



## **Introduction**

Singapore is one of the countries which progress toward EFA since 2000 was not fully reflected in the 2015 Education for All Global Monitoring Report (GMR) due to lack of sufficient data. The country has not submitted any enrolment data in pre-primary education to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) over the 1999 and 2012 period while data were provided only for the school years ending in 2007 to 2009. In addition, no enrolment ratios could be calculated by UIS due to inconsistencies between enrolment figures provided by the country and the United Nations population data from the 2012 population revision. In order to monitor progress made by Singapore across some of the EFA goals since 1999, the GMR Team relied on data provided by the Ministry of Education of Singapore upon a specific request. However, the data provided was only for primary education and could not allow to assess progress towards either to early childhood education or to gender parity at primary level. Moreover, the drop-out rates provided were turned into survival rates to last grade and were used to assess progress towards primary school completion.

Finally, it is important to note that the use of data from the national source meant using age-groups that are different from the ones agreed upon in the International standard classification of education system (ISCED) framework. The primary education structure as nationally defined refers to the 7-12 age group instead of the 6-11 used by UIS.

## **Primary education**

In 2000, Singapore was close to universal primary enrolment and has reached the target by 2012, with net enrolment ratio (NER) rising from almost 96% to 100%.

Access to school is an important step to universal primary education, but it is equally important to ensure that all children, who enrol in primary education, complete it. In terms of primary retention, all children who enter primary school reach at least the last grade, with a survival rate of 100% in 2012.

## **Learning achievements**

Since 1990s, there has been a great development in terms of international, regional as well as national assessments, with more countries covered. More specifically, Singapore participated in the different rounds of the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) and of the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), at primary level for both surveys.

Singapore is one of the highest performing countries in international learning assessments. The 2011 PIRLS results showed that almost all grade 4 primary school pupils had basic reading skills, with 99.7% reaching level 1 of the reading performance scale. Learning achievement in reading has improved since 2001 when the percentage of pupils at level 1 was 96%. The increase in learning outcomes benefited boys, which the proportion of those reaching level 1 in reading rising from 95% to 99.6% while that of girls went from 97.3% to nearly 100% over the period. Gender parity in learning achievement in reading is achieved in the country, with the GPIs of 1.02 in 2001, and at 1.00 in 2011. Such a pattern is rather an exception given the worldwide gender disparities in favour of girls in reading.

As for reading, basic learning skills science and mathematics are mastered by almost all primary school pupils, girls and boys as well. Results of the most recent TIMSS assessment in 2011 showed that more than 99% of grade 4 pupils reached level 1 in science performance scale, and this was already in the 2003 round. In mathematics, the percentage of grade 4 pupils performing at level 1 slightly increased from 98% to more than 99% over the same period. As in reading, there is no gender disparities in science and mathematics in grade 4 of primary education in Singapore.

## **Conclusion**

Singapore is certainly a high performing country at least in some of the EFA aspects analysed in this country profile. The country has achieved universal primary enrolment while ensuring that all children in school, girls and boys alike, are learning at least the basics. However, more data are needed in order to assess the extent to which the country is also fully committed to pre-primary.