

Regional fact sheet: East Asia and the Pacific

There are stark variations between countries in East Asia and the Pacific: while several countries have reached EFA goals, others lag behind in key education areas.

EFA progress and challenges

- Child mortality rates in East Asia and the Pacific have improved in the last decade, with under-5 mortality rates now at 31 per 1,000 births (31 ‰). While rates are below 10 ‰ in seven countries including Brunei Darussalam, Japan and Singapore, they are over 85 ‰ in Cambodia, Myanmar and Timor-Leste.
- Under-five malnutrition rates in the region as a whole are below the world average. However, among the few countries with data available, high moderate and severe underweight rates are reported in Cambodia, Myanmar and Lao People's Democratic Republic, ranging from 32% and 40%, and about or more than one-third of children suffer from moderate and severe stunting.
- Participation in pre-primary schools in East Asia and the Pacific increased from 40% to 45% between 1999 and 2006. Within the region, the pre-primary gross enrolment ratio ranges from 44% in East Asia to 74% in the Pacific in 2006.
- The average net enrolment ratio (NER) in primary education decreased from 96% in 1999 to 93% in 2006. Some countries lag behind the region average, with primary NERs below 80% in the Cook Islands, the Marshall Islands, the Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste.
- There were 9.5 million out-of-school children in 2006, 3.5 million more since 1999. Cambodia, Myanmar and the Republic of Korea made extraordinary progress in reducing the number of children not enrolled.
- In 2006, 51% of out-of-school children in the region were boys, although in specific countries such as Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Macao (China) and Timor-Leste, the majority of 'missing' school children were girls. The possibility that out-of-school children might eventually attend school is also gender-skewed in the region, with 88% of boys expected to enroll late, compared with 67% of girls.
- In 2006, some 162 million students were enrolled in secondary education in East Asia and the Pacific, an increase of nearly 29 million since Dakar. Total secondary NER also grew, averaging 69% in 2006, compared to 61% in 1999.
- About 30%, or 44 million, of the world's students in tertiary education were enrolled in East Asia and the Pacific in 2006. Even so, with a GER of 25%, participation in tertiary education in the region remained low, with great variation among countries.
- An estimated 113 million adults in the region were considered illiterate in 2000-2006, nearly two-thirds of these were in China and 13% in Indonesia. Between 1985-1994 and 2000-2006, the average adult literacy rate increased

from 82% to 93% mainly due to the reduction of illiteracy in China. The rise was more pronounced among women whose literacy rate climbed from 75% to just over 90%.

- Nearly two-thirds of the countries in this region have achieved gender parity in primary education, but gender gaps in secondary schools exist in almost three-quarters of the countries. Only five countries have achieved gender parity at both levels (China, Japan, the Marshall Islands, Myanmar and the Republic of Korea).
- Teaching staff in primary education for the whole region fell by 4% between 1999 and 2006, but slower than total enrolment. Malaysia and Vanuatu increased the number of teachers by at least 30% during this period which lead to a decrease in pupil/teacher ratios by 4 percentage points. The decline of PTRs were particularly marked in Macao (China) and Viet Nam.
- The EFA Development Index (EDI) for the school year ending in 2006 is available for 13 of the 33 countries in East Asia and the Pacific. Of these, two developed (Japan, New Zealand) and four developing countries (Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, the Maldives, Republic of Korea, Tonga) have achieved or are very close to achieving the four quantifiable EFA goals included in the index. Five other countries are in an intermediate position, while Cambodia and Lao People's Democratic Republic are furthest from achieving the EFA goals.

National education finance

- Nine of the fourteen countries with data spent less than 5% of GNP on education in 2006, with large variation within the region (minimum of 1.8% in Cambodia and maximum of 10% in Vanuatu).
- With about 16% in 2006 East Asia was slightly higher than the world median in terms of its total public expenditure which is allocated to education (no data is available for the Pacific). Of the twelve countries with available data, only two (Malaysia and Thailand) allocated about 25% of their total public expenditure to education in 2006.

International aid

- Total official development assistance (ODA) commitments towards East Asia and the Pacific remained relatively constant around US\$13.5 billion in 1999-2000 and 2005, and dropped to US\$11.7 billion in 2006. More than half that drop was experienced solely in Indonesia (nearly US\$1 billion less in 2005 than in 2006).
- Total aid to education for the region increased since 1999 by US\$ 835 million. Moreover, the share of aid for education in total ODA more than doubled from 8% in 1999-2000 to 17% in 2005-2006.
- Aid to basic education in the region increased from US\$ 300 million in 1999-2000 to US\$ 634 million 2006. The share of aid to basic education in total aid to education went from 27% in 1999-2000 to 33% in 2005-2006.