probability of reaching secondary education was reduced by nearly 11 per cent. But, if work begun before starting primary education, the probability of entering secondary education was reduced by more than 33 per cent (Canals-Cerda and Ridao-Cano, 2004).

It should finally be recognized that the nature of work that children undertake have an important impact on school attendance. Children engaged in hazardous forms of child work are amongst the most marginalized in terms of education access. For instance in Bangladesh, a study commissioned by the ILO found that only 2 per cent of an estimated 86,000 employed children working as helpers, conductors and cleaners in the transport sector attended school. Another ILO study in Bangladesh pointed to the domestic labour sector as particularly incompatible with schooling. Domestic labour is relatively common in Bangladesh, and this sector has a very high concentration of children from landless rural households. These children often work full time and have limited freedom to engage in other activities or even visit home. In the case of girls, some are not paid directly but the expectation is that the hosting household will cover the costs of their marriage. The study estimated that approximately 420,000 children of age 5-17 years are engaged in domestic labour. The survey results showed that only half of these children had ever been to school and only 11 per cent were attending school at the time of the survey (ILO, 2006; Bangladesh OOSCI Study).



5.4 Policies and strategies for addressing child labour and school attendance

The large disparity in the ability of child labourers to attend school across the countries in South Asia is intriguing. While nearly all child labourers in Pakistan are out of school, more than half of the child labourers in Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka are able to combine education and work (see Figure 2.8 in chapter 2). Some of this disparity is likely to be explained by data for Pakistan which covers an older group of children of age 10-14 years compared with 5-14 years in Bangladesh and India, and 5-17 years in Sri Lanka. But to some extent, these patterns surely mirror variations in the kind of work children undertake, as well as variations in work intensity. For instance, three-quarters of Pakistani working children are engaged in agricultural activities, compared to about two-fifths in Bangladesh. At the same time, a significant part of the explanation to the differences in 'school-work compatibility' has to do with the success of government policies and strategies to attract and retain child labourers in education.

This section reviews some of the major policy efforts undertaken in South Asia to combat child labour and get more children into schooling. The large disparities in the extent to which children are able to combine school and work point to considerable scope for setting and implementing policies that further enhance child labourers access to education.

The life situations of child labourers are not restricted to one single sector, but cuts across traditional policy boundaries. Most notably, addressing child labour includes policy measures related to education, social protection and the labour market. Because of the complexity of the child labour phenomenon, policy responses that aim to improve children's living conditions need to be cross-sectoral, comprehensive and collaborative in nature (UCW, 2010). To be effective, such policies also need to recognize that 'most children work with or for their parents, in economies where markets are underdeveloped and the legal and political infrastructure is thin' (Bhalotra and Tzannatos, 2003). Table 5.2 outlines several broad public policy measures which have proven useful in addressing child labourers school attendance in South Asia.

Table 5.2 Policy measures to promote school attendance for child labourers

| Improving incentives for children to go to school | Removing constraints stopping children from going to school | Using legislation to encourage schooling and discourage labour |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make school attendance more accessible (more schools, flexible scheduling) • Reduce or eliminate school fees • Eliminate discrimination against girls in schools • Improve education quality • Improve basic services (e.g. access to clean water) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing strategies to eliminate poverty • Create social safety nets • Establish conditional cash or food transfers • Promote financial instruments that allow access to credit and collateralize assets | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enforce compulsory education laws • Introduce and enforce appropriate child labour laws |
| Providing protection and rehabilitation services for working children | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove children from hazardous and the worst forms of child labour • Enforce health, safety and other employment standards • Provide access to education and health services • Offer vocational training and other rehabilitation services | | |

Source: Betcherman et al., 2004.

The legal framework forms an important basis for policy responses

Adequate labour legislation is valuable not only as a statement of national intent, but also as a foundation for national efforts to combat child labour. It is worth noting that several of the countries in South Asia have yet to ratify the two principal international conventions on child labour – the ILO Minimum Age Convention No 138 from 1973, and the more recent ILO convention No 182 on Worst Forms of Child Labour from 1999 (Table 5.3). The Indian government motivates the country's non-ratification of the convention no 182 by referring to the current lack of 'a suitable all encompassing Central Legislation for minimum age of entry to employment' in India's national legislation and states that such provision in national labour laws would need to be enacted first (Government of India, 2012).

Table 5.3 Ratifications of the key international conventions on child labour

| Country | The ILO minimum age convention No 138 | | The ILO worst forms of child labour convention No 182 | |
|------------|---------------------------------------|----|---|----|
| | Yes | No | Yes | No |
| Bangladesh | | X | 2001 | |
| India | | X | | X |
| Pakistan | 2006 | | 2001 | |
| Sri Lanka | 2000 | | 2001 | |

Source: ILO, 2012.

Several of the countries in South Asia face the challenge of complex and fragmented national legislations. In India, children are allowed to work in different sectors, at different ages and for different amounts of time. While the country's Child Labour Act from 1986 prohibits work for children below the age of 14 in specified occupations or places of work, several important occupations, such as agriculture, are not covered by the Act. There is also an absence of a clear distinction of what constitutes hazardous and non-hazardous work for children in India's labour laws (OPM, 2010).

The situation is in several ways similar in Bangladesh. The country has made some important progress in recent years, most notably by passing the new Labour Act in 2006 and thereby replacing a range of different and contradictory laws. Yet some major gaps remain. In particular, the current legislation has a strong focus on work in the formal and semi-formal sectors and pays limited attention to the informal sector. It is surprising that although the agricultural sector, small-scale informal sector business and family-based employment have been estimated to account for 80 per cent of children's total employment, no reference is made to these sectors in the legislation (UCW, 2011).

The complexity and fragmentation of existing legislations cause loopholes and make it difficult to apply sanctions on violators. Cases of prosecution are rare in South Asia, and prosecutions resulting in convictions even rarer. As discussed earlier, not all work carried out by children fall under the scope of child labour. Countries should avoid leaving it to employers to arbitrarily decide what work is acceptable for children and what is not. For such purposes, international and national legal standards are essential instruments to provide clear and unambiguous definitions of what constitutes child labour to be eliminated (UCW, 2010).

The sequencing of policy actions is very important when dealing with economically vulnerable households, where child labourers are most likely to be found. Measures to enforce child labour laws need to follow actions to ensure that households have alternative sources of income. Without this in place, there is a danger that households relying on the income from child labour become more impoverished or are forced to put their children into jobs that are better hidden and perhaps more dangerous.

Addressing supply-side barriers by making education more attractive

Policies and strategies that reduce the cost of education and improve its quality can help to shift household incentives away from sending children to work, towards sending them to school. To increase the expected returns to education, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka all have cost reduction and quality as integral parts of national education policies and programmes.

Reducing the costs of education by making it more accessible continues to be a key strategy for attracting more children to school in South Asia. This is particularly the case in rural areas. In Andhra Pradesh, school constructions have been identified as the main driving force behind a significant decline in the amount of children's work in rural areas from the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s. Reduced incidence of poverty also played a role, but much less so than the effect of having a school in proximity to where children live. On average, between 1994 and 2005, children's work in rural areas in Andhra Pradesh declined by more than five percentage points and school attendance increased by around 14 percentage points. Researchers have recently estimated that the increased supply of schools generated a reduction in children's work of around 2.4 percentage points. As children's work overall dropped by 5.2 percentage points, just below half of the estimated reduction in children's work can be explained by the improved access to school (Guarcello et al., 2010a).



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Besides the general policy of increasing the number of schools, more targeted measures are also needed to make education accessible for all working children. One such targeted measure is to provide alternative education programmes for child labourers (and other marginalized groups of children and adolescents). This point has been mentioned throughout this study and is relevant for all the four countries and across the South Asia region. The provision of alternative pathways to (basic) education should be scaled up and improved in quality and status so child labourers and other marginalized children will not receive second rank education. Instead, they will see their educational opportunities genuinely improved. Bangladesh and India are two of the countries in the world that have pioneered different models to provide education for working children in flexible ways, frequently with important contributions from non-governmental organizations. In Bangladesh, learning centres under the Basic Education for Hard-To-Reach Urban Working Children (BEHTRUWC) project provide life skills-based non-formal basic education in the six largest cities for working children aged 10-14 years who have either never been or dropped out of school. Since 1997, more than 500,000 children have received an accelerated basic education course equivalent to at least Grade 3. There has not been an overall impact evaluation study (Bangladesh OOSCI Study).

The other major government programme in Bangladesh for attracting marginalized children, including child labourers, is the Reaching Out-of-School Children Project (ROSC). Since 2007, learning centres known as Ananda schools have been established in nearly a fifth of the country's upazilas and are credited officially for successfully enrolling 750,000 out-of-school children (Bangladesh OOSCI Study). Although the results need to be interpreted with caution, a recent evaluation suggests a modestly positive impact of the ROSC project on school participation. In the two age cohorts of 6-8 and 6-10 years, ROSC schools are found to increase the probability of enrolment of between 9 and 18 per cent. In terms of test scores, ROSC schools were found to perform as well as other schools (Dang et al., 2011)⁹⁹.

⁹⁹ Some data quality problems have been noted with regard to the survey baseline, for details see the Bangladesh OOSCI Study.

Addressing demand-side barriers through social protection and cash transfers

Children are in many cases in child labour, not because there is a lack of interest in education, but because of economic constraints at the household level. As a consequence of temporary economic shocks or chronic poverty, families are not able to invest in children's education and are obliged to make decisions that they know are not favourable for their children's long term development. Policy responses that are able to ease families budget constraints and open up their choices have proven effective in reaching more child labourers with education.

The literature from South Asia on the effects of social protection measures on child labourers' participation in education is limited. However, one recent impact evaluation of a major conditional cash transfer programme for adolescent girls in Pakistan does point to some interesting findings. To promote participation in public education for girls in middle school, the Punjab Female School Stipend Programme provides quarterly stipends of about PKR 600 (approximately US\$10) to each participating girl. Since its start in late 2003, the programme has been gradually expanded, and included 245,000 girls aged 12 to 17 in 2007. Overall, the evaluation results indicate that the programme raises school participation and increases the likelihood that girls progress and complete middle school. The evaluation also shows that the programme has significantly reduced the amount of work for participating girls. Compared to their counterfactuals in non-stipend districts, the 15-16 year-old girls who participated in the programme were found to work seven days less per month (equivalent to about 2.8 hours per day) (Alam et al., 2011).

These results from Punjab are in accordance with findings from several rigorous impact evaluations outside South Asia – in countries such as Brazil, Cambodia, Colombia, Mexico and Nicaragua. Evaluations have detected that conditional cash transfer programmes are not only able to increase the time children spend in education, but that they also tend to reduce children's time in economic activities and domestic chores (Behrman et al., 2005; Maluccio and Flores, 2005; de Janvry et al., 2006; IFS–Econometria–SEI, 2006; Ferreira et al., 2009). However, further evidence is required on the effectiveness of these programmes in South Asia.

5.5 Analytical summary

Child labour remains an important reason why all children are not in school in South Asia. There is now a sizable body of literature that shows that child labour is rooted in poverty and that children from poor families in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka are considerably more likely to work compared with children from richer families. Economic growth and improved living standards have contributed to reduce the incidence of child labour in the region from the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s. At the same time, the positive effects of improved living standards on child labour have in some contexts been partly offset by a rising demand for such labour.

Besides household poverty, other factors also play a role in explaining child labour. Norms, including different attitudes to the roles of girls and boys in society, long distances to school and perceived low returns to education, influence decisions about the allocation of children's time for work and schooling.

This chapter has shown how harmful child labour is for school attendance. Governments in the region thus face the twin challenge of reducing the incidence of child labour and raising school participation. The key message of this chapter is that to a large extent, these efforts are two sides of the same coin. While the sheer size of the child labour population in South Asia (particularly in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan) makes the task challenging, policy responses in the region do point to some important achievements. Policy measures that make education more attractive by making it accessible, flexible and relevant, as well as measures that ease families budget constraints have proven useful in addressing child labourers school attendance in South Asia.

6. Emergencies and out-of-school children in South Asia

6.1 Introduction¹⁰⁰

Human-made crisis, i.e., conflict and natural disasters have devastating consequences for people's well-being and deny millions of children their right to education¹⁰¹. A natural disaster occurs when a natural hazard meets vulnerability, for example: flooding in inhabited areas that leave people without homes and livelihoods making them dependent on external assistance for their existence. Over the past decade, the South Asia region has experienced some of the world's most destructive conflicts and disasters. The best available estimates show that in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka more than 155,000 people have died from natural disasters since the year 2000 and more than 67,000 people have been killed in armed conflict (PRIO, 2009; EM-DAT, 2011). While these figures are a shocking reminder of the human impact of emergencies, they only tell part of the story. Besides immediate deaths, emergencies force large-scale displacements of affected populations and put children at great risk. In 2010 alone, nearly 2 million people in India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka were internally displaced. Together with Bangladesh, these countries hosted 2.3 million refugees (IDMC, 2011a; UNHCR, 2011) (see Table 6.1).

Table 6.1 Number of battle-related deaths, deaths from natural disasters, IDPs and Refugees

| Country | Battle-related deaths | Deaths from natural disasters | Internally displaced persons | Refugees |
|--------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------|
| | 2000-2008 | 2000-2010 | 2010 | 2010 |
| Bangladesh | 0 | 6,774 | ... | 229,253 |
| India | 31,599 | 36,394 | 650,000 | 184,821 |
| Pakistan | 11,107 | 76,299 | 980,000 | 1,900,621 |
| Sri Lanka | 24,807 | 36,138 | 327,000 | 223 |
| Total | 67,513 | 155,605 | 1,957,000 | 2,316,928 |

Sources: PRIO, 2009; EM-DAT, 2011; IDMC, 2011a; UNHCR 2011; Note: "..." means no data.

No emergency is identical. They vary in character, duration, scope and intensity and affect civilians in different ways. Armed conflicts tend to last for many years – such as the conflict between the Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) – and have deep rooted socio-economic or ethnic causes. Natural disasters, on the other hand, are sudden onset events – such as the flooding in Pakistan in July 2010 – that cause immediate, widespread damage and human suffering. While all emergencies share the common problem of affecting access to and provision of education negatively, their different characteristics have important implications for how to best maintain the demand for and supply of education¹⁰².

Responding to emergencies remains one of the most critical development challenges for the South Asia region. This chapter examines some of the severe effects of emergencies on education opportunities for children and youth. It also highlights some of the key mechanisms limiting access to education, as well as common strategies which have been used to address the specific constraints to education in emergency

¹⁰⁰ This chapter draws on the thematic section on armed conflict and education of the 2011 EFA Global Monitoring Report, and its' background papers.

¹⁰¹ A disaster refers to "a serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society involving widespread human, material, economic or environmental losses and impacts, which exceeds the ability of the affected community or society to cope using its own resources" as defined by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR).

¹⁰² Education in emergencies is a relatively new field of expertise and available research from the South Asia region is still limited. For the purposes of this report, the scope of emergencies are defined as 'any crisis situation due to natural causes such as earthquake, tsunami, flood or hurricane, or to armed conflict, which may be international (including military occupation) or internal, as defined in international humanitarian law, or post-conflict situations, which impair or violate the right to education, impede its development or hold back its realization' (United Nations, 2008).

settings. The chapter builds on the four OOSCI country studies from the region, as well as a review of complementary sources.

6.2 More emergencies, less education

The economic, political and social costs of emergencies are enormous. Conflict and natural disasters displace families, destroy vital infrastructure, causes infectious diseases and undernutrition, interrupt schooling and push people further into poverty. Table 6.2 gives an overview of the major natural disasters and violence that the four case countries in South Asia have experienced over the last decade.

Table 6.2 Overview of natural disasters and conflicts in South Asia, 2000-2013, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka

| Country | Natural Disaster (Top natural disasters by numbers of persons killed) | Conflict |
|------------|--|---|
| Bangladesh | Extreme temperature (2002); Flood (2004, 2007); Storm (2007) | Organised Political Parties (2006) |
| India | Earthquake (2001, 2004, 2005); Flood (2013) | Assam (2008-present); Bodoland (2004-present); Kashmir (2008-present); Manipur (2008-present); Nagaland (2000, 2005-present); Naxalite movement (2004-present); Tripura (2004, 2006-present); India-Pakistan (2003-present) |
| Pakistan | Earthquake (2005); Flood (2005, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013); Storm (2007) | Balochistan (2004-present); FATA (2004-present); Pakistan-India (2003-present) |
| Sri Lanka | Earthquake (2004); Epidemic (2004, 2009, 2011); Flood (2003, 2011, 2012, 2013) | Eelam (2001, 2003-2009) |

Sources: For data on natural disasters: EM-DAT, 2011; For data on conflict: World Bank database accessed 21 January 2013 http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTCPR/Resources/407739-1267651559887/Violent_Conflict_Dataset_combined

To measure the impact of these emergencies on education is inherently difficult. As highlighted earlier in this report, the countries in the region already struggle with unreliable data on several key education indicators in normal situations, in particular with regard to identifying children and youth who have never enrolled in school or have dropped out. The constraints in obtaining good quality data are amplified in areas affected by conflict and natural disasters. Not only can access to an emergency area be limited, but one of its hallmarks is the rapid changes of events. A few years ago, a humanitarian aid worker made the comment that collecting data “... *within a rapidly evolving emergency is like looking at the situation from the back of a speeding train. You can see what is behind you, but not where you are, let alone what is ahead*” (Global Education Cluster, 2009).

While data constraints prevent getting a comprehensive picture of participation in education in emergency-affected areas, studies and humanitarian reporting from the region capture some of the negative effects:

- In early 2009, violence in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa¹⁰³ in Pakistan caused an unprecedented wave of displacement of up to three million people. In the three districts with the heaviest fighting, some 600,000 children were reported to have missed one year or more of schooling (IDMC, 2009).
- In Sri Lanka, more than two decades of secessionist conflict in the North and East parts of the country have led to lower school participation than the national average, particularly at the lower secondary level. Not only is it less likely that children affected by conflict in Sri Lanka go to school, but they are

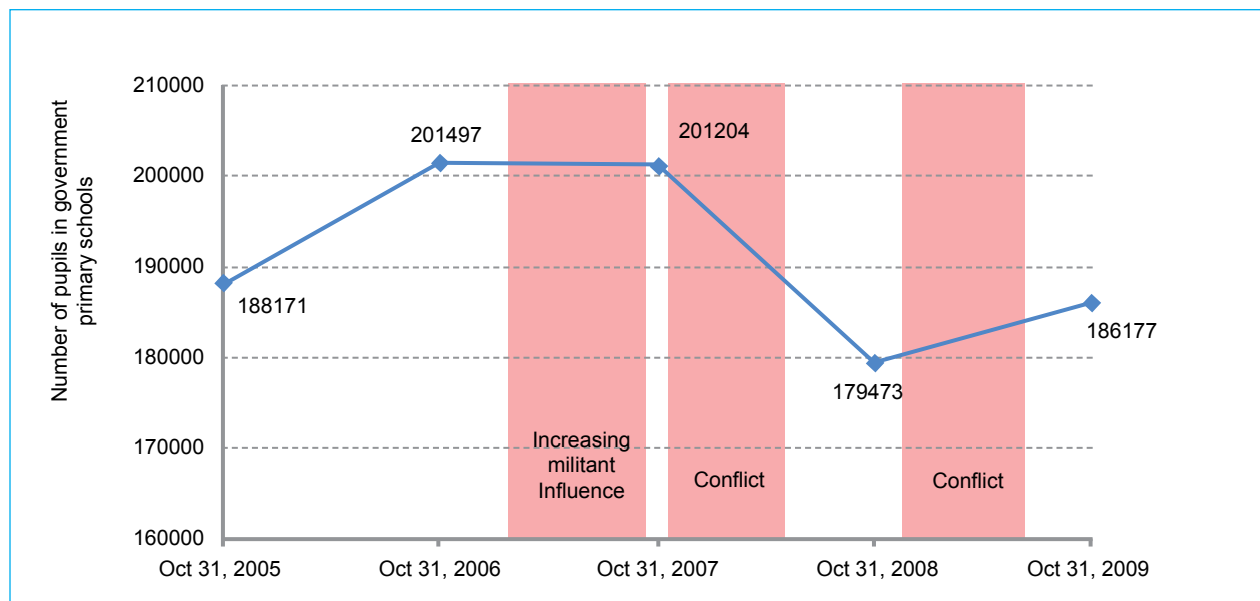
¹⁰³ In May 2010, the name of the province was changed from North West Frontier Province (NWFP) to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

also less likely to survive to the last grade. The national school census data from 2007 show that the survival rate for the conflict affected parts of the country are up to 10 percentage points lower than the national average, and up to 15 percentage points lower for girls (Aturupane, 2009).

- Bangladesh is prone to all types of environmental disasters, frequently disrupting education for many children. One study estimates that more than 1.5 million children could not attend school due to the cyclones Sidr in 2007 and Aila in 2009, and that the enormous damages to schools caused around 11.2 billion taka (approximately \$140 million) in losses. Initial assessments of the impact of cyclone Sidr showed that 9,655 educational institutions had been fully or partially destroyed. In the 12 most badly affected districts, more than three-quarters of all schools were damaged (Government of Bangladesh and UNDP, 2009; Humanitarian Practice Network, 2010; UNICEF, 2010).

A more detailed illustration of the damaging, and complex, impact of conflict on education access comes from the Swat valley in Pakistan. From 2007 to 2009, several rounds of fighting between Pakistani Taliban and anti-government militants and the Pakistani military took place in the Swat area, resulting in the displacement of millions of people. Figure 6.1 reveals how the number of pupils in government primary schools in the Swat district changed between October 2005 and October 2009. In the first period, from October 2005 to October 2006, the Swat area was relatively stable and participation in primary education increased by 7 per cent. However, in the first half of 2007, anti-government forces gained control over areas in the Swat valley and marked the beginning of greater instability. This insecure period between October 2006 and October 2007, was associated with a slight decline in children in primary education - there were 293 less students enrolled representing a 0.1 per cent decline. In late October 2007, conflict caused 400,000-900,000 IDPs to flee the area and participation in primary education declined by 11 per cent from October 2007 to October 2008. Intense fighting also took place in the first half of 2009, but is associated with a slight increase in school participation. The research suggests that the modest improvement recorded by October 2009 could be related to families' eagerness to send back their children to school as soon as the fighting ended in July 2009 (EPDC, 2010).

Figure 6.1 Number of pupils in government primary schools in the Swat valley, October 31, 2005 to October 31, 2009



Source: EPDC, 2010.

In Pakistan, and elsewhere, massive displacement of people within countries and across borders is a defining feature of widespread conflict. Recent data from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) help to shed some light on the participation in education for refugee children and youth in South Asia. While collecting reliable data on school enrolment for refugees remains a challenge – and the data should therefore be treated with great caution – some interesting findings do emerge (all figures below are cited in Dryden-Peterson, 2011):

- There are marked differences in refugees' school enrolment between the different regions in the world, in particular for those living in urban areas. At the primary education level, gross enrolment rates for urban refugee children range from an average of 46 per cent in Africa to 90 per cent in

the Middle East and Northern Africa. The primary education GER for urban refugee children in South Asia, at 75 per cent in 2009, stands just above the global average of 70 per cent¹⁰⁴.

- Access to secondary education for urban refugees in South Asia is very low. While the global secondary education GER for urban refugees is 30 per cent, only 10 per cent of urban refugees in South Asia are enrolled in secondary education.
- There are some notable variations in participation across different refugee camps. In Pakistan, some camps report to have primary education GERs of 0 per cent (probably because there is little or no provision of schooling available) while other camps report GERs of 80 per cent and above.

Frequently, emergencies exacerbate already existing patterns of exclusion in society. With limited ability to cope with economic shocks, poor households are likely to be the worst affected by violence and disasters. A common feature of emergencies is also that they hit areas where levels of poverty are already high. In Bangladesh, for instance, the char areas along the Brahmaputra and Jamuna rivers have a high concentration of poor people with limited access to education. Frequent flooding in these areas adds to the already difficult economic situations of poor families, which in turn have negative effects on children's schooling.

It is a challenge to isolate the effect of conflict and natural disasters on children's education from other sources of exclusion, such as those related to poverty and socio-cultural norms, as these factors act together and reinforce each other. Nonetheless, a growing body of research conducting quantitative analysis across, as well as within countries, points to devastating effects of conflicts on education, including significant declines in both education expenditures and enrolment during periods of war (Lai and Thyne, 2007; Justino, 2011).

6.3 Emergencies – a major obstacle to education

“As a result of the ethnic conflict in our area, our family life was a bitter experience. We did not have a decent place to live and we were pushed into poverty. The continuous displacement and losing our properties and being separated from our siblings, relatives and friends have affected our mental ability and totally destroyed our eagerness for studies. Gradually schools also closed and their activities also ceased.”

- Sameera from Kilinochchi, Sri Lanka (Sri Lanka OOSCI Study)

The damaging effect of conflict and natural disasters on education is evident across the countries in South Asia. But what are the mechanisms through which emergencies undermine education opportunities? This section looks at three broad mechanisms which separately, as well as together, act as powerful breaks for education progress:

- direct attacks on education;
- forced displacement; and
- utilization of public resources towards military spending.

These mechanisms are important not just in terms of understanding the problems involved, but also for developing more effective responses.

When violence attacks children, teachers and schools

Education is affected by the changing nature of conflicts. One distinctive feature of several of the recent conflicts globally, and mirrored in South Asia is the deliberate targeting of civilians. Unlike previous conflicts, the targeting of civilians has increasingly become part of deliberate war strategies carried out by armed groups.

The intensified levels of violence against civilians have increased the risks facing children and young people. With insecurity mounting, many parents have to consider whether it is safe to send their children

¹⁰⁴ Primary education GER for South Asia and the global average are estimated from a chart in Dryden-Peterson, 2011.



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A boy covers his face after returning to his damaged school in Batticaloa District, Eastern Province, Sri Lanka. The school was evacuated when government and Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam forces exchanged fire in the area. This photo was taken in September 2007.

to school. Each year, the UN Secretary General publishes a report on the situation of children in armed conflicts. In the 2011 report, the Secretary General pays special attention to attacks on schools and hospitals and expresses his deep concern about the growing trend of such attacks.¹⁰⁵ South Asia figures prominently in the UN reporting. Of the four countries covered in this report, the United Nations points to violations against children in armed conflicts in India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka ¹⁰⁶.

Attacks on education take many forms. They include targeted killings of students and teachers, as well as threats of attacks, abductions, forced recruitments and sexual violence. Common attacks also include the destruction of schools, looting and military use and occupation of school buildings. The following are some recent examples in South Asia:

- In India, the armed conflict between Maoist insurgents – known as Naxalites - and government forces put school children at great risk. Between 2006 and 2009, nearly 300 schools have been reported blown up by the Maoists and have disrupted the education of tens of thousands of India's most marginalised children. Government security forces have occupied school buildings and these occupations have further added to children's insecurity and reduced access to schooling (Human Rights Watch, 2009; GCPEA, 2011).

¹⁰⁵ Attacks on schools and hospitals by parties to a conflict is one of the six grave violations of child rights in armed conflict identified by the UN Secretary-General in his 2005 annual report. The recruitment and use of children by parties to a conflict used to be the only trigger to get a party listed in the annex to the Secretary-General's report and the establishment of a country task force on monitoring and reporting the grave violations. After the UN Security Council Resolution 1998 on the protection of children in armed conflict (adopted in July 2011) attacks on schools and hospitals also get parties listed and triggers the establishment of a country Monitoring and Reporting Task Force. For more information see: <http://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/>

¹⁰⁶ The report contains information on 22 country situations in the world. Apart from India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and Nepal are also included from South Asia.

- In Sri Lanka, large numbers of schools turned into temporary shelters for IDPs or the military during the last phase of the conflict from 2006 to 2009. Both the LTTE and government security forces have been reported to have attacked schools, causing the death and injury of civilians. By September 2007, a total of 261 schools were reported to have been damaged or destroyed and school attendance was reported to be as low as 80 days out of 210 in 2007. Forced recruitment of child soldiers, mainly by the LTTE, was made of Tamil children, their own ethnic group. Nearly two-thirds of recruited child soldiers were boys, and one-third girls. In May 2009, children – some as young as 9 years – were reported to have been abducted from IDP camps. Some of these children were taken for ransom while others were abducted by paramilitary forces for questioning over links to the LTTE (UNESCO, 2010). Impact of the above is still noticeable, e.g. in the lower learning achievements of directly-affected children.
- Girls' schools have been systematically targeted by Taliban forces in Pakistan's Swat valley. On December 24, 2008, the Taliban announced on the radio a deadline of 14 January for all girls' schools to close. As a result of the announcement, at least 400 private schools closed and prevented around 40,000 girls attending school. While the Taliban later decided to lift the ban for the first four grades, many parents were too afraid to let their children go to school. The situation was also dangerous for female teachers, as the Taliban had issued orders for women not to leave their homes without the company of men. In May 2009, government forces entered the Swat valley, causing mass displacements and the stoppage of schooling (O'Malley, 2009).

Besides direct attacks, emergencies also cause less visible threats to children's well-being and learning. Most notably, children exposed to war and disasters often suffer from traumatic events such as shootings, destructions, injuries and loss of family members. One survey of children ages 9-15 in Sri Lanka showed extensive exposure to traumatic events related to the conflict and the tsunami, causing symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder and weak psychosocial functioning (Catani, Schauer et al., 2010). Research from some conflict-affected areas highlights the negative impact of traumatic experiences on children's ability to learn. In Sri Lanka, a study of children exposed to the conflict found lasting interference of traumatic events with children's daily lives, including reduced memory performance and lower school achievements in Tamil and English (Elbert, Schauer et al., 2009).

Forced displacement as a barrier to children's education

There is still a common belief that emergencies and displacement are short term and occasional events. Yet a large number of emergencies last for many years, with waves of continuing violence, destruction and displacement. By the end of 2009, more than half of the world's refugees had been displaced for more than five years (UNESCO, 2011). Long lasting and recurrent emergencies deprive many displaced children and youth of education, and with it their long-term life opportunities.

In Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, the total number of refugees (displaced across national borders) and IDPs (displaced within their own country) was estimated at 4.3 million at the end of 2010 (UNHCR, 2011; IDMC, 2011b). According to the UNHCR, Pakistan hosts the largest number of refugees in the world - 1.6 million by the end of 2012 - nearly all of them from Afghanistan. While reliable numbers of out-of-school displaced children do not exist, available evidence show that in many cases, displaced children in the region are disproportionately denied their right to education.

To a large extent, the barriers to education in displacement are similar to the barriers in any emergency setting. Most notably, widespread poverty and lack of school infrastructure act as two strong factors hindering the demand and supply of education in emergencies (Dryden-Peterson, 2010). But, education access for displaced children and youth can be even more challenging.

One common obstacle for displaced populations' access to education is the need for official documentation. When people are forced to flee, they frequently lose identity documents. Without such documentation, it can be difficult for children to register for schooling. To obtain replacement documents can be even more difficult, sometimes making people return to the areas they come from although the area might not be safe. Some years ago, the Ministry of Education in Sri Lanka was put under pressure to release a national circular which relaxed the requirements for registration of IDP children, as the formal requirements prevented their school enrolment (Mooney and French, 2005).



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On 10 September 2011, a boy wades through a school courtyard in the village of Fatehpur, near Badin, a city in Sindh Province, Pakistan. The school has been turned into a camp for families displaced by flooding. By 26 September 2011, over 5.4 million people – including 2.7 million children – had been affected by monsoon rains and flooding in Pakistan. The crisis came one year after the country’s 2010 monsoon-related flooding disaster, which covered up to one fifth of the country in flood water and affected more than 18 million people, half of them children.

Conflict puts a strain on education financing

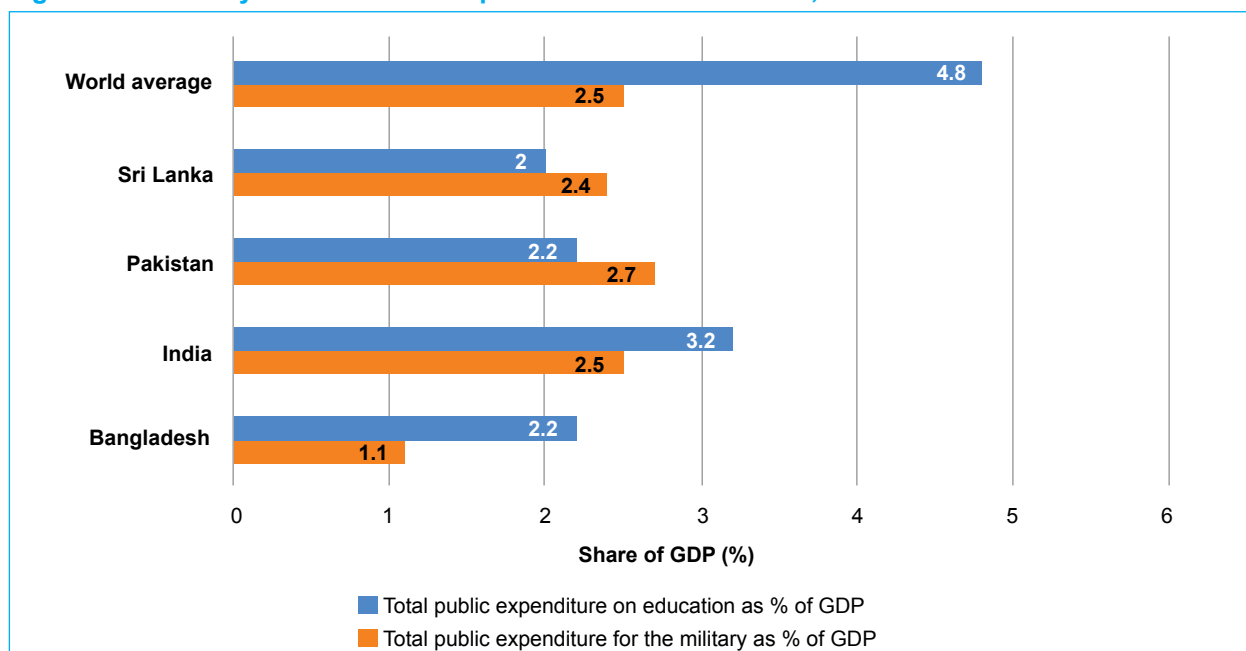
The mechanisms through which emergencies prevent education are not only direct, such as through attacks on schools and displacement of children. Several indirect mechanisms are also at play. High levels of public spending on the military can restrict public spending on education.

Figure 6.2 reveals that military spending in Pakistan at 2.7 per cent of GDP is slightly above the world average of 2.5 per cent. The percentage in India is 2.5 per cent, while it is 2.4 per cent for Sri Lanka. Bangladesh has the lowest rate of the four countries with military spending accounting for 1.1 per cent of GDP. At the same time, education expenditure as a share of national income is higher in India and Bangladesh than the country’s military expenditure, the reverse is true in Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

While the dynamics of conflict differ, Pakistan and Sri Lanka have both experienced armed conflict over a number of years and this has contributed to lower spending on basic social services. The situation is particularly serious in Pakistan, as over the past five years, the country is estimated to have been ranked by the EFA Global Monitoring Report as having the second highest number primary school-age of out-of-school children in the world next to Nigeria. As featured in the 2011 EFA Global Monitoring Report, even small transfers from the military budget to the education budget could make a big difference in terms of education provision. The report highlights that in Pakistan, one-fifth of the country’s military budget in 2007 would have been enough to finance universal primary education (UNESCO, 2011).

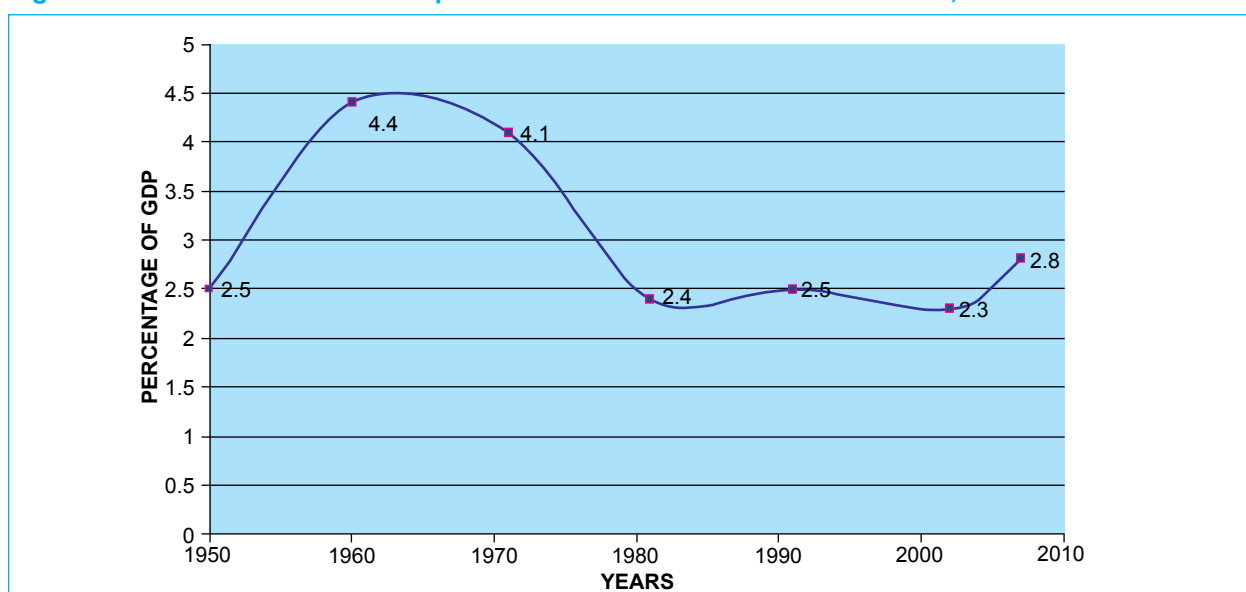
The protracted conflict in Sri Lanka has been a drain on education financing for nearly three decades. Historical data show that the country invested a relatively high share of its national income in education in the 1960s and 1970s, reaching a peak of 4.5 per cent of GDP in the mid-1960s. But since the 1980s, when the conflict with the LTTE started, Sri Lanka has only invested an average of 2.5 per cent of GDP in education (Figure 6.3). To a large extent, the decline in the share of the national income devoted to education can be attributed to the increase in military spending (Aturupane, 2009).

Figure 6.2 Military and education expenditure as share of GDP, latest available data



Sources: Education expenditure data are from the UIS Online Database accessed 16 January 2014; Data for Bangladesh is for 2009; Data for India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka are for 2011. The world average is the median data from the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2012. Military spending data is from SIPRI, 2012.

Figure 6.3 Trend in education expenditure as a share of GDP in Sri Lanka, 1950-2007



Source: Aturupane (2009).

6.4 Protecting the right to education in emergencies

Families affected by emergencies find education of utmost importance. Numerous testimonies from South Asia point to education as a priority need for displaced families and community leaders, sometimes even seen as more important than food, water, medicine and even shelter (Anderson and Hodgkin, 2010)¹⁰⁷.

¹⁰⁷ For instance, during the famine in Afghanistan in the winter of 2001-2002, when village leaders' requests for education was declined by aid groups in favour of food supply and other commodity distributions, community leaders then requested that teachers be categorized as the "most vulnerable" for priority rationing of food parcels. Education was so important to them that they wanted to make sure that teachers didn't leave their communities in search for food, wage labour, or other means of sustenance (Anderson and Hodgkin, 2010).

The vital role of education for enhancing child protection and providing daily structure for children in communities in disarray is gaining recognition. Two decades ago, few humanitarian aid workers saw education as part of their mandate. But persistent advocacy from a number of organizations such as UNICEF, Save the Children and the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) and committed individuals has played an important role in the now broader acceptance and inclusion of emergency education in humanitarian responses. Nonetheless, education remains the least well financed sector in emergency situations; globally, as well as in South Asia (OCHA, 2011).

Organising education in emergency settings is difficult. The provision of education needs to be tailored to the stage of the emergency and to the people concerned. Making it safe for children to attend school is paramount. So is the need to pay attention to the special requirements of displaced populations. Frequently, the state is not capable or willing to provide education, and communities can become isolated and left without access to basic social services. Yet experiences show that even in very difficult circumstances, there are strategies and initiatives that can keep education going. Often, communities are the driving force behind such initiatives, with NGOs and UN agencies playing a supportive role.

Based on experiences in South Asia and elsewhere, critical issues for the provision of education in emergencies include:

Responses need to start early: To restore a sense of normalcy in children’s lives, rapid response programming is required from the outset. Key factors for integrating education early on in emergencies have been an acceptance from humanitarian actors to think beyond purely education material assistance. UN agencies, most notably UNICEF, working together with governments and NGOs, have developed a range of standardized education responses to be implemented in emergencies. These responses are often documented in contingency plans developed prior to the occurrence of emergencies. These include provision of teacher training and learning space structure, school-in-a-box stationery kits, recreation kits, learning materials, child-friendly spaces and school feeding. Table 6.3 highlights the achievements of such efforts in some recent disasters.

Table 6.3 Examples of education in emergency responses, Pakistan

| Pakistan Earthquake 2005 relief phase | Pakistan Flood Response July 2011 to mid-March 2011 |
|--|--|
| Reoperationalisation of 3,112 schools | Provision of education supplies to 351,758 children (of whom 39% girls) |
| Procured 12,530 tents and 9,500 school-in-a-box kits | Establishing of Temporary Learning Centers, reaching 284,740 children |
| Reached 9,300 teachers with psychosocial training | Rehabilitation of 889 flood affected schools (of which about 1/3 were girls, schools) |
| Introduced hygiene education to 9,500 students in 100 schools | 6,246 teachers trained (about 1/3 women) in psychological support, disaster risk reduction and use of education supplies |
| Provided drinking water and latrines to more than 22,000 children in 160 schools | |

Sources: Kirk, 2008; and Alexander, 2011.

One essential factor for an effective emergency response is a close collaboration between its key actors, including government, community groups, UN agencies and INGOs. Another factor is the level of available funding. While improvements have been noted in terms of better coordination between education officials, UN agencies and NGOs, lack of funding for education in emergencies is still a major bottleneck. For instance, in response to the flooding in Pakistan in 2011, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Education Cluster established a comprehensive coordination system to support the Pakistani authorities in the emergency response efforts. A recent review of its effectiveness found it to be a strong mechanism for identifying gaps, allocating responsibilities, avoiding duplication, strengthening coordination and improving practices across more than 50 agencies and NGOs. Yet low levels of funding for education caused important gaps in response coverage with some of the most severely affected not being reached. One reason for the weak resource mobilization was the refusal to include education as an emergency sector in the first humanitarian appeal on the grounds that education was not seen as lifesaving. As of mid-March 2011, just above one-third of assessed education needs had been funded, compared to two-thirds for all sectors (Alexander, 2011). A review of the



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Children play in a UNICEF-supported children-friendly space at the JS Bank camp on the outskirts of the city of Sewan Sharif, in Jamshoro District, Sindh Province, Pakistan in this photo taken in 2011. The camp housed 7,000 people displaced by flooding, some of whom have since returned to their homes. The flooding began in mid-July 2010 and, at its height, affected 20 million people, half of them children.

coordination and humanitarian aid funding in Sri Lanka points to similar experiences for the response efforts in education in the last phase of the conflict in 2009 (Papadopoulos, 2010).

Use of flexible and innovative approaches: Conflict and natural disasters create a wide range of 'learning hurdles', calling for a high degree of flexibility and innovation if children and youth are to be reached. This is especially the case for displaced populations. Some common strategies to overcome access barriers for IDPs and refugees include the hiring of teachers from among displaced populations, negotiations with host governments to let refugee children attend local schools, issuing of temporary documentation for those who have lost their documentation, and the provision of non-formal and skills training programmes (Mooney and French, 2005; Ferris and Winthrop, 2010).

In the Indian state of Tamil Nadu, the Organization for Eelam Refugees Rehabilitation (OfERR) has developed an innovative education programme for some 65,000 Tamil refugees living in more than 100 camps. Set up already in 1984, OfERR encourages Sri Lankan refugees to pursue their education through various non-formal and formal routes of learning. It cooperates with the Tamil Nadu education authorities, which let nearly all refugee children attend school and some 600 students from the refugee camps go to state universities. OfERR provides financial assistance to the university students and in return, these students are obliged to provide tuition to younger refugee students. OfERR also provides a variety of skills training programmes, including for instance tailoring and gem-cutting. When they arrived in the mid-1980s, most Sri Lankan refugees could not read or write. Today, this refugee population is not only literate, but well educated with a growing number of qualified professionals (Saha, 2004; Ferris and Winthrop, 2010).

Protracted conflict are particularly challenging, as they result in a large number of children who miss years of schooling. While some young people will re-enter the formal education system, others consider themselves too old to return. Under such circumstances, different modules of accelerated learning can offer a second chance to not only acquire a basic education, but also a possibility to re-enter the formal education system later on through equivalency. Sri Lanka has extensive experiences of such programmes. Over a number of years, Catch-Up Education has been provided in the north and east of Sri Lanka, and with the end of the conflict in 2009, interventions to support accelerated learning have intensified. Under the responsibility of education authorities, UNICEF, Save the Children and other NGOs provide financial

and technical support for training and learning materials which will cover two years of the curriculum in programmes compressed to be completed in one year. In addition, a so-called Home-School Programme has been developed to provide modules for children's learning in Grade 1-5 (Williams, 2010).

Quality is important as well as quantity: The provision of education during emergencies tends to focus on getting children into schooling, frequently following an 'access first, quality later' approach (World Bank, 2005; and UNICEF, 2010). While expectations should remain realistic about what can be done, some recent reviews of emergency responses in South Asia found too limited attention to issues of education quality. For instance, the education response to the flooding in Pakistan in 2011 gave high priority to 'hardware aspects' of education such as rehabilitation and rebuilding of schools, but paid little attention to the quality of teaching and learning practices in temporary learning centres and schools (Alexander, 2011).

Emerging evidence stresses the essential role of education quality for children's wellbeing and cognitive development in emergency situations (Kirk and Winthrop, 2008). Education that is provided in a supportive and healing environment has proven to be one of the best ways in which psychosocial support can be provided to children (Nicolai and Triplehorn, 2003; Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 2004). To take into account the specific needs of children faced with calamities, UNICEF and a number of NGOs support child-friendly schools which aim to create a supportive and child-orientated environment (see earlier description in section 4.5). A major challenge in emergency circumstance in achieving a holistic approach to education provision, including having physically and emotionally safe environments, is that the efforts are very dependent on external aid funding, with a majority of governments yet to integrate it in their standard response (Pakistan OOSCI Study).

A widespread obstacle for achieving good quality education is the frequent lack of trained teaching staff in emergency settings. Recognising the critical role of teacher training for quality improvement efforts, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) works with an approach called 'healing classrooms'. The aim of this approach, which has been used in Afghan communities in exile in Pakistan, is to attune the education that takes place to the psychosocial wellbeing of children. In particular, the approach pays close attention to what and how teachers teach and encourage active participation of students in the process of teaching and learning (Kirk, 2008).

Educational planning is essential for emergency preparedness: In recent years, some important work has been undertaken in South Asia to include measures of disaster risk management in education sector strategies and policies. Depending on the assessed risks, measures vary across countries. Supported by agencies such as UNICEF and GIZ, Sri Lanka has put a strong emphasis on safer school constructions and on improving disaster preparedness skills among education officials, teachers and students. After the devastating impact of the tsunami in 2004, the Government of Sri Lanka adopted a Disaster Management Act which provides a legislative and institutional framework under a Central Disaster Management Centre (Sri Lanka OOSCI Study). In Bangladesh, disaster preparedness in the education sector is still a relatively new area of work. However, the National Disaster Management Advisory Committee is reported to work with the Ministry of Education to strengthen disaster awareness in the school curriculum. The Disaster Management Bureau organises regular education programmes to increase public awareness on preventive measures. In addition, several NGOs and UNICEF often as part of their regular programming provide training on disaster risk reduction for schools in high risk areas that promotes more child-friendly approaches to learning. Some initiatives have also been undertaken to find more long-term solutions to safe school infrastructure in Bangladesh. For instance, charity Shidulai Swanivar Sangstha, or 'Self Reliance', constructs schools on boats. To keep schools intact, there are also examples of schools being built on tall concrete stilts (UNICEF, 2009).

6.5 Conclusion

Education often fails to feature prominently as a priority in emergency situations response efforts – as well as media images – which mainly focus on such immediate threats as injuries and displaced people in need of food and shelter. This despite major global initiatives on this issue such as the Rewrite the Future campaign¹⁰⁸ and the Call to Action issued in September 2012 by world leaders, international organizations and civil society at a side meeting during the UN General Assembly. The Call to Action urges

¹⁰⁸ The Rewrite the Future campaign (2006-2010) led by Save the Children aimed at securing quality education for millions of children in conflict affected countries who are deprived their right to education. Source: Global Movement for Children website accessed 22 January 2014 see www.gmfc.org/en/action-within-the-movement/gmc-actions/actions-by-imperatives/7-educate-every-child/current-actions/101-rewrite-the-future

for immediate attention to the education of children in crisis zones by protecting schools from attacks, significantly increasing humanitarian aid for education and planning and budgeting for emergencies before they occur.¹⁰⁹ The Call to Action was issued to reinforce the 2010 UN General Assembly resolution on the Right to Education in Emergencies. The resolution calls on “States to ensure right to education for affected populations in all phases of emergency situations.”¹¹⁰ The UN Secretary General’s Global, **Education First** initiative also upholds the right to education in conflict and humanitarian emergencies, reinforcing the UN General Assembly resolution.

Also in 2010, the inter-agency Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA) was established. The GCPEA brings together various international organizations from the fields of education in emergencies and conflict-affected fragile states, higher education, protection, international human rights, and international humanitarian law who were concerned about on-going attacks on educational institutions, their students, and staff in countries affected by conflict and insecurity.¹¹¹

While such efforts are obviously important, humanitarian emergencies caused by conflict and natural disasters also cause less visible threats to the lives of children and youth by destroying their learning opportunities. In view of the long term and cyclical character of conflict and disasters in South Asia, a far higher priority to education in emergencies is needed in the region.

To sum up the findings from this chapter, several issues stand out as particularly important:

- Conflict and natural disasters continue to hold back progress in education in South Asia. However, the scale of the impact of emergencies on the number of out-of-school children remains largely hidden, partly because data collection is very difficult in emergency situations.
- Attacks on school, teachers and education institutions continue to occur in the region. Also the occupation of education institutions, sometimes used as a deliberate strategy to interrupt education also has a damaging impact on the wellbeing of children and their right to education. Within the provision of the UN Security Council Resolution 1998, increased commitment needs to be invested in acting upon reported ‘attacks on schools and hospitals’ through the UN Security Council-mandated Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism so that victims of attacks receive tangible support. Also education should be placed high on the humanitarian and rights agenda for schools to be designated as conflict-free zones respected by all parties.
- Poverty, insecurity and forced displacements act as mutually reinforcing barriers to participation in education in emergency settings. Yet experiences show that even in very difficult circumstances, it is possible to find ways to keep education going.
- Current Sector Education Plans and long-term strategic plans insufficiently take emergencies into consideration as part of their responsibilities: not in preparedness efforts nor in response. This is reflected in lack of specific and targeted interventions within the plans as lack of budgets.¹¹²
- Flexible and innovative programmes exist to attract children and youth to schooling among affected populations, but low levels of funding undermine effective responses and lack of equivalency undermines the future education opportunities. Unless rapid progress is made in raising more funds for expanding and improving learning opportunities in emergencies, education that is truly for all, will remain a distant goal in South Asia.

As mentioned in the Call to Action, “education cannot wait” even in times of humanitarian crisis. Thus international laws should be enforced to protect children, schools and teachers from attacks. Humanitarian aid for education must be increased, and planning and budgeting for emergencies before they occur must be strengthened.

¹⁰⁹ More information about the Call for Action is available from the UNICEF website accessed 22 January 2014, www.unicef.org/media/media_65935.html

¹¹⁰ UN website accessed 22 January 2014, www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2010/ga10964.doc.htm

¹¹¹ GCPEA website accessed 22 January 2013, www.protectingeducation.org

¹¹² Global Partnership for Education website accessed 22 January 2014, www.globalpartnership.org/news/367/22/Call-for-Action-Education-Cannot-Wait/d,Whats%20New

7. Conclusion

This concluding chapter sums up the key findings from the report, provides a set of recommendations, and some suggestions for further areas of research. The final section makes some recommendations for strengthening data sources.

7.1 Key findings

Number of out-of-school children

South Asia has seen significant achievements in strengthening education systems and getting more children to school. Enrolment rates in primary education have reached 90 per cent in 2011 in most countries, up from 75 per cent in 2000. More importantly, this growth has been accompanied by a sizeable progress in enrolling girls, with net enrolment rates for the region indicating 88 per cent of the total primary school-going age girls are now in school, up from 68 per cent in 2000 (UIS Database accessed January 2014). National laws and policies have been introduced in line with the CRC and other international frameworks. Countries have committed to achieving the MDGs and the EFA goals. Across the region, strategies for a more equitable development, including in education, have been developed. Education has also been identified as a major priority area in the Post 2015 development agenda discussions.

Yet, the unfortunate reality is that South Asia is facing challenges with the high number of children being denied schooling. The magnitude of the numbers of out-of-school children in the region remain staggering despite efforts towards universal primary and basic education. An analysis of household surveys show that a total of 27 million children are out of school in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. This comprises 17 million children of primary school-age (ages 5-9 in Pakistan and Sri Lanka, and ages 6-10 in Bangladesh and India) and 9.9 million children of lower secondary school-age (ages 10-12 in Pakistan, 10-13 in Sri Lanka, and 11-13 in Bangladesh and India). Primary school-age children not in school make up more than half (63 percent) of the total number of children out of school. The vast majority of out-of-school children live in India mainly because of its large school-age population; very few live in Sri Lanka because of its relatively small population and high rates of school attendance. The majority of excluded children in each of the three largest countries live in rural areas. Pakistan has the highest urban-rural gap in rates of school exclusion.

UIS data which are sourced from administrative data in countries also show an estimated 26.6 million children not in school in the four countries alone. Of this, 1.5 million are primary school-age children and 25.1 are lower secondary school-age. India has the highest number of out-of-school Children at 17.8 million followed by Pakistan with 6.5 million. For the eight South Asian countries, UIS estimates a total of 7.57 million children between the ages 5 to 10 not in either primary or secondary schools. Another 25.29 million children between the ages 11 to 13 should be in secondary education but are not in school.

It should be noted that there are challenges when trying to calculate numbers of out-of-school children. Discrepancies arise when comparing participation rates in education and the number of OOSC generated from administrative and household survey data. The numbers from different data sources indicate the range of numbers of out-of-school children in a country. In countries with large populations, reaching the most accurate and exact number of out-of-school children would be very challenging. Having estimates from both administrative data and household surveys is thus crucial to get a better indication of the numbers of OOSC which is very important for informed policy and decision-making.

School exclusion is a significant problem in the three largest countries of the region:

- Pakistan has the highest rate of school exclusion for pre-school age children (51 per cent) and for primary school-age children (34.4 per cent), but this indicator falls to 30.1 per cent for lower secondary school-age children largely due to late entry in school.
- In Bangladesh, around a third (34 per cent) of pre-primary school-age children are not in school. The rate of school exclusion is lower for primary school-age children at 16.2 per cent but rises sharply for lower secondary school-age children at 30.7 per cent.

- For India, rates of non-participation in schooling for pre-school age children is 12.4 per cent and for primary school-age children, 6.4 per cent. The rate of school exclusion for lower secondary school-age children is 5.7 per cent. Given its large population size, India has the highest number of out-of-school children among the four countries with 11.9 million children not in school (ages 6 to 13).
- Sri Lanka has close to universal participation in primary and lower secondary schooling (with the caveat that the data do not cover some of the districts where conflict took place), and a small minority of pre-school age children who are out of school (<10 per cent). In terms of absolute numbers, an estimated 70,000 children ages 5 to 14 are out of school.

Profiles of out-of-school children

The profiles of out-of-school children show considerable heterogeneity across countries, with household wealth being the exception. Some of the key characteristics associated with school exclusion in the four countries are:

- *Household wealth*: low economic status is very clearly negatively correlated with school exclusion in the three largest countries, across Dimensions 1 to 3. This wealth disparity in school attendance is particularly marked in Pakistan across the dimensions, and for lower secondary school-age children in all four countries.
- *Gender*: gender gaps are largest for the poorest households and for lower secondary school-age children. School attendance rates are less for girls in Pakistan throughout the basic education cycle. In rural India, older girls are more likely to be excluded than older boys, while gender gaps are much smaller for primary school-age children and in urban areas overall. Girls in rural areas, particularly those from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in India also have higher rates of exclusion. In Bangladesh, boys are more excluded in both primary and lower secondary education.
- *Urban-rural location*: across the four countries children living in rural areas and in urban slums have a higher chance to be out of school. The urban-rural gap is highest in Pakistan. The aggregate picture of urban-rural divide for Bangladeshi children conceals pockets of very high rates of exclusion in urban slums. In metropolitan slums in Bangladesh, children are 2.5 times more likely to be excluded from school than the national average. In India, rural children also face a schooling disadvantage, but the urban-rural gap is smaller. Research from India also notes that deprivation in urban areas tends to be highly concentrated in specific groups (mainly slum dwellers and street children), and the schooling situation for these children is similar to the most disadvantaged in rural areas. Sri Lanka too has pockets of high exclusion: older children living in tea estates have markedly higher rates of school exclusion than the average.
- *Geographical location*: children living in Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh in India have significantly higher rates of exclusion compared with the national average. This is the same for children in Sylhet in Bangladesh, and Balochistan in Pakistan. In Sri Lanka, about 10 per cent of lower secondary school-age children living in tea estates are out of school compared with the 3 per cent proportion in rural and urban areas. Areas experiencing conflict and emergencies also have higher numbers of OOSC. In Bangladesh for example access to education is lowest in specific areas with high concentrations of poor and vulnerable people due to a combination of geographic, climatic and socio-economic factors.
- *Social groups*: in India, school exclusion is considerably more prevalent among Muslim children, and among older children from socially disadvantaged groups. The average rate of exclusion for primary school-age children from Scheduled Castes is 5.6 per cent and Scheduled Tribes 5.3 per cent compared to the 3.6 per cent national average. Girls from Scheduled Castes have the highest rates of exclusion at 6.1 per cent. Various research has also shown that children with a minority language as mother tongue are disproportionately excluded. In Bangladesh, children in the Chittagong Hill Tracts which is home to ethnolinguistic minorities have lower enrolment rates than their counterparts in Khulna, Rajshahi and Barisal.
- *Child labourers*: the incidence of child labour varies from 3 per cent in Sri Lanka to 16 per cent in Pakistan. In India and Bangladesh, an estimated 12 per cent and 9 per cent of children are engaged in child labour. In all four countries, school attendance rates for child labourers are lower than for other children of the same age. Generally, this disparity is much greater for children living in Pakistan and for older children across the countries. As children age, they are much less likely to combine school and work. More than 90 per cent of child labourers in Pakistan are out of school.



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- *Children with disabilities:* children with disabilities are less likely to enrol and complete a full cycle of basic education. An estimated 90 per cent of children with disabilities in the developing world do not go to school. In India, 38 per cent of children ages 6 to 13 who have disabilities were found to be out of school.
- *Children in emergency settings:* children that live in areas where regular life and hence education systems are disrupted by emergencies are often excluded from schooling. All four countries are facing such challenges: (i) children living in conflict-affected northern and eastern areas of Sri Lanka have lower school participation than the national average, particularly at lower secondary level (data from 2007); (ii) cyclones in Bangladesh in 2007 and 2009 meant that more than 1.5 million children could not attend schools; (iii) widespread violence in the Swat valley in Pakistan in 2007 led to mass fleeing of internally displaced people (IDPs) and a marked drop in school attendance; (iv) some schools in India have been closed due to civil strife related causes; (v) school attendance rates for refugee children are comparatively low, and access to secondary education is particularly low for urban refugees.

Patterns of exclusion

In addition to the profiles of children who are most excluded from schooling opportunities, it is also crucial to understand the patterns of exclusion to understand better the underlying causes. Below are some patterns observed in the four countries based on the OOSCI studies.

Amongst children who are out of school, there is a group that is not likely to enter primary school. This is affecting a strikingly high proportion of excluded children in Pakistan (51 per cent) and in India (39 per cent). At the same time, 39 per cent of OOSC in Pakistan and 31 per cent in India are expected to enrol at a later stage. They will enter school “older” than their peers putting them at risk of dropping out. In Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, the significant portion of out-of-school children are those who have dropped out from school at 68 per cent and 48 per cent, respectively. A better understanding of these patterns will help tailor policies and interventions to each group of children: those who have dropped out from school, those who are likely to enter late, and those who will never see the inside of a classroom.

The problem of children enrolling at an older age than the grade appropriate age, along with repetition and dropout is leading to a major age-grade discrepancy in school attendance in the three largest countries in the region. The situation is most acute for Pakistan, and appears to be driven largely by children entering



primary school late. In Bangladesh, repetition is the major cause of overage attendance. Studies show that being overage is a risk factor for dropping out. Both late enrolment and repetition are phenomena that demonstrate a sub-optimal efficiency of the education system and reflect inappropriate use of resources. To have the right to education of all eligible children fulfilled, these challenges need to be addressed.

Dropout is a major problem in the three largest countries of the region across the basic education cycle (from primary to the end of lower secondary). Survival rates are alarmingly low at primary level in Bangladesh, such that 40 per cent of children who enter the cycle drop out before they reach the final grade; the comparable figure is 20 per cent in India. Dropout rates by grade are high in Pakistan which also points to low survival rates. Transition between the primary and lower secondary education is also a point of high dropout in the three largest countries: in India and Bangladesh, about 20 per cent of final year primary students are lost by the education system and do not transition to lower secondary education. In Pakistan, the dropout rate in the last grade of primary is 43 per cent. In Sri Lanka, 3 per cent of primary students do not transition to lower secondary education.

With respect to children in primary education who are at risk of dropping out (Dimension 4), the characteristics of exclusion vary somewhat across the four countries. In India, students in rural areas have markedly lower primary survival prospects than urban students. It should be noted that the primary education survival rate for urban areas masks disparities between children in urban slum areas and other urban children. The survival rate for urban areas could also be overestimated if children from rural areas move to urban schools during the primary education cycle. There is not much variation in primary survival rates by gender or rural-urban residence in Bangladesh or Sri Lanka. In Pakistan, current primary dropout rates for rural children are considerably higher than for urban children. Some disparities are also evident in the transition rate from primary to lower secondary education: again Indian rural students have far lower transition rates than their peers in urban areas (although again this may be overestimated). In Bangladesh, the gender gap in transition rates is evident with boys having lower rates than girls.

At the same time, in Bangladesh, contrary to the gender disparity found in rates of transition from primary to lower secondary education, female students are more likely to drop out from lower secondary grades than male students. This suggests that although fewer boys reach lower secondary education than



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girls, those that do make it, are more likely to be retained. There are some similarities in the four countries in relation to characteristics of children in lower secondary education who are at risk of dropping out (Dimension 5): rural children are more likely to drop out. India's rural children are at a disadvantage over those in urban areas in terms of lower secondary survival rates. In Pakistan, children living in rural areas have markedly higher dropout rates by grade.

Barriers to school participation and policy responses

Efforts to improve school participation in the four countries over the past decade have mainly focused on easing quantitative supply-side barriers (e.g. building schools) and mitigating economic demand-side barriers (e.g. school-fee abolition). These approaches have generated a large influx of children enrolling in schools since the late 1990s. Furthermore, the impact of the mix of programmes, such as school fee abolition and concerted community based efforts around the UN Girls Education Initiative (UNGEI), increased enrolment rates in South Asia, reaching 89 per cent in 2011 from 75 per cent in 2000. At the same time, policies and programmes to address socio-cultural demand-side barriers such as those related to child marriage and child labour have scope for improvement. In reference to the interventions addressing supply-side barriers, systemic quality education sector reforms which impact classroom level have remained elusive. This could be related to disappointing progress in learning achievements and high level of drop-out in the South Asia region. Reforms to governance and management systems have been partial, and critical system-level bottlenecks remain, especially in the rural and other marginalized areas which experience most challenges with out-of-school children.

Drawn from this study's Chapter 4, below is a summary of some of the noteworthy policy responses to the main categories of barriers to schooling facing different profiles of excluded children. It should be noted that although the link between barriers and profiles seem somewhat simplified: in reality, profiles of out-of-school children usually consist of multiple characteristics each with a reduced likelihood of attendance. The barriers related to these multiple characteristics reinforce each other and lead to exclusion.

Supply-side barriers

Improving the capacity of the schooling system has been a high priority of South Asian governments and societies overall. Large-scale construction programmes and PPPs in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan,

have delivered a considerable number of additional classrooms in regular formal schools. At the same time, private sector provision in Pakistan and India (to a large extent unregulated) has driven much of the growth in capacity. Alternative models of formal schooling have proved to be an important way of reaching some groups of vulnerable out-of-school children, for example lower secondary school-age girls from marginalised social and religious groups in India, and children in remote areas in Bangladesh. Non-formal basic education programmes are widespread in some countries, and provide innovative and flexible learning opportunities for OOSC. Increasingly, NFE programmes have equivalency with the formal system. For instance, in Bangladesh, learning centres under the BEHTRUWC project provide life skills-based non-formal basic education in the six largest cities for working children aged 10-14 years who have either never been to or have dropped out of school.

While there are many attempts in creating alternative pathways to basic education for children who dropped out and tend to be overage or for children who will never be reached by formal schooling, investment in these programmes is not sufficient to cover all eligible children. Second chance education, therefore is not a reality for the millions of children currently out of school. Even for children participating in non-formal education, the investment per child is much lower than for children in formal schools. This makes it much less likely for OOSC to return to school or enrol in school for the first time and obtain the same learning as their non-excluded peers.

Interventions to improve the quality of schooling have been numerous and some show positive results, but generally these have not been on a scale to make an impact on the majority of learners, especially the most vulnerable children. Water, sanitation and hygiene interventions in the four countries vary, from improving infrastructure to school-based programmes on child health and hygiene education. Some are integrated into a holistic set of school improvement measures. Such health-promoting interventions aim to benefit all students, including adolescent girls who need sanitation facilities like separate functioning toilets. The education component of WASH interventions have proven to be particularly important for children from families where parental education levels are low.

Economic demand-side barriers

Commitment to 'free education' has resulted in fee abolition in all four countries and the provision of a wide range of programmes, such as incentives in the form of free uniforms, stationery, waiving of exam fees, and different scholarship schemes. Large-scale conditional cash transfer programmes have also been introduced to off-set the remaining direct costs of schooling, particularly in Bangladesh and Pakistan. There are also large-scale poverty alleviation programmes in place in all four countries. Noting the poor health and nutritional status of young children, particularly from poorer families, large-scale school feeding programmes have been introduced. This is also an incentive to households to send their young children to school. These interventions will largely benefit children from poorer households, rural areas, and also, for some of the CCT programmes, older girls.

Socio-cultural demand-side barriers

There have been relatively few effective interventions to tackle prominent socio-cultural barriers to school attendance. Community mobilisation campaigns have been successful to some extent in fostering positive attitudes to education and changing socio-cultural norms in Bangladesh and Pakistan (related to gender roles and tolerance of child labour). The physical and social restrictions placed on older girls in some communities has been alleviated in some cases by provision of more single-sex school places closer to home, and single-sex residential facilities (supply-side responses). Efforts to delay the age of marriage for girls via conditions set in some CCT programmes (as already mentioned), have had, at most, a modest effect in the short term as seen in Bangladesh. Some reproductive health programmes have had spin-off benefits related to combatting child marriage. Some relatively small-scale child protection programmes provide care and welfare for children deprived of a safe family environment, such as children living and working on the streets, though there is no significant evidence that these have directly improved school enrolment or attendance beyond the limited target group.

System bottlenecks

The main programmes in place to mitigate bottlenecks are governance reforms, often in the context of decentralisation. The aim has been to promote decision-making and resource allocation based on local needs - a thinking pushed as part of the formulation of Education Sector Plans or Sector Wide Approaches. The delegation of authority to lower levels of the education administration, and to school-based management bodies has been partial: sometimes initiatives have positive impact, especially on reasonably performing schools. But these positive impact have been offset by unwanted effects in terms

of weak administrative bodies (e.g. districts, blocks, upazillas, etc.) and schools not able to take charge and make use of the transferred responsibility in a constructive manner. The provision of direct grants to schools in Bangladesh to support school-level improvement plans has demonstrated that this funding mechanism can work well. Sri Lanka is applying an equity-based decentralised funding mechanism which invests more in under-performing schools in provinces. Systems for delivering textbooks on a vast scale in Bangladesh and India have become much more efficient over the decade.

Barriers to schooling in emergency situations

Since emergency situations are characterized by providing basic services in systems that are temporarily non-functioning or breaking down, education responses in this setting are often initiated in parallel to the more traditional systems. In this context, some flexible and innovative programmes in the four countries include delivering schooling to children and youth in affected populations. These include interventions to support accelerated learning for children who have missed many years of schooling, some with equivalence to the formal system. To promote early response to emergencies, MOEs with the support of UN agencies and INGOs have developed and applied/implemented a range of standardised responses focussing on education provision, such as school-in-a-box kits, child-friendly spaces, and school feeding. Emergency preparedness is also increasingly integrated into education sector planning.

7.2 Key recommendations

This study provides important new insights into the characteristics of excluded groups of children in South Asia, the barriers they face in attending school and the major gaps in current education policy and programming on school participation across the four countries. This forms a rich evidence base for immediate policy action, and highlights areas where further research is warranted.

The profiles provide a rich picture of the characteristics of out-of-school children. However, due to data limitations the analysis did not pick up some specific groups of marginalised children which other studies suggest are disproportionately excluded from school. Such groups include: children living in urban slums and on the street, children from families who migrate seasonally for work, child refugees and internally displaced children, children with disabilities, and children who do not speak the national or official language(s). These groups merit further research to understand the multitude of barriers they face in attending school, so that they can be effectively targeted with interventions.

Taking stock of the profiles of excluded children, related patterns of exclusion and the existing range of interventions to address the barriers to school participation, there are some noticeable gaps and opportunities for strengthening existing programmes. Three general recommendations arise:

- 1. Increase public spending on basic education.** Public expenditure on education in the four countries is low by international standards with total public spending on education as a percentage of GDP only between 2-3 per cent. More importantly, budget priority for education seems to have stagnated in Bangladesh and India, and is falling in Pakistan. This is of particular concern in Pakistan, which has the highest rate of school exclusion in the region, and the largest wealth disparity in school participation. Although Sri Lanka does not face the same challenges, if the country were to make the shift to a knowledge society, the current levels of public spending on education would not be sufficient to make the required leap in quality and learning outcomes. Given the scale of the challenge of mitigating all the barriers keeping the 27 million children in the four countries out of school, it is clear that additional public financing along with more efficient allocation of resources is critical.
- 2. Continue to strengthen education sector-wide planning approaches and reflect increased opportunities for alternative pathways to basic education.** Sector-wide planning approaches should promote explicit objectives, coordinated action and large-scale integrated programming and financing mechanisms, in line with the type of holistic interventions needed. Sector plans should include appropriate strategies and resource provision that improve equitable education opportunities. This means significant scale up in the number and quality of alternative pathways to basic education, including for children affected by emergencies, increased emergency preparedness, and targeted and realistic interventions for specific groups of excluded children, in particular children with disabilities and ethnic and religious minorities.



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- 3. Implement more large-scale holistic interventions that address multiple barriers to schooling simultaneously.** Out-of-school children often face numerous and reinforcing barriers which single interventions cannot address effectively. For example, the high priority to measures to tackle economic barriers in the past decade seem appropriate in view of the strong negative association between school participation and household wealth. Yet almost all the other barriers disproportionately affect poor children too. This study has shown that excluded children from minority groups who are poor and come from rural areas often face multiple deprivations due to systemic bottlenecks, opportunity costs, and socio-cultural expectations. Barriers preventing some children going to school cannot be dealt with by the education sector alone. Policy responses need to address these overlapping barriers and thus need to be cross-sectoral to be effective.

At a more detailed level, the policy and thematic Chapters 4 to 6 identified some critical gaps in current strategies to mitigate the different types of barriers to school exclusion. Proposals to improve the impact of some existing programmes have also been discussed. The key recommendations are categorized according to the below focus areas:

I. Progressive investment in excluded children, weak schools and under-performing areas

- **Target children who are likely to never enter school** and improve equitable distribution of resources within the education system. An estimated 9.7 million Indian children and 4.8 million Pakistani children are not likely to ever go to school unless specific interventions are in place. The expansion across the region of alternative pathways to education is crucial to reach children who could not access or are pushed out by the traditional schooling system. By increasing investment in these programmes, including increasing the amount invested per pupil and ensuring equivalency, outreach to out-of-school children will be more equitable. Scaling-up some of the alternative models of education which are tailored to attract particular groups of marginalized children (e.g. child labourers, migrant children, and older adolescents) is also necessary so these children are equipped with basic literacy, numeracy and relevant life skills. Only when this is put in place can the majority of out-of-school children have access to learning opportunities.
- **Increase transition rates between the primary and lower secondary education cycle in the three largest countries.** Possible supply-side strategies include: delivering lower secondary education on the same site as primary schools (this has implications for infrastructure but also for teachers and is probably only feasible for primary schools above a certain size). On the demand-

side, costs for schooling rise substantially as the education level increases, so measures to offset these costs are needed for poorer children. Girls are less likely to transition to lower secondary education hence specific measures to improve their completion of the basic education cycle is crucial. There is also a need to address dropout and repetition in primary schooling so children can transition to lower secondary. A relatively high proportion of excluded children in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka have dropped out of school.

- **Continue to expand public provision of school (and pre-school) infrastructure targeted at areas where need is greatest, taking into account demand-side factors.** For example there is an acute shortage of schools for girls in rural Pakistan; and many primary schools in Bangladesh operate double shifts (and restricted learning hours) due to insufficient classrooms. To match rapidly increasing pre-school enrollment of children from urban and middle-income families, governments have to prioritize pre-primary provision in marginalized rural areas.
- **Provide schools and districts that perform below average in terms of retention and learning achievements with appropriate support and resources** in a needs-based manner. This might imply that some of the performance-based incentives schemes, such as per capita grants, matching grants for community contributions, and social audits as condition for additional cash transfers are not the best fitted programmatic response for under-performing schools. For example, experience in India has shown that under-performing schools improve more rapidly when they receive stronger personalized guidance, capacity building and on-location support from educational authorities and civil society organizations.
- **Invest in rural areas and urban slums** in terms of coverage and quality improvement, especially in the rational distribution of trained teachers to address the disparities in these areas and ensure the gaps do not worsen.

II. Inclusive and equitable education sector-wide approaches

- **Translate ambitious political commitment and progressive objectives of education plans into specific and equitable results to overcome disparities** in terms of gender, educational opportunities for children with disabilities, ethnic minorities and geographic discrepancies. Set targets that take into account the agreed results to be achieved through doable time-bound programmes with appropriate budget.
- **Ensure gender-sensitive, equitable and responsive budget allocations and utilization** by tracking expenditures and assessing planned versus utilized budget across urban-rural disaggregation, level of schooling, and geographic location. Identify bottlenecks that hinder implementation and limit absorption capacity. Address these bottlenecks starting with those that affect mostly marginalized groups and areas.
- **Make direct cash grants more beneficial for schools.** Direct cash grants have the potential to serve a number of purpose. First they give schools some autonomy to plan and respond to the needs of their particular students and community. Second they reduce the need for schools to levy additional (non-fee) charges on parents, which is a significant barrier for some poor families. School grants need to be predictable, timely, transparent, flexible and of appropriate value, to be effective and avoid a perverse impact such as increased risk of corruption. The possibility of varying the level of the public subsidy according to community poverty levels, as done in Sri Lanka, is an approach that should be considered as a means of narrowing differences in total spending on education (public and private) per student.
- **Explore ways to capitalize on public-private partnerships to expand provision, particularly of lower secondary education for disadvantaged students.** If public provision for secondary schooling does not match the demand, alternative (temporary) scenarios need to be explored taking into account that the government has primary responsibility to ensure the right to education. For example, private schools which receive public subsidies to expand enrolment and to serve disadvantage students. This can be done by having a transparent, competitive and open bidding process, and clear contracts which detail outputs and responsibilities for both parties.

III. Child-centered approach

- **Concerted action is necessary to eliminate corporal punishment**, which many children in the region are subjected to, making schools far from child-friendly environments conducive to learning. Laws prohibiting corporal punishment look likely to be in place in all four countries in the near future, which is a strong signal of intent, but this needs further attention, to ensure that social norms and practices are adjusted accordingly.
- **Improving teaching and learning processes at scale must be at the core of reform efforts.** There are many ways to start this process, but it is worth considering some of the successful models of child-centered pedagogy in the region as the basis for reform. Achieving change at scale in this area almost certainly requires interventions in curricula, learning materials, formative and continuous assessments, teacher education and management (including addressing high levels of teacher absenteeism). All of these reforms need to be carefully sequenced.

IV. Well-functioning, well-managed and accountable education systems

- **Promote age-appropriate enrolment and reduce age-grade disparity in the three largest countries.** Possible strategies include making pre-primary education a part of the basic education cycle so children are more likely enrol in Grade 1 at the appropriate age and are more 'school-ready'; undertaking campaigns at the community level at the start of the school year to encourage parents to enrol the children at the correct age; work with parents and communities to raise demand of quality education; changing the policy on repetition in Bangladesh in line with competency based assessment and automatic promotion to vastly reduce the need for children to repeat grades.
- **Reduce dropout rates in the primary cycle**, particularly in Pakistan and Bangladesh. To ensure that enrolled children stay in school and complete the full primary cycle, schools, resource centres, district education and social welfare authorities should be empowered, supported and held responsible for minimizing drop-out in their schools. Practices that reduce the risk of drop-out should be promoted in parallel fashion: systematically at policy and at school level. Hence, immediate results should be achieved in the areas of grade repetition (by continuous assessment instead of examination), remedial teaching (children falling behind receive additional in- and out-of classroom support), multi-lingual education for early grades of primary education (teachers from the community who speak the language should be recruited; children speaking their mother tongues when in school should not be penalized), encourage age-appropriate enrolment, zero tolerance for teacher absenteeism, make schools child-seeking schools (teachers visit family when child does not go to school for a prolonged time).
- **Improve key aspects of teacher management**, so that teachers have clear incentives to perform well in the classrooms, and, school-management committees have the capacity to reward and sanction as appropriate. The politicization of teacher recruitment and deployment also needs to be tackled if the wide disparities in class sizes, which favor urban areas, are to be reduced.
- **Ensure conducive environment for education programmes in emergency situations.** Flexible and innovative programmes exist to attract children and youth to schooling or alternative learning spaces among affected populations, but low levels and unpredictable funding undermine effective and continued responses. In addition, existing policies need to be reformed in order to address better the needs of emergency response such as the ability to print textbooks locally (with the textbook curriculum on the MOE website), equivalency given to non-formal education programmes, flexibility for enrolment in schools in host communities, etc.
- **Improve use of resources by increasing efficiency and effectiveness of programmes**, particularly those targeted at disadvantaged groups. The efficiency of some of the existing targeting mechanisms of large-scale CCTs could be improved considerably using measures, such as targeting based on poverty or geographic location. Consideration should also be given to the level of the cash transfer, in the light of high opportunity costs (as well as direct schooling costs). One innovative approach might be to target child laborers with a CCT. The profiles analysis could help refine profile of child laborers for effective targeting: for example amongst out-of-school children in Bangladesh older boys are particularly likely to be engaged in child labor. In addition, from an equity perspective, consideration should be given to include in the education cash transfers schemes children attending NFE or flexible programmes.

V. Accelerate efforts to mitigate socio-cultural barriers to schooling

- **Interventions to mitigate socio-cultural barriers to schooling need to be a higher priority** because there are relatively few effective interventions in place. Some of the key barriers are child marriage (and early childbearing) for girls, restricted physical and social mobility for older girls, discriminatory employment practices affecting minority communities, lack of information on the likely returns to education, social norms related to schooling and child labor, and social neglect and abuse of particular groups of marginalized children (e.g. children with disabilities). In seeking to mitigate gender gaps related to socio-cultural barriers, the profiles data suggest that it would be appropriate to target: poor families with primary-age children in Pakistan and Bangladesh, and older children in Pakistan, Bangladesh and rural India.
- **Invest vigorously in increased access for specific groups of marginalised children who do not show up in the aggregate OOSC profiles** (partly because of data constraints) but are disproportionately excluded from school as other data sources suggest. Such groups include: children with disabilities; children from ethnic minorities often with different languages; children from religious minorities; children living in urban slums, and on the street; children from families who migrate seasonally for work; and refugee and internally displaced children. Besides targeting these groups with education that takes into account their needs and specific circumstances, it also includes addressing discriminatory socio-cultural practices in the education system and society at large.
- **More cross-sectoral efforts at scale are needed between education, health, child protection and welfare.** It is clear that the barriers keeping children from school or pushing them out of school cannot be dealt with by the education sector alone. The involvement of central ministries (e.g. Planning, Finance, Prime Minister's office), which set country-level performance frameworks including targets on education participation, is critical in ensuring appropriate cross-sectoral incentives.

7.3 Some priorities for further research

This study raises a number of research questions related to school participation in the four countries and the region at large. Some priority areas for research are mentioned below grouped into three focus areas. The findings from this research should help to inform the policy debate on how best to mitigate school exclusion in the region, by filling important information gaps.

I. Focus on ECD and early grades in primary education

- A systematic review of the main types of ECD programmes available (costs, services, beneficiaries, impact, etc.) will be important to make informed policy decisions. Numerous different models of ECD operate in the region - from provision of pre-school education in primary school facilities to fully integrated ECD programmes which have education components; Having a clear sense of the various programmes available will help policy makers understand options for expanding provision of pre-schooling.
- Research on the impact of ECD /pre-primary education exposure of children on their retention and performance in primary education.
- Late entry to school is common, particularly in Pakistan. It would be useful to understand the main reasons behind this, and whether the comparatively early entry age of 5 years is relevant. (In South Asia, only Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Nepal have a primary school entry age of 5 years.)
- Studies on how and what type of multi-lingual education in the early grades of primary education improves enrolment, retention and learning achievements of children.

II. Focus on enhancing inclusion and learning

- Research on how and what quality improvements in schooling impacts enrolment, retention and learning achievements, and on how parents perceive quality of education.
- Noteworthy practices related to alternative pathways to basic education (e.g. NFE, flexible learning or accelerated programmes, etc.) for primary school-age and lower secondary school-age out-of-school children, including information on what is required (costs, services, beneficiaries, impact, etc.) to scale them up and/or expand these programmes.

- Noteworthy practices on mainstreaming primary school-age children to formal education.
- Noteworthy practices to meet the learning needs of children with disabilities, including on scaling up or expansion.
- Schooling and work decisions for children who drop in and out of schooling, including seasonal migrants. These children are comparatively difficult to track, and so some basic research is needed to establish their profiles, the scale of this pattern of schooling, and the factors which prevent these children spending sustained periods in school.

III. Focus on sector coordination and other issues

- Noteworthy practices in addressing public investment and alignment regarding different streams of schooling (e.g. secular and religious; formal and non-formal; public and private) for improved sector planning and resource prioritization with a focus on disadvantaged groups.
- The actual and perceived connection between school, work and future income. This could be much better understood, particularly for marginalised groups who do not have the same professional opportunities in the labour market.
- More data and research on the characteristics and barriers keeping children out of school (see data recommendations below).

7.4 Data recommendations

Section 2.2 in Chapter 2 highlighted some of the limitations of the data sources used in the study. During the planning stages for the country studies, each country team reviewed and documented a range of potential data sources available. Based on observations from the country team documentation, and from the data used for the profiles of out-of-school children, some recommendations for strengthening data sources on school participation and exclusion are:

- a) Ministries of Education should use and analyse household survey data on education to complement administrative (EMIS) data, particularly in designing policies, programmes and interventions for disadvantaged groups.
- b) Improve the quality of the data collected on pre-school programmes: establish an administrative data collection system which covers all service providers; use standardized definitions in both household surveys and in administrative data collection.
- c) Use standard definitions on dropout, out-of-school children and school types in administrative data collection systems and in household surveys to improve comparability, and enable better monitoring.
- d) In household surveys covering health and nutrition (and school attendance), collect additional data on selected health and nutrition indicators (anthropometrics) and on disabilities for children of school age (or a subset of children of school age).
- e) In the administrative data collection system, make efforts to tag schools located in urban slum areas so that separate indicators can be produced. Efforts should be made to obtain representative household survey based estimates of school participation for children living in urban slums — either through adjusting the sampling of existing surveys or by conducting a separate survey.
- f) Integrate the fragmented administrative data collection systems covering basic education in Bangladesh (see country report for details).
- g) Improve the coverage of the administrative data collection system in countries, particular in Pakistan to systematically include all types of public and private providers.
- h) When possible, administrative data collection, particularly in India, should try to collect data on children's age, including in pre-primary education (see country study for details).
- i) Where there are concerns about the quality of the school census data for particular reasons (e.g. potential inflation of enrolment data in response to incentives), conduct carefully designed sample surveys to validate the census data. Depending on the nature of the concern the design should be adjusted, and not necessarily simply recollect data from registers.
- j) Improve the data collection system, coverage and reliability of data on non-formal and flexible education programmes and use these for informed policy making, including increased investment.

Annex A Supplementary information for chapter 2

A.1 Definition of child labour

A.1.1 OOSCI definition

The following explanation of the definition of child labour used in the OOSCI is taken from the note prepared by UCW dated 31 May 2011: ‘Child Labour and out-of-school children: a statistical profile: 3-12’.

Child labour is a legal rather than statistical concept, and the international legal standards that define it are therefore the necessary frame of reference for child labour statistics. The three principal international conventions on child labour – ILO Convention No. 138 (Minimum Age) (C138), United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), ILO Convention No. 182 (Worst Forms) (C182) together set the legal boundaries for child labour, and provide the legal basis for national and international actions against it.

But the translation of these broad legal norms into statistical terms for measurement purposes is by no means straightforward. The international legal standards contain a number of flexibility clauses left to the discretion of the competent national authority in consultation (where relevant) with worker and employer organisations (e.g., minimum ages, scope of application). This means that there is no single legal definition of child labour across countries, and concomitantly, no single standard statistical measure of child labour consistent with national legislation across countries.

The resolution on child labour statistics adopted at the 18th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) in 2008 provides a first-ever set of global standards for translating the international legal standards on child labour into statistical terms.

The ICLS resolution states that child labour may be measured in terms of the engagement of children in productive activities on the basis of the general production boundary. The general production boundary, in turn, is a broad concept encompassing all activities whose performance can be delegated to another person with the same desired results. This includes unpaid household services (i.e., household chores) that are outside the more narrow System of National Accounts (SNA) production boundary.

Based on the measurement guidelines contained in the 18th ICLS resolution, and restricting the scope to children up to and including 14 years of age (the most common upper age limit for basic schooling), the child labour measure used in this study comprises three groups of children:

- (1) **5-11 year olds in economic activity** (i.e., those engaged in any activity falling within the SNA production boundary for at least one hour during the reference week). Economic activity covers children in all market production and in certain types of non-market production, including production of goods for own use. It includes forms of work in both the formal and informal sectors, as well as forms of work both inside and outside family settings;
- (2) **12-14 year-olds in non-light (or “regular”) economic activity** (i.e., those engaged in any activity falling within the SNA production boundary for at least 14 hours during the reference week); and
- (3) **5-14 year-olds in hazardous unpaid household services** (i.e., those engaged in the production of domestic and personal services for consumption within their own household, commonly called “household chores”, for at least 28 hours during the reference week).

The first two groups relate to ILO Convention 138, which stipulates a minimum age of at least 14 years in less developed countries for admission to employment or work (art. 2), but states that national laws may permit the work of persons from age 12 years in light work (art. 7). In determining the hours threshold for permissible light work, which is not defined explicitly in C138, the ICLS resolution recommends a cut-off point of 14 hours during the reference week, below which non-hazardous work can be considered permissible light work.

It should be noted that the second group of child labourers does not include those children working for less than 14 hours per week in hazardous work, although this group too falls technically within the definition of child labour.

The inclusion of the third group marks recognition of the fact that the international legal standards do not rule out a priori children's production outside the SNA production boundary from consideration in child labour measurement. The ICLS resolution, building on this recognition, recommends classifying those performing hazardous unpaid household services as part of the group of child labourers for measurement purposes, where hazardous unpaid household services, in turn, are defined as those requiring long hours; involving unsafe equipment or heavy loads; in dangerous locations; etc.

The ICLS resolution does not recommend a specific hours threshold for classifying household chores as hazardous (and therefore as child labour), and cites establishing hazardousness criteria as area requiring further conceptual and methodological development. In the absence of detailed statistical criteria for hazardousness, an hours threshold of 28 weekly working hours is used in the current paper, above which performance of household chores is classified as child labour. It should be kept in mind, however, that this threshold is based only on preliminary evidence of the interaction between household chores and school attendance, and does not constitute an agreed measurement standard.

The child labour indicator utilized in this study, therefore, represents a benchmark for international comparative purposes, but, is not necessarily consistent with (estimates based on) national child labour legislation, again owing to the flexibility clauses contained in the international legal standards and to the measurement issues discussed above.

A.1.2 Sri Lanka child activity survey definition

The Sri Lanka the child activity survey 2008/09 defined child labour as follows:

- for the 5–11-years age group, all children engaged in some form of economic activity excluding those who worked less than five hours per week in non-agricultural, non-hazardous activities as contributing family worker, and those who worked less than 15 hours per week as contributing family workers in agricultural, non-hazardous activities;
- for the 12–14-years age group, all children engaged in some form of economic activity excluding those who worked less than 15 hours per week in non-agricultural, non-hazardous activities, and those who worked less than 25 hours per week as contributing family workers in agricultural, non-hazardous activities; and
- for the 15–17-years age group, all children engaged in some form of economic activity excluding those who worked less than 44 hours per week in non-hazardous activities.

Note that the survey was unable to collect data from Northern Province and, consequently, figures may be distorted.

(ANAR)

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