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Asia-Pacific Regional Report
October 2021



Continental Overview:

Bridging Asia-Pacific Education Monitoring Frameworks and SDG 4

SEAMEO | ASEAN | SAARC | Pacific Community



Pacific
Community
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du Pacifique

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Continental Overview: Bridging Education Monitoring Frameworks in the Asia-Pacific with SDG 4

Executive Summary

This report highlights how different subregional bodies in the region have incorporated SDG 4 goals and targets in their education strategic frameworks. It aims to promote an understanding of the relationship between regional and global education objectives while providing a way for subregional bodies in the Asia-Pacific to measure progress. In 2019, the Technical Cooperation Group (TCG) on the Indicators for SDG 4 agreed to specifically monitor seven SDG 4 indicators and to set intermediary objectives – benchmarks – with the aim of keeping countries on track to achieve global education targets. Recently, these benchmark indicators together with additional regionally relevant indicators were approved for the Asia Pacific region for the purpose of benchmarking. In this report, these approved benchmarks are the key focus in reporting on progress in the region.

This *Continental Overview* provides an account of regional progress to achieve SDG 4 using SDG 4 benchmark indicators. A deep dive on subregional **target-by-target** analysis linking with their respective frameworks helps provide insight on specific issues and challenges in each of the subregions. The following are some of the highlights in terms of evaluating progress in the region:

- The region has made tremendous progress in improving access and participation, especially at the primary and lower secondary levels. However, the report depicts that the majority of countries across the region are **failing to equip their children with the necessary minimum competencies in reading and mathematics skills** at the primary and secondary levels. Secondary age out-of-school adolescents are also worrisome in the region with the widest distribution in South East Asian countries, corresponding to SEAMEO and ASEAN countries as well as the Pacific countries.
- Quality early childhood education and pre-primary education helps children succeed in their future education and life. Available data show that **lower income countries are struggling to provide equitable access to early child education and pre-primary education**.
- Country data show that there is **little or no progress in participation in tertiary education** among countries in the region. Generally, high-income countries show high levels of enrollment, however, enrollment in tertiary education is historically low in South Asian countries. Except for a few countries, **participation in technical vocational education and training (TVET) remains low** among young people in all countries in the region.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) skills among the Asia-Pacific youth and adults tend to be highest in upper middle- and high-income countries, irrespective of subregion. Yet, **basic ICT skills are not universal even in high-income countries and are missing mostly in SAARC countries**.

- There is strong a focus on equity and gender equality in the subregional frameworks. However, 25% of countries in the region lack data disaggregated by sex on gross enrolment for early childhood and tertiary education, which are needed to monitor equity in education. **Equal access to education remains far out of reach** for many countries in SAARC and the Pacific.
- **Youth and adult literacy rates have shown little improvement since 2015 with great variability among the countries in South Asia and South East Asia.** Generally, younger people have better literacy rates than adult and elderly.
- **Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship remains a source of concern when it come to monitoring** as its indicator measurement is predominantly absent from the region as a whole.
- School environments in countries in the region are improving. Yet, **ensuring that all school facilities are equipped with relevant ICT for teaching and learning as well as catering to students with disabilities is still not attained** in all subregions.
- The proportion of teachers with minimum required qualifications is high in the region. However, **countries corresponding to SAARC or the Pacific community show the biggest inconsistencies** among teachers across basic education and pre-primary levels.
- **Subregional disparity** can be seen for almost all the indicators across targets. Starting points for countries in different subregions are varied as are their priorities. Thus, monitoring progress based on their actual starting points would be more useful to gain better insights of their issues and challenges.

Following the analysis and comparison, this report reflects on the challenges to collecting high-quality data while offering multiple solutions to strengthen data collection processes.

Key challenges in monitoring education 2030 in the region include:

- The lack of clear national benchmarks for SDG 4 indicators is one of the main challenges when it comes to monitoring progress and developing appropriate strategies to boost progress. Countries in the region will certainly benefit from the finalization of this process of setting benchmarks towards the end of 2021.
- A common concern across all subregions and SDG 4 targets is that data to measure performance and progress remain unavailable, including for globally reported indicators. Major data gaps can be seen in measuring learning outcomes of students at different levels; disaggregated data to measure equity; and populations in the margin of formal education – NFE, TVET.
- Lack of human, technical and financial resources to collect/compile data for all the SDG 4 target indicators threaten to hinder the production of high quality, timely data for SDG 4.

The way forward to strengthen regional and subregional monitoring include the following solutions:

- Countries should be encouraged to establish national benchmarks for SDG 4 indicators on priority policy areas. The UIS in collaboration with regional bodies and partners is working to

support this process in compliance with the Global Education Meeting request made in October 2020.

- Improving data collection and processing of learning outcomes at national and regional levels is vital and requires close attention by policy makers as well as regional and subregional partners.
- To fill the data gaps in learning outcomes while maintaining international standards and linking this to national priorities, initiatives like policy linking which allow countries to use their existing assessments (sub-national, national and cross national) to report on global student learning outcome indicators, namely SDG Indicator 4.1.1 (a, b and c) should be promoted in the region.
- The measurement of learning losses due to COVID-19 is an emergent policy priority that requires attention in the region.
- It would be beneficial to develop more integrated education statistical systems that utilize data from multiple data sources to produce more granular data to aid in measuring equity. Shifting to an individual- or student-centric comprehensive education management information system (EMIS) poses a good solution. As data quality remains a concern – even for available data – regular audits will need to be done.

Through this analysis and comparison, regional organizations, government policymakers, academia and interested individuals will gain a fuller understanding of where the Asia-Pacific stands in its path to achieving a high-quality education for all children and young people in the region. The report also shed light on the key challenges and issues in terms of strengthening monitoring and provides some practical and viable solution to act upon.

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Foreword

Achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 for education (SDG 4) requires a concerted effort by countries, regions and global organizations to track current progress and address challenges in collecting and producing high quality data. The stakes are high as children and young people around the world will be left with fewer opportunities if they are denied a quality education and an opportunity to learn. Our current research suggests that the COVID-19 pandemic has reversed much of the progress achieved to date, with many more children now falling behind in learning even basic skills. To get back on track, it is essential that we have the data needed to measure learning so that policymakers can focus efforts on reaching the most vulnerable children.

This report by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) follows a regional report on Africa, and precedes upcoming reports on Latin America and the Caribbean, the Arab states and Europe. The series is intended to bring a regional focus to SDG 4 monitoring by highlighting work being done in the regions while comparing SDG 4 targets with those established by regional and subregional bodies. Even before the adoption of the Education 2030 Agenda in 2015, some subregional organizations in the Asia-Pacific had already adopted their own set of education objectives and targets. To ensure the most efficient and impactful use of resources, it is important to mitigate duplication and concentrate effort in overall outcomes.

This report, *Continental Overview: Bridging Education Monitoring Frameworks in the Asia-Pacific*, looks at progress made so far, compares subregional and SDG 4 targets, and provides an overview of their similarities. The report goes on to consider some challenges Asia-Pacific Member States have experienced in collecting high quality data that are comparable across countries. The recommended solutions are intended to strengthen education monitoring systems so countries and subregional bodies can align objectives with SDG 4 and identify data gaps.

In addition to this report series, many data resources can be found in the UIS Technical Cooperation Group website where readers can find a Data Book highlighting how each region performs across SDG 4 indicators as well as a section devoted to [benchmarking](#) with regional and country [dashboards](#) for each of the seven SDG 4 indicators identified for benchmarking.

Finally, this report is the result of a collective effort by a team under my supervision. Tiago Vier has helped to consolidate and assemble the report that incorporates contributions from the UIS Regional Advisor for Asia Pacific, Roshan Bajracharya, and inputs from the Foresight and Innovation team (Kim Deslandes, Adolfo Imhof and Lina Ktali) and takes advantage of the benchmarking process that is globally led by the UIS and the Global Education Monitoring Report.

We offer our gratitude for the close partnership offered by all the regional bodies: the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO), the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the Pacific Community (SPC) and the Office of UNESCO in Bangkok who leads the policy dialogue in the region.



Silvia Montoya
Director, UNESCO Institute for Statistics

Abbreviations and Acronyms

APMED	Asia-Pacific Regional Meeting on Education 2030
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AU	African Union
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CARICOM 2030 HRD Strategy	CARICOM 2030 Human Resources Development (HRD) Strategy
CESA 16-25	Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016-2025
CONFEMEN	<i>Conférence des ministres de l'Éducation des États et gouvernements de la Francophonie</i> (Conference of the Ministers of Education of French speaking countries)
CSO	Civil Society Organization
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
EAPRO	East Asia and Pacific Regional Office (UNICEF)
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
ESD	Education for Sustainable Development
EMIS	Education Management Information System
EQAP	Educational Quality and Assessment Programme
EU	European Union
GAML	Global Alliance to Monitor Learning
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio
GIRLG	Gross Intake Ratio to the Last Grade
GPF	Global Proficiency Framework
GPIA	Gender Parity Index Adjusted
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
LE2030+	Learning and Education 2030+
LPIA	Location Parity Index Adjusted
NFE	Non-Formal Education
OEI	<i>Organización de los Estados Iberoamericanos</i> (Organization of Ibero-American States)

ODA	Overseas Development Assistance
OOSC	Out-of-school children
PacREF	Pacific Regional Education Framework
PEC	<i>Política Educativa Centroamericana</i> (Central American Education Policy)
PIF	Pacific Islands Forum
PIFS	Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
PILNA	Pacific Islands Literacy and Numeracy Assessment
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PMEL	Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
RCP	Regional Collaborative Platform
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SDG 4	Sustainable Development Goal 4 for education
SEAMEO	Southeast Asia Ministers of Education Organization
SEA-PLM	Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics
SFFA	SAARC Framework for Action for Education 2030
SOM-ED	ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Education
SPC	Pacific Community (formerly, South Pacific Commission)
TCG	Technical Cooperation Group on the Indicators for SDG 4
TIMMS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
TWG	Thematic Working Group
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics

Introduction

Achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 for education (SDG 4) requires an understanding of current progress, and the relationship between global goals and regional education objectives. In this publication, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) provides an overview of progress and a comparison of SDG 4 targets and continental education strategies in the Asia-Pacific. This effort forms part of a broader UIS initiative to connect and combine efforts to monitor the 2030 Agenda at national, regional and global levels and is intended to both inform readers and help policymakers advance progress. A first regional report on [Africa](#) considered the regional priorities in that region in the context of SDG 4 global targets.

Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, some countries in the Asia-Pacific have started to adjust SDG 4 goals and targets to meet local conditions. Most, however, have not yet translated the global targets in a way would enable them to serve as reference points for reporting national progress on education in a regular manner.

To fill this gap and to enable countries to more easily track progress toward the agreed global targets, in 2019 the Technical Cooperation Group on the indicators for SDG 4 (TCG) endorsed seven indicators for benchmarking at the global level¹. These indicators are discussed in the regional benchmarking process, and take into consideration disparities within and between regions, subregions and countries.

The Asia-Pacific is divided into five subregions: East Asia, South East Asia, Central Asia, South and West Asia, and the Pacific. The varying socioeconomic conditions across the subregions is reflected in their priorities and challenges. While there is no common regional body or framework which covers all countries in the Asia-Pacific, subregional bodies provide a platform for countries to discuss, prioritize and develop common plans to achieve development goals, including education.

Regional Coordination Mechanism

The Asia-Pacific Regional Thematic Working Group (TWG) Education 2030, co-chaired by UNESCO Bangkok and UNICEF, serves as the regional coordination mechanism bringing together regional and national partners, and other stakeholders. A key objective of the group is to develop a common understanding among Member States regarding SDG 4, its corresponding targets, and the Framework for Action, and continuously engage in regional dialogues to identify common challenges and solutions through knowledge sharing and peer learning.

The regional coordination mechanism also brings together the following subregional organizations: South East Asia Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO), Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), and the Pacific Island Forum (PIF). Each of these has its own education sector strategies aligned with SDG 4-Education 2030 and they also participate in broader regional level efforts.

¹ 6th meeting of the TCG in 2019. Agreed targets: <http://tcg.uis.unesco.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2020/09/TCG6-Benchmarks-Decisions.pdf>

Box 1: Learning and Education 2030+**Networking group to improve scope and coverage of regional data**

The [Learning and Education 2030+ \(LE2030+\) Networking Group](#) which emerged from the previous regional TWG ED2030+ has been formally established under the regional collaborative platform (RCP) and is co-chaired by UNESCO and UNICEF, with the Secretariat provided by UNESCO Bangkok. The LE2030+ networking group has members from over 34 entities including the UN, government, subregional bodies (ASEAN, SAARC, SEAMEO), regional NGOs, the private sector, and academia, as well as 74 national SDG 4 coordinators from the Asia-Pacific region.

The LE2030+ networking group shows great value as a regional multi-stakeholder platform and forum for policymakers, development partners and others with an interest in issues related to SDG 4.

Four subgroups have successfully been established under the LE2030+: (i) multilingual education (MLE) working group, (ii) disability-inclusive education (DIE) working group, (iii) school health, nutrition, and well-being subgroup, and (iv) digital transformation in learning and education subgroup, all of which are fully operational.

These subregional bodies developed their own education strategies, plans and policies reflecting their particular needs while adapting the global SDG 4 goals and targets. The subregions Central Asia and East Asia do not have a specific framework.

Given the geographic spread of the Asia-Pacific, subregional organizations play a significant role in the efficient coordination of regional-level actions and they contribute to the implementation of the three thematic areas of the regional roadmap – advocacy, capacity building, and monitoring – within their respective subregional contexts.

UNESCO Bangkok, as the secretariat of the regional TWG-Education 2030, represents the Asia-Pacific region and ensures regular communication and information exchange with the global coordination mechanism guided by the SDG Education 2030 Global Steering Committee. To support Member States and subregional bodies in implementing SDG 4 in their respective countries and subregions, TWG Education 2030 developed the Regional Roadmap for the SDG 4-Education 2030 Agenda in Asia-Pacific (2015–2030) detailing strategies and actions for implementing SDG 4 in the region.

Asia-Pacific Regional Meeting on Education 2030 (APMED)**A regional platform for dialogue and coordination between subregions and countries to implement and monitor SDG 4**

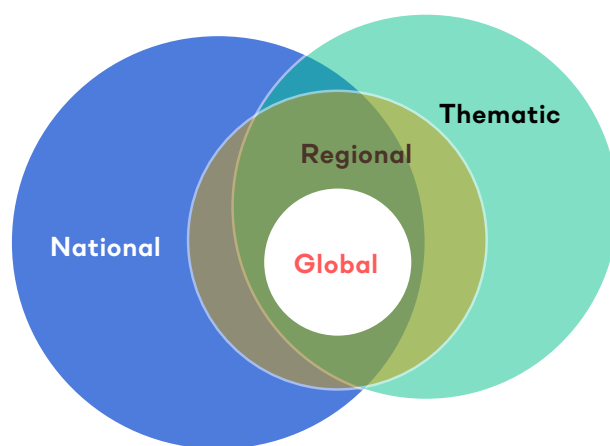
The Asia-Pacific Meeting on Education 2030 (APMED) will serve as the regional consultation platform for the exchange of knowledge, best practices, and support for countries in all aspects of the implementation and monitoring of SDG 4. It brings together national SDG 4 coordinators, planners, policymakers and monitoring officers to discuss various issues and challenges regarding education in the region. APMED will also take technical decisions on the regional agenda which regional and national bodies can implement or use for advocacy purposes.

The next section describes the regional monitoring frameworks, followed by a comparative analysis of the education priority areas of each subregion. The final two sections of the report reflect on challenges and look forward to possible solutions countries can take to ensure that their education data are sufficient to meet national, regional and global education objectives.

Regional Monitoring Frameworks

SDG 4 monitoring is based on universal principles and emphasizes a participatory framework in which all stakeholders (including civil society, business, academia and government) recognize their shared responsibility in achieving the Education 2030 Agenda. SDG 4 monitoring is a multi-purpose framework based on global, thematic, regional and national levels.

Regional indicators and the four levels of the SDG 4 monitoring



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics

At the **regional level**, various sets of indicators were developed (or are in process of development) to take into account the priorities and issues that are shared by countries in a particular region, as outlined in regional planning documents or frameworks. Regions and subregions reached agreements on certain goals and targets even before the approval of the SDGs, and mapping these strategies, comparing them to the SDGs at the global level, is a crucial step in promoting efficiency and avoiding duplication.

There are multiple regional or subregional organizations that generate information and promote consensus in the field of education based on common goals. These institutions differ in their organizational structure and level of engagement with educational monitoring. In some agencies, member countries are represented by ministries of education. Others include representatives of civil society or officials appointed by member countries or governments. These entities can also be part of a supra-regional organization. In general, the member countries of these organizations are linked by common features, such as geographic territory (AU, EU, SEAMEO, CARICOM), language (CONFEMEN), or a cultural or historical characteristic (OEI). These organizations have reached agreements on common education targets in the medium and long term. Their transnational

commitments require national and regional coordination and monitoring mechanisms to identify progress and obstacles. At the same time, they have articulated, or have begun to articulate, their regional objectives with the SDG 4 targets and the Education 2030 Agenda.

The following section briefly describes the SDG 4-related work of these organizations by SDG region. Some share countries located across multiple SDG regions. In these cases, the organizations are described in the region with the highest number of member countries.

Europe and North America

European Union (EU)

In 2017, the European Council, Member States and the European Parliament adopted the Consensus on Development, in which Member States aligned the development policy of the EU with the 2030 Agenda. By contributing to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, the EU Member States are seeking to promote a stronger, more sustainable and more inclusive existence. The Consensus also offers guidance on the implementation of SDG 4 in partnership with all developing countries. The objective is to provide a framework for a common approach to development policy that will be applied by EU institutions and Member States.

Latin America and the Caribbean

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)

ECLAC presents a proposal that contributes to stimulating and sustaining intergovernmental dialogue, with the contribution of specialized bodies, to reach a consensus among Member States on the regional framework of indicators for monitoring the SDGs in Latin America and the Caribbean. In 2018, a regional monitoring framework² and a prioritized set of indicators for monitoring the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development from a regional perspective was established and adopted by the Statistical Conference of the Americas³.

Organization of Ibero-American States (*Organización del los Estados Iberoamericanos (OEI)*)

The 2021 educational goals of the OEI were adopted by Ibero-American countries in 2008. This framework is linked to several SDG 4 targets, but the OEI is in the process of aligning its goals with the Education 2030 Agenda.

Caribbean Community (CARICOM)

The CARICOM 2030 Human Resources Development (HRD) Strategy is a regional framework developed to ensure the successful participation of the Caribbean community in the economy and society of the 21st century. The CARICOM 2030 HRD Strategy is articulated in the CARICOM Strategic Plan (2015–2019). Following the global assessment of the Millennium Development Goals and the post-2015 development agenda, the strategy focuses on the SDGs.

2 <https://agenda2030lac.org/estadisticas/institutional-architecture-regional-statistical-follow-up-sdg.html>

3 https://www.cepal.org/sites/default/files/events/files/sca-executive-committee-17_3-report-prioritization-indicators-regional-statistical-follow-up-to-sdg-lac.pdf

Central American Integration System (*Sistema de la Integración Centroamericana*)

The *Política Educativa Centroamericana (PEC)* is a set of guidelines to provide the eight Member States of the *Sistema de la Integración Centroamericana* with a general framework of action based on regional education priorities. This framework was adapted and aligned with the SDG 4-Education 2030 Agenda. Currently PEC 2030 establishes the way forward on education development for Central America and a specific indicator framework was also developed to monitor that implementation.

Africa

Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16–25)

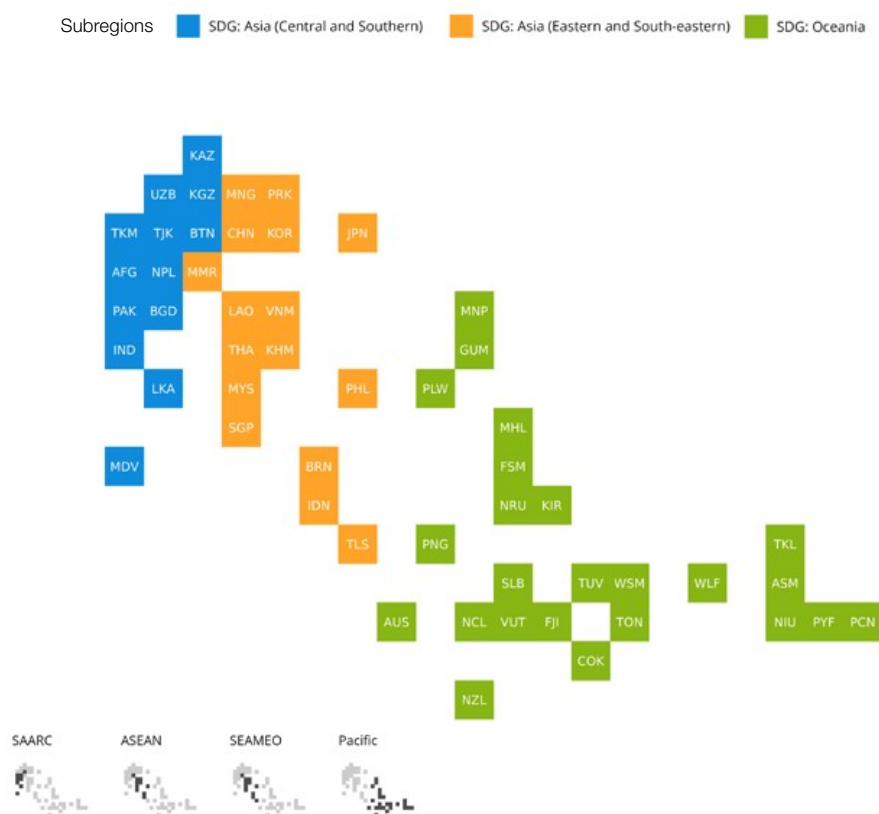
In 2016, the African Union (AU) adopted the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16–25) as the framework for transforming education systems in the region. CESA 16–25 is designed to involve the broadest coalition possible for education and training in Africa.

CESA 16–25 consists of 12 strategic objectives that find correspondence with several SDG 4 targets, and both frameworks require similar data points to track countries' progress. At the subregional level, countries are grouped within development communities that meet regularly, but their education-related objectives are in alignment with CESA 16–25.

Bridging Asia-Pacific monitoring frameworks and SDG 4

Countries in the Asia-Pacific have established comprehensive education agendas. The SDG 4-Education 2030 policy environment in the region is composed of four major subregional education sector development plans, policies and strategies monitored by SEAMEO, ASEAN, SAARC and PacREF covering South East Asia, South Asia and the Pacific. In East Asia and Central Asia, there are no specific regional common frameworks and strategies⁴.

Figure 1: Colour-coded map of the Asia-Pacific, by subregion



Tables 1-4 show the correspondence between the three frameworks that are established in the region with the SDG 4 targets.

⁴ East and Central Asian countries that are not part of SEAMEO and ASEAN organizations were included in the analysis. SAR Macau and SAR Hong Kong are also included in the analysis.

Southern Asia

South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)

The eight countries of South Asia, members of the South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC), have jointly formulated the SAARC Framework for Action for Education 2030 (SFFA) affirming their commitment to work together in advancing SDG 4 in the region. The SFFA was endorsed by the SAARC ministerial meeting in 2019.

The SFFA is a comprehensive agenda providing a roadmap for strengthening regional collaboration in education to achieve SDG 4-Education 2030 targets.⁵ It identifies key priorities in each subsector of education and training covering all ten targets of SDG 4, including a number of cross-cutting themes. It is accompanied by a more detailed Action Plan that consists of 13 key thematic areas prioritized for regional collaboration. The SAARC framework underscores the importance of a regional monitoring mechanism and the evaluation of progress. The draft framework was developed in consultation with several stakeholders and includes relevant indicators for the region to ensure effective monitoring of progress towards SDG 4 in the region.

Table 1: SAARC priority areas and related SDG 4 targets

SAARC Priority Areas	Related SDG 4 Targets
1. Expanding educational access and accelerating OOSC reduction	Target 4.1
2. Ensuring educational equity and inclusion	Target 4.2 and 4.5
3. Achieving gender equality	Target 4.5
4. Improving learning outcomes and promoting quality education	Target 4.a
5. Promoting acquisition of skills for life and for work	Target 4.3
6. Harnessing the potential of ICTs	Target 4.4
7. Improving the quality and relevance of teacher development programmes	Target 4.c
8. Improving education governance	
9. Strengthening institutional and human capacity for monitoring progress towards SDG 4	
10. Enhancing financing of education	Target 1.a
11. Ensuring lifelong learning opportunities	Target 4.7
12. Strengthening partnership and collaboration	Target 4.b

⁵ https://bangkok.unesco.org/sites/default/files/assets/article/Education/files/session-2sub-regional-landscape-sdg-4-education-2030_0.pdf

South East Asia

Southeast Asia Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO)

SEAMEO promotes regional cooperation in education, science and culture. The SEAMEO Council is composed of 11 ministers of education who oversee the organization's mandate to explore the maximum potential of the people of the region through the promotion of quality and equity in education, preventive health, culture and the preservation of tradition, training, research, information and ICT. Its seven priorities for the 2015–2030 Action Agenda presented at the 48th SEAMEO Council Conference are: (i) achieving universal early childhood care and education; (ii) addressing barriers to inclusion; (iii) promoting resiliency in the face of emergencies; (iv) promoting technical and vocational education and training (TVET); (v) revitalizing teacher education; (vi) harmonization in higher education and research; (vii) adopting a 21st century curriculum⁶.

Table 2: SEAMEO priorities and related SDG 4 targets

SEAMEO Priorities	Related SDG 4 Targets
Priority 1. Achieving universal early childhood care and education	Target 4.2
Priority 2. Addressing barriers to inclusion	Targets 4.1 and 4.5
Priority 3. Promoting resiliency in the face of emergencies	Target 4.a
Priority 4. Promoting technical and vocational education and training (TVET)	Targets 4.3 and 4.4
Priority 5. Revitalizing teacher education	Target 4.c
Priority 6. Promoting harmonization in higher education and research	Target 4.b
Priority 7. Adopting a 21 st century curriculum	Target 4.7

Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)

The ASEAN charter entered into force on 15 December 2008 in the aftermath of the ASEAN foreign ministers meeting held at the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta. ASEAN operates under a specific legal framework and acts in different policy areas. The ASEAN work plan on Education 2016–2020 was endorsed by the 11th ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Education (SOM-ED) and adopted in May 2016 in Malaysia. The workshop concluded the formulation of the ASEAN work plan on education and provided an opportunity to build consensus among ASEAN Member States on strategies to further develop the education sector.⁷ Strongly rooted in the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community BLUEPRINT 2025, the work plan is organized in eight sub-goals and 19 priority areas and 70 activities, mostly focusing on

6 http://www.seameo.org/SFAMEOWeb2/images/stories/Publications/Centers_Pub/SFAMEO_Education_agenda/Action%20Agenda%20for%20the%20SEAMEO%207%20Priority%20Areas_FINAL.pdf

7 <https://asean.org/asean-concludes-work-plan-education-2016-2020/>

development and harmonization of higher education and TVET in support of development and economic growth in ASEAN. The eight sub-goals and related policy areas are listed in **Table 3** and compared with the relevant SDG 4 target or indicator.⁸

Table 3: ASEAN sub-goals and related SDG 4 targets / indicators

Policy	Priority Area / Outcome	Related SDG 4 Targets
SUB-GOAL 1: Promote ASEAN awareness through strengthening of South East Asian history and indigenous knowledge.	PRIORITY AREA 1.1: Enhancing ASEAN awareness through exchange programmes for ASEAN students and youth	
	PRIORITY AREA 1.2: Promoting a culture of peace and understanding through education in contributing towards a peaceful and harmonious ASEAN Community	
	PRIORITY AREA 1.3: Advancing ASEAN studies programmes and courses in higher education through online and cross-border mobility	
SUB-GOAL 2: Enhance the quality and access to basic education for all, including the disabled, less advantageous and other marginalized groups	PRIORITY AREA 2.1: Promoting inclusive schools through improved access and provision of basic education for marginalized and out-of-school children	Target 4.5 Target 4.1 Target 4.a
	PRIORITY AREA 2.2: Improving the quality of basic education through quality-focused interventions	
SUB-GOAL 3: Strengthen the use of ICT	PRIORITY AREA 3.1: Expanding and improving human and institutional capacity in educational software development and online instructional design to enhance access to quality education	Target 4.4
	PRIORITY AREA 3.2: Strengthening capacity to access and use digital learning through ICT in ASEAN Member States; providing other capacity building programmes to support this	
SUB-GOAL 4: Support the development of the technical and vocational education and training (TVET) sector as well as lifelong learning in the region	PRIORITY AREA 4.1: Maximizing access to TVET for employment and sustainable development	Target 4.3
	PRIORITY AREA 4.2: Strengthening regional harmonization for the advancement of quality TVET transformation through networking, partnerships and mobilization of TVET personnel and resources	
	PRIORITY AREA 4.3: Establishing regional quality assurance and recognition for TVET and/or non-degree (diploma or certificates only) institutions	
	PRIORITY AREA 4.4: Reducing the gaps between vocational skills demand and supply across ASEAN (ASEAN Connectivity 2025 Plan)	Target 4.4

8 <https://bangkok.unesco.org/sites/default/files/assets/article/Education/files/session-2asean-cooperation-education-sdg-4.pdf>

SUB-GOAL 5: Complement the efforts of other sectors in meeting the objectives of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)	PRIORITY AREA 5.1: Strengthening collaboration between the education and other sectors related to ESD	Target 4.7
SUB-GOAL 6: Strengthen the higher education sector through the implementation of robust quality assurance mechanisms	<p>PRIORITY AREA 6.1: Developing harmonized quality assurance mechanisms within the context of ASEAN</p> <hr/> <p>PRIORITY AREA 6.2: Supporting institutional capacity in developing harmonized quality assurance mechanisms within the context of ASEAN (recommendation in support of the Kuala Lumpur Declaration on Higher Education)</p>	
SUB-GOAL 7: Foster the role of higher education in the area of socioeconomic development through university-industry partnership	<p>PRIORITY AREA 7.1: Developing stronger linkages between universities, industries, and communities</p> <hr/> <p>PRIORITY AREA 7.2: Increasing the number of intra-ASEAN international students (ASEAN Connectivity 2025 Plan)</p>	
SUB-GOAL 8: Provide capacity-building programmes for teachers, academics and other key stakeholders in the education community	<p>PRIORITY AREA 8.1: Promoting education exchange week to conduct comprehensive, multi-level, and wide-ranging exchanges and cooperation</p> <hr/> <p>PRIORITY AREA 8.2: Enhancing teachers' competencies for 21st century skills</p>	Target 4.c

Pacific

Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) and the Pacific Regional Education Framework (PacREF)

PIFS is the region's premier political and economic policy organization. Founded in 1971, it is a political and economic body comprising 18 members. The forum's Pacific Vision calls for peace, harmony, security, social inclusion, and prosperity, so that all Pacific people can lead free, healthy, and productive lives. PIFS works to achieve this by fostering cooperation between governments, collaboration with international agencies, and by representing the interests of its members. Since 1989, the forum has organized an annual meeting with key dialogue partners at the ministerial level. The work of the forum is guided by the Framework for Pacific Regionalism, which was endorsed by forum leaders in July 2014. It sets out the strategic vision, values, objectives and approaches to achieve deeper regionalism in the Pacific.

PacREF was designed by education ministers to direct education priorities across the subregion. The PacREF roadmap (2015–2030) promotes a human rights approach to education and seeks to empower the people of the Pacific islands. As laid out in **Table 4**, PacREF has six targets: regionalism and mutually beneficial partnerships; the application of tests to policies and practices; efficiency in the use of resources; equity in access and opportunity and relevant and high-quality contributions, and high quality and sustainable results. PacREF has a programme of strategies and activities in four policy areas:

(i) quality and relevance; (ii) learning pathways; (iii) student welfare and outcomes, and (iv) the teaching profession.

Table 4: PacREF policy areas and related SDG 4 targets / indicators

Policy	Area / Outcome	Related SDG 4 Targets
Quality and relevance	1. Curriculum and programmes are embedded in the Pacific context that reflect Pacific values, cultures, traditions knowledge and skills that draw on the land that we live/ exist upon and the ocean that surrounds us.	Targets 4.2
	2. Learning is inclusive of cognitive and noncognitive development.	
	3. Curriculum and programmes, with appropriate pedagogy are inclusive and rights based; promote gender equality; flexible and responsive to innovation and change; and are adaptable to new learning opportunities.	Target 4.5
	4. Quality learning environment that supports learning at all levels of education.	Target 4.a
Learning pathways	1. An enabling policy environment, which is rights based with appropriate resourcing, for TVET models and relevancy increased school-based decision making and flexibility in the facilitation of learning.	Target 4.3
	2. Our most vulnerable learners fully participate in a wide range of learning.	
	3. Our youngest learners (preschoolers) are prepared to engage in formal schooling.	Target 4.2
	4. Linked pathways between levels of schooling and beyond.	Target 4.4
Student outcomes and wellbeing	1. Increased percentages of learners achieve expected levels of literacy and numeracy at all levels of education but particularly by the end of the primary cycle.	Target 4.6
	2. Improved participation and success rates at all levels, especially in ECCE and secondary and TVET.	Targets 4.1 and 4.3
	3. Programmes developed and implemented that strengthen cognitive, noncognitive and social skills in young people, recognizing “Pacific literacies” ensuring their readiness for the challenges and opportunities they will encounter in life.	Target 4.7
The teaching profession	1. All teachers and school leaders in the Pacific are qualified and skilled certified professionals who are able to demonstrate their competencies against approved standards	
	2. All teachers and school leaders are supported, through a range of modalities, in developing new skills and knowledge to create better outcomes for students.	Targets 4.c
	3. The teaching profession holds status in the Pacific and due to this, parents and the community have unreserved confidence in teachers and schools.	

The Pacific Community (SPC)

The SPC is the largest scientific and technical organization in the Pacific subregion and is owned and governed by 26 country and territory members. SPC works for the wellbeing of Pacific people through the effective and innovative application of science and knowledge, guided by a deep understanding of Pacific island contexts and cultures. The SPC's focus is on major cross-cutting issues, such as climate change, disaster risk management, food security, gender equality, human rights, non-communicable diseases, and youth employment. Using a multi-sector approach in responding to members' development priorities, SPC draws upon skills and capabilities from around the region and internationally, and supports the empowerment of Pacific communities and sharing of expertise and skills between countries and territories.

The SPC supports and has a leading role in implementing PacREF through the Educational Quality and Assessment Programme (EQAP). The vision of EQAP is to be 'the agency for educational quality in the Pacific region'. As one of two regional institutions in the implementing partnership, EQAP is responsible for leading the planning, monitoring, evaluation and learning (PMEL) of the PacREF. SPC/EQAP will also coordinate the regional benchmarking processes under the TWG - Education 2030+ in partnership with UNESCO Bangkok and UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office (EAPRO).

Regional Roadmap for the SDG 4-Education 2030 Agenda in the Asia-Pacific

The Education 2030 Framework for Action states that “*implementation of SDG 4 requires national, regional and global mechanisms for governance, accountability, coordination, monitoring, follow-up and review, reporting and evaluation.*”⁹ To facilitate the coordination and prioritization of regional efforts for the localization and implementation of SDG 4-Education 2030, a regional roadmap offers four different tracks as a reference for Member States and development partners in the Asia-Pacific.

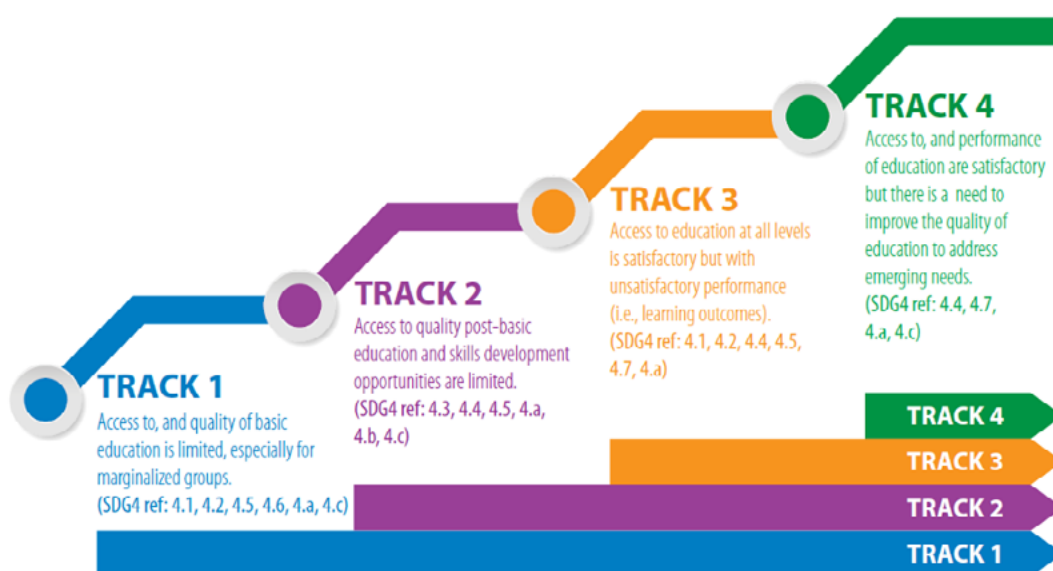
The Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau for Education (UNESCO Bangkok) leads the work on SDG 4 in the region and coordinates the regional multi-partner group as well as an SDG 4 National Coordinators network. Implementation is guided by a Regional Roadmap for 2015–2030 consisting of a set of regional milestones organized into five phases.

Figure 2 shows the four complementary tracks of the roadmap. Each track represents a different challenge that Member States may face and is intended to help with prioritizing capacity building needs and resource allocation to align the SDG 4 targets to national education plans, policies and programmes.

Given that SDG 4-Education 2030 covers the entire education system, the starting point or initial benchmark of each track reflects the current status of access, quality, and equity at the different levels of education¹⁰.

9 <https://apa.sdg4education2030.org/sites/apa.sdg4education2030.org/files/2020-12/Education2030%20Incheon%20Declaration%20and%20Framework%20for%20Action.pdf>

10 <http://tcg.uis.unesco.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2021/04/Asia-Pacific-Regional-SDG4-Roadmap-July2018.pdf>

Figure 2: Regional Roadmap for the SDG 4-Education 2030 Agenda**Table 5: SDG 4 implementation phases**

SDG Implementation Phases	Years
PHASE I: Foundation building	2015–2016
PHASE II: Clarification of targets; towards implementation, and first progress review for the region	2017–2019
PHASE III: Implementation and mid-term review for the region	2020–2023
PHASE IV: Acceleration/reviewing success and remaining challenges	2024–2027
PHASE V: Into the future	2028–2030

In the next section, some of the objectives and goals of regional monitoring frameworks that find direct correspondence with an SDG 4 target are described and the current progress of countries is assessed based on SDG 4 global and thematic indicators.

The seven global indicators that were endorsed to benchmark the global framework against regional ones are included in the analysis. **Box 2** presents the data resources available for benchmark indicators.

Box 2: UIS data resources

The UIS-led Technical Cooperation Group for the indicators of SDG 4 (TCG) provides a platform to discuss and develop the indicators used to monitor the Education 2030 Agenda in an open, inclusive and transparent manner. Part of its mandate has been to develop the benchmarking methodologies required to help countries and regions align their own education objectives with those of SDG 4. To facilitate this process and to make its resources more widely available, the TCG website has multiple data resources in various formats.

Under [Data Resources](#), users will find the list of SDG 4 and benchmark indicators, SDG 4 global and country data tables, data tree specifications for the extraction of data from the [bulk data download services](#), and links to the UIS [global education database](#).

The section [SDG 4 Benchmarks](#) contains the following information:

- a. [Background](#): Background information, benchmark indicators, a description of the technical processes used to determine regional benchmarks, and global and regional roadmaps. Also contains links to the resources (publications, data, and blogs) and meetings
- b. [Regions](#): Region-specific information for [Africa](#), [Arab States](#), and [Asia and the Pacific](#), including a description of the process of setting regional benchmarks and outcomes in each region.
- c. [Dashboards](#): A summary of progress describes what has been achieved to date, while global, regional and country dashboards present data for the SDG 4 indicators to be used for benchmarking based on current values, benchmark objectives, baseline scenarios, minimum and feasible benchmarks, regional benchmarks for 2025 and 2030 and national benchmarks (when determined). Available in a pull-down menu for each region for easy comparison.

SDG Target 4.1 – Primary and secondary education

“Target 4.1 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes”

Related regional policy priority areas and outcomes

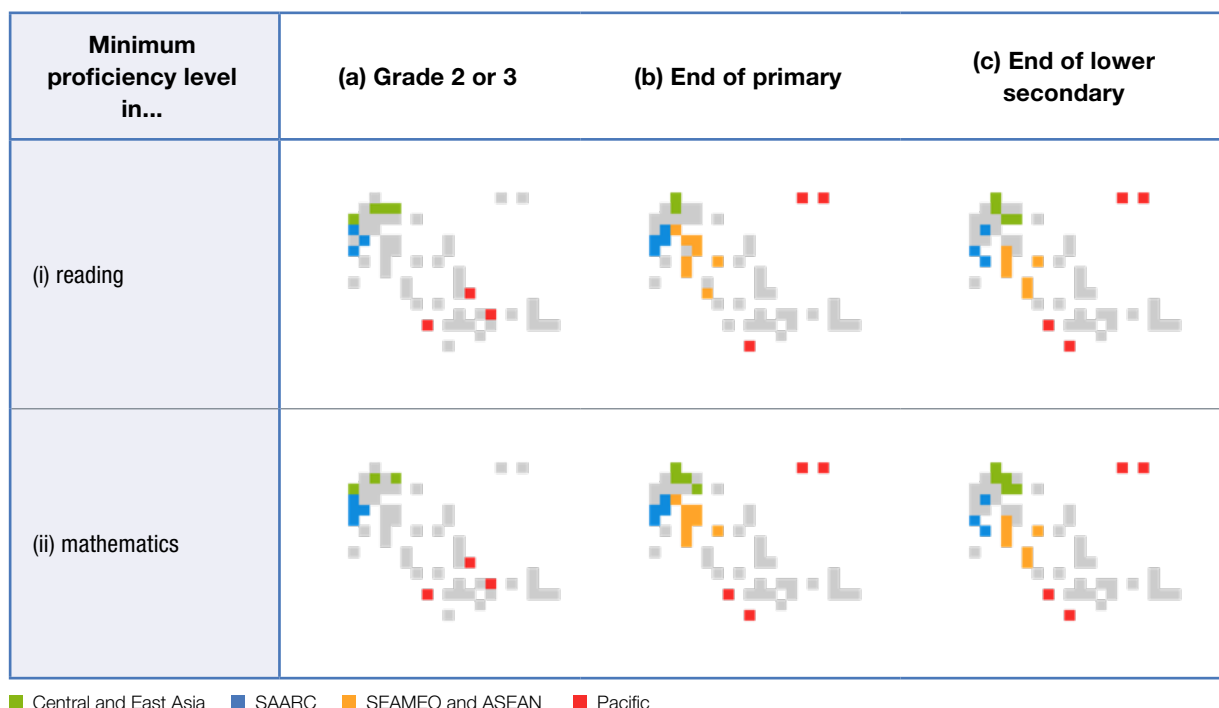
SAARC Priority Area	SEAMEO Priority Area	ASEAN Policy Area / Outcome	PacREF Policy Area / Outcome	Roadmap for Education 2030
Priority 1: Expanding educational access and accelerate OOSC reduction	Priority 2: Addressing barriers to inclusion	SUB-GOAL 2: Enhance the quality and access to basic education for all, including the disabled, less advantageous and other marginalized groups	Student outcomes and wellbeing 2. Improved participation and success rates at all levels, especially in ECCE and secondary and TVET	Tracks 1 and 3

SDG Target 4.1 relates to SAARC Priority Area 1 “*expanding educational access and accelerate OOSC¹¹ reduction*”. The target also relates to SEAMEO Priority Area 2, on inclusion, overlapping with SDG Target 4.5. ASEAN policy outcomes do not specifically address learning, access and intake. In the Pacific subregion, the PacREF addresses these issues in the “*students outcomes and wellbeing*” policy area. A specific outcome is expected regarding the participation and success rates at all levels. Actions related to monitoring the achievement of this target are part of Tracks 1 and 3 of the Roadmap for Education 2030.

Learning

Figure 3 shows that learning data for SDG Target 4.1 are scarce for all countries in the Asia-Pacific. On average, 35% of countries do not have data for the end of primary and lower secondary, and 45% of countries lack data for Grade 2 or 3. South East Asia is the most represented region.

11 Out-of-school children

Figure 3: Data availability of the SDG Global Indicator 4.1.1 by country, 2015–2020

Analysing progress in these indicators is challenging due to the lack of data for most countries. **Figures 4a and 4b** show the latest measured value for the Asia-Pacific in reading and mathematics.

Measuring progress requires comparing data in at least two different points in time, but in reading, only eight countries are able to meet this criterion. They include the Republic of Korea, Hong Kong, Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia, New Zealand and Australia for the end of lower secondary in 2015 and 2018, and Bangladesh at the end of Grade 2 or 3 and primary in 2015 and 2017. In these countries, overall, there were no major changes, though the following cases can be noted: the proportion of children proficient in reading in Thailand and Indonesia fell by 10% over this three-year period at the lower secondary level while in Bangladesh proficiency rose by 6% between 2015 and 2017 in Grade 2 or 3.

In SAARC member countries, data show that reading proficiency at the end of primary remains between 45% and 55% of children in India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan. On the other hand, in Nepal, 80% of primary-aged children are proficient. Nepal also outperforms other countries in this subregion at the end of lower secondary with 99.5% proficiency in 2017. On other end of the scale, Sri Lankan data for lower secondary school children are below the average, with 21.3% of children considered proficient in reading in 2016.

Southeastern Asian countries do not have data for Grades 2 or 3. Similarly to South Asia, two countries, Singapore and Vietnam, report proficiency levels in lower secondary above 80%, while the remaining countries report reading proficiency between 30% (Indonesia) and 55% (Malaysia). At the end of primary, the Philippines, Myanmar, Cambodia and Lao PDR report that around 10% of children are proficient in reading.

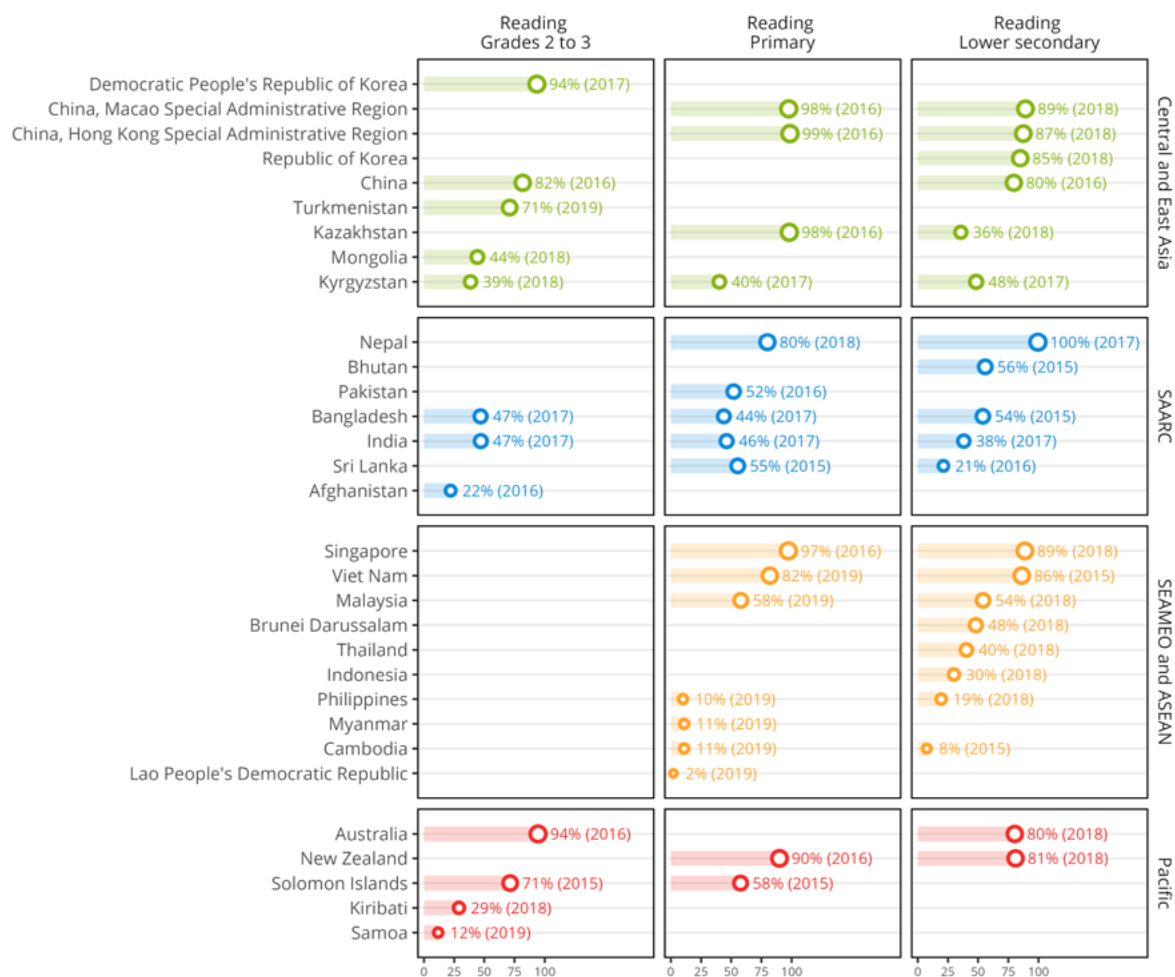
Pacific countries are less represented in the sample. Australia and New Zealand report that 80% of children are proficient in reading in lower secondary. Solomon Island's last survey, administered in 2015,

showed 71% of children were proficient at the end of Grade 2 or 3 and 58% at the end of primary. Samoa and Kiribati measured proficiency at the end of Grade 2 or 3, in 2018 and 2019, respectively. Only 11.7% of the Samoan children and 29% in Kiribati were proficient.

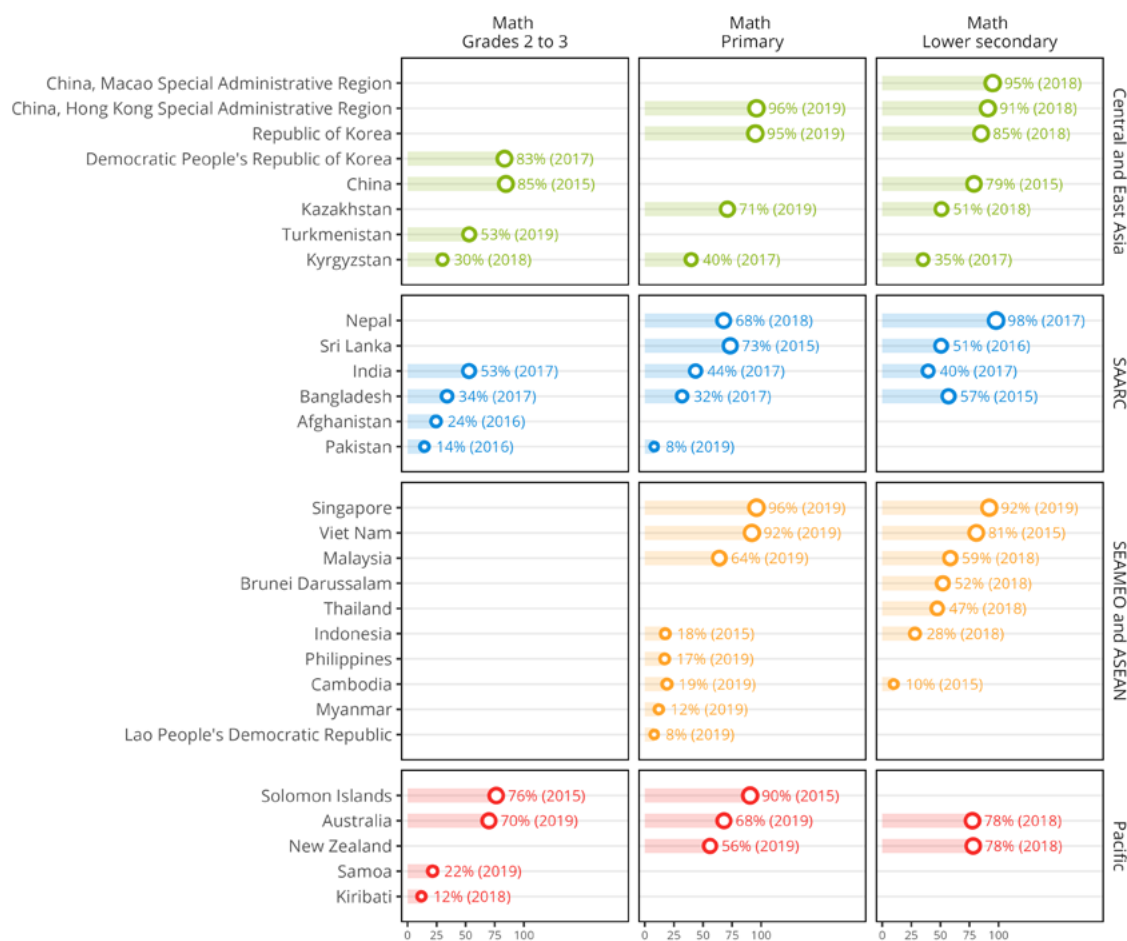
In Central and East Asia, data for China, Hong Kong, Macau, South and North Korea show that at least 80% of children meet minimum proficiency levels in reading at the end of primary and lower secondary. Mongolia has only one data point which revealed that 44.4% of children in Grade 2 or 3 were proficient in 2018. Kyrgyzstan measured proficiency in 2017 and 2018. Proficiency remains below 50% for children at all school levels. On the other hand, Kazakhstan measured almost 100% proficiency in primary in 2016. In 2018, proficiency at the lower secondary was much lower at 36%.

Figure 4: Proportion of children and young people achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in reading and mathematics by country, 2015–2020

a) Reading (latest data available)



b) Mathematics (latest data available)



EQAP administered PILNA provides averages of minimum proficiency level (MPL) in literacy and numeracy for three years in the periods 2012, 2015 and 2018. The assessment focused on the numeracy and literacy proficiency skills of Year 4 and Year 6 students and involved from 14, 13 and 15 Pacific island countries respectively in each wave.

Table 6: PILNA averages for literacy and numeracy

	Literacy			Numeracy		
	2012	2015	2018	2012	2015	2018
Grade 4	43,29	46,36	52,65	74,23	86,21	83,29
Grade 6	48,39	45,73	62,82	56,66	67,94	83,44

Box 3: Policy Linking***Definition, tools and use***

Policy linking is a methodology for measuring global learning outcomes and is a quick, low cost, easy-to-implement method that allows countries to link existing national reading and/or math assessments to a common scale. The Global Proficiency Framework (GPF) is used as common scale to set the benchmarks for producing and reporting SDG 4.1 indicators: *Proportion of children and young people: (a) in Grades 2/3; (b) at the end of primary; and (c) at the end of lower secondary achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in (i) reading and (ii) mathematics, by sex.*

The main challenge with conducting global comparisons and aggregations of assessment results is that countries generally use different assessment tools with varying levels of difficulty. The way to address this problem is by linking the different assessments to a common scale. Policy linking relies on the judgment of **teachers-in-country** who believe that the **pedagogical interpretation** of learning assessment results using the proficiency level description **link the national assessment to the global minimum proficiency levels.**

Policy linking enables outcomes from the national assessment to be compared, aggregated, and tracked over time. It allows countries to identify where the greatest learning gaps exist so that focused interventions can target those areas and/or population(s) most in need.

Policy linking is a standardized process

Policy linking is implemented in workshops that begin with a thorough review of the GPF. Three major tasks are carried out by the 15-20 panelists (teachers) for each grade/subject to set the required benchmarks for national / international reporting.

Task 1 – Checking the alignment between the items used in the specific national assessment and the GPF following a standardized procedure

Task 2 – Matching the assessment items with the GPF and with the proficiency level descriptors

Task 3 – Identifying the level that is consistent with the description of the Minimum Proficiency Levels as required for SDG 4 reporting.

The Policy linking workshops are administered in many countries by different partners as follows:

UIS: India, Grades 3 and 5 (2019); Grade 8 (2021), **Bangladesh** Grades 3 and 5 (2019); **Cambodia** (Grade 6); **Lesotho** (Grade 6) and planned for **Zambia** (Grade 5) and **Nepal** (Grade 5) by 2021. **USAID:** Nigeria (2020), **Morocco** and **Djibouti**; forthcoming **Kenya** and **Senegal**. **WBG:** Ghana, forthcoming **Gambia**; USAID/FCDO/UIS: ICAN/PAL Network.

As with reading, when considering student achievement in mathematics, only a few countries have more than one data point available. Data in New Zealand and Australia (**Figure 4b**) for 2015 and 2019, show little progress. Australia experienced an increase of four percentage points in reading proficiency for primary-aged children while New Zealand saw proficiency for this age group decrease by almost three percentage points, from 58.6% in 2015 to 56% in 2019. In East Asia, Kazakhstan saw a decrease of almost eight percentage points in primary from 79.7% in 2015 to 71% in 2019. Bangladesh has improved its results at the end of Grade 2 or 3 and primary.

In Southern Asia, Nepal has the best performance at the lower secondary level with almost 98% of adolescents proficient in mathematics. At the end of primary school, Sri Lanka reported slightly higher results. In India and Bangladesh respectively 32% and 44% of children meet minimum levels of understanding in mathematics by the end of all levels. Pakistan and Afghanistan have the lowest levels of proficiency in mathematics by the end of Grade 2 or 3 and by the end of primary school in Pakistan, just 8% of children were proficient in math in 2019.

In South East Asia, data are not available for the end of Grade 2 or 3. Singapore and Vietnam are the best performing countries in the region. Singapore has proficiency levels in mathematics above 90% for children at the end of primary and lower secondary school. Malaysia, Brunei and Thailand report that 50% to 65% of children meet minimum standards in math. Indonesia, Philippines, Cambodia, Myanmar and Lao PDR reported, in 2019, proficiency levels in math between 8% and 18% at the end of the primary.

In the Pacific, besides Australia and New Zealand, data are available only for Solomon Islands, Kiribati and Samoa. Solomon Islands data for 2015 are the highest of the region for the primary. In 2019, Kiribati and Samoa collected data for proficiency in mathematics. Samoa's results in mathematics are twice as high as reading, while Kiribati is the reverse, proficiency in reading is higher.

Access and Completion Rates

In terms of the completion rate for each level of education including primary, lower secondary and upper secondary, data are only available for a few countries in all regions (see **Figure 5**).

Figure 5: Data availability of the SDG Global Indicator 4.1.2 by country, 2015–2020

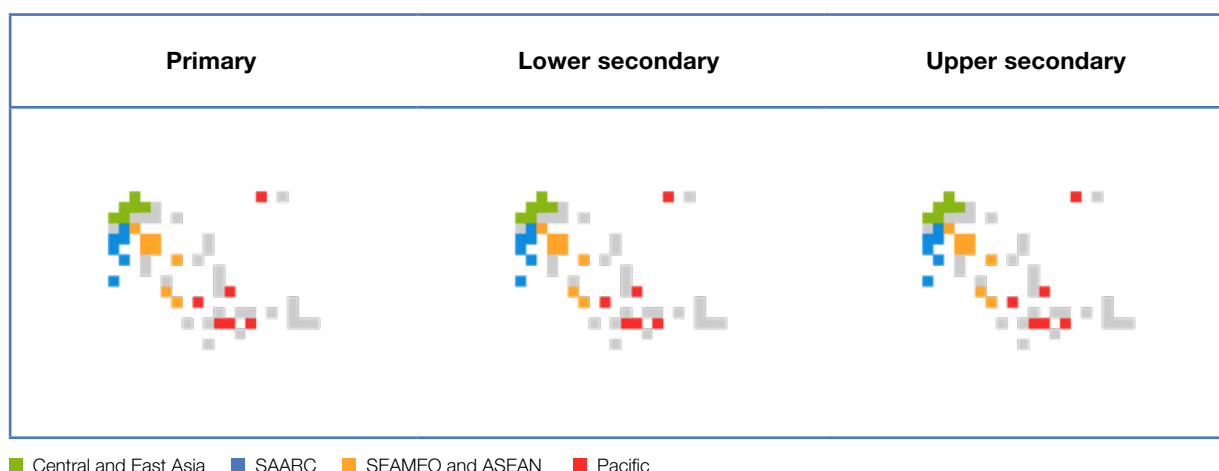
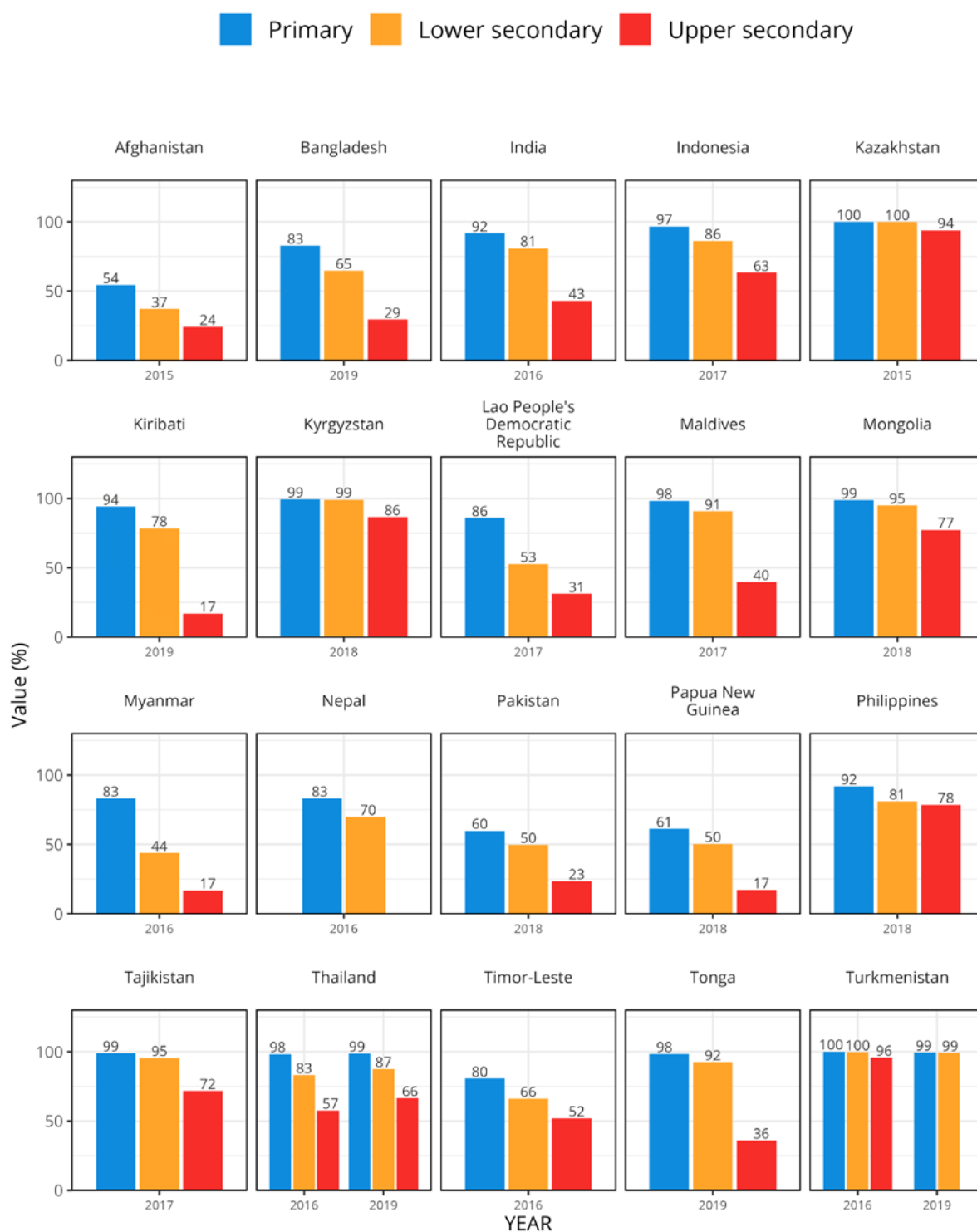


Figure 6: Completion rate by level of education, 2015–2020



As shown in **Figure 6**, only Thailand has measured completion rates in the last five years showing an improvement at all levels of education. Completion rates in upper secondary have improved ten percentage points in the period but remain almost half the level seen at the end of primary school. The situation is similar for the other countries, except for the Philippines which has comparable completion rates across all three education levels.

In Central Asia, Turkmenistan has the highest completion rate for all three levels and is the only country with two data points for primary and lower secondary school. In both, there was a small decline of half a percentage point. In the other countries of the subregion, completion rates in primary are above 98%. With the exception of Mongolia, completion rates for lower secondary are also above 98% (see **Table 7**). In upper secondary, Tajikistan and Mongolia have the lowest performance with completion rates of 71% and 77%, respectively. Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan have figures around 95% and Kyrgyzstan is in between with an 85% completion rate at this level.

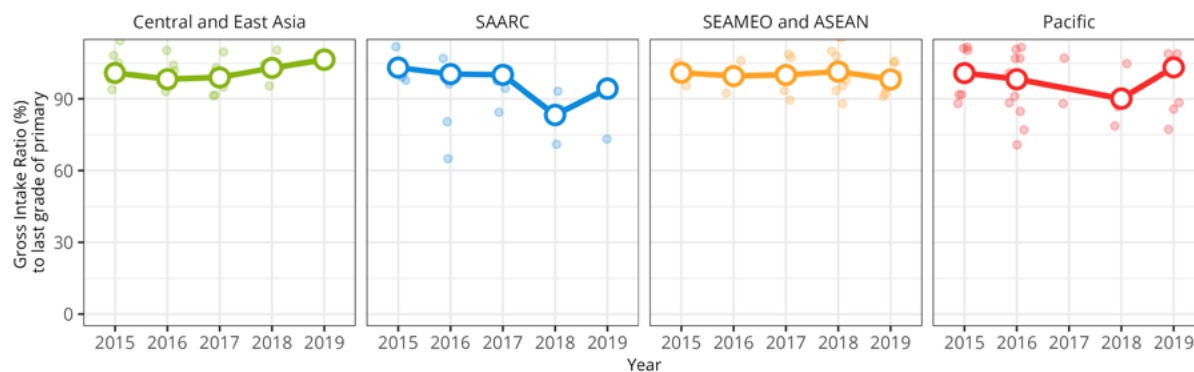
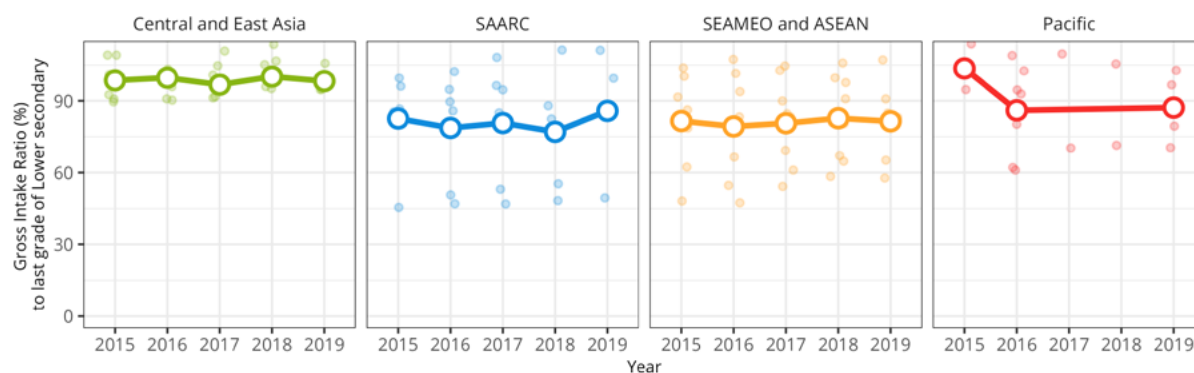
The gross intake ratio at the end of primary and lower secondary levels illustrated in **Figure 7** also provides information on the impact of policies and programmes on access to school. The gross intake ratio to the last grade (GIRLG) of primary education accounts for the “total number of new entrants to the last grade of primary education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the population at the official school entrance age for that grade.” As such, it measures how many children enter each grade and can be considered a proxy for the completion rate. Since it also includes over-age students and those who have repeated years, the analysis of the completion rate using this proxy takes into consideration the ratio of students who actually reached the last grade of the level at the official age for that level of education. This might explain the fact that completion rates are slightly lower than the GIRLG in most cases in Asia¹².

The gross intake ratio to the last grade of primary education is stable in all Asia-Pacific subregions, except for SAARC countries where in the last five years the intake has stalled; Pakistan in particular, lags behind its subregional counterparts. In SEAMEO member countries and the Pacific, the average primary gross intake ratio remains close to 100%. In the Pacific, only the Marshall Islands have an intake ratio below 75%. Countries of the SEAMEO region seem to be more homogeneous than the Pacific where the variance in intake remains higher as of 2019.

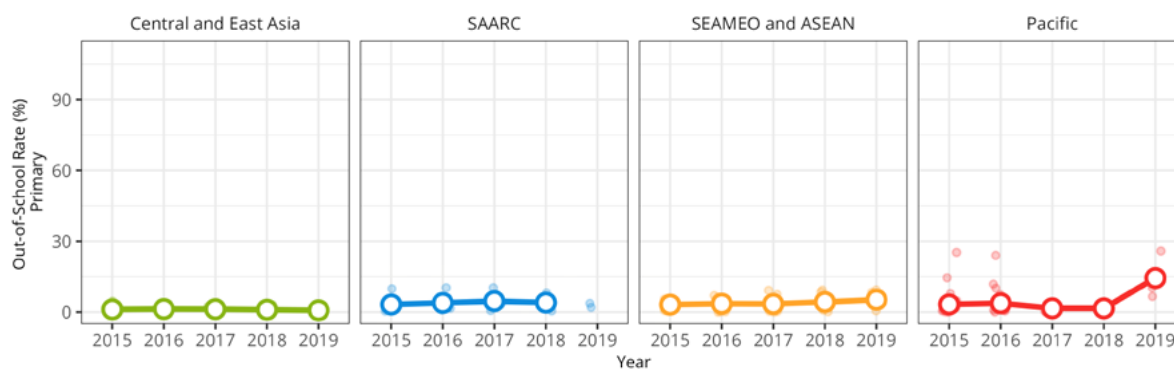
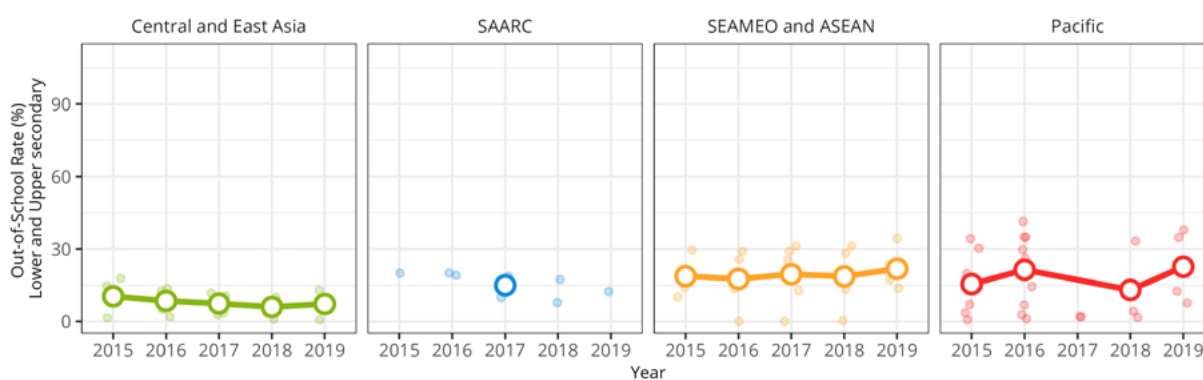
For the lower secondary education level, the gross intake ratio to the last grade of lower secondary varies more within each subregion, except for Central Asia and East Asia. A few countries have an intake just above 50% while others have levels similar to the last grade of primary. A few countries have a gross intake ratio below 50% like Cambodia and Pakistan, though both of these countries have improved by four percentage points since 2015. Tokelau reported an almost 150% intake ratio indicating that large numbers of pupils entered school either early or late and/or have repeated earlier grades. For Samoa, the ratio decreased from 113% in 2015 to 102% in 2019. In Central Asia, Kazakhstan showed an opposite trend, increasing from 109% in 2015 to 117% in 2019. Among SAARC countries the gross intake ratio in the Maldives increased from 102% to 111% in the same period. In the SEAMEO, Brunei also has a gross intake ratio above 100% which increased by five percentage points in the period.¹³

12 Comparing 60 cases in which CR and GIRLG are available for primary and lower secondary in the period, the mean absolute difference between the two indicators in both educational levels is around 5% for Central and Southern Asia, and 10% for Eastern and South-eastern Asia

13 Marshall Islands, Tonga and Tokelau reported a 0 gross intake ratio to the last grade of lower secondary general education and data points were excluded. Values above 100% are used but not shown in the figure.

Figure 7: Gross intake ratio, both sexes (%), 2015–2020**a) to the last grade of primary education****b) to the last grade of lower secondary general education****Out-of-school children**

The proportion of children out of school varies across the subregions of the Asia-Pacific (see **Figure 8**). In SAARC and SEAMEO countries, most primary-aged children are in school, though it remains a challenge for many countries in the Pacific such as Tuvalu, Marshall Islands and Micronesia. Within subregions, there are also varied out-of-school rates. In SAARC, the primary level out-of-school rate is higher in Bhutan than in Sri Lanka, Maldives and Nepal. It also tends to be higher for children of secondary school age. In some Pacific countries (like Tuvalu, Marshall Islands and Papua New Guinea), out-of-school rates for secondary school are above 35%, similar to Lao PDR and Myanmar in the SEAMEO. Bhutan has the lowest out-of-school rates in the SAARC region for secondary school.

Figure 8: Out-of-school rate for children of primary and secondary age, both sexes (%), 2015–2020**a) Primary****b) Lower and upper secondary****Table 7: SDG Indicator 4.1.2, completion rate, primary education, by sex (%)****SAARC**

Region	Subregion	Country	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Asia	Southern Asia	Afghanistan		40.7	..	..	..	54.2	..	..	..	..	..
Asia	Southern Asia	Bangladesh		74.8	..	72.2	80.0	..	..	..	..	82.6	..
Asia	Southern Asia	India		88.3	..	..	..	..	91.6	..	..	..	..
Asia	Southern Asia	Maldives		..	..	..	..	..	..	98.2	..	..	..
Asia	Southern Asia	Nepal		75.2	..	..	76.2	..	83.2	..	..	..	..
Asia	Southern Asia	Pakistan		..	60.9	..	..	..	..	..	59.7	..	..

SEAMEO

Region	Subregion	Country	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Asia	South East Asia	Indonesia	..	..	95.2	..	..	..	..	96.6	..	..	..
Asia	South East Asia	Lao People's Democratic Republic	..	..	67.1	..	..	..	..	85.9	..	..	..
Asia	South East Asia	Myanmar	..	..	..	..	..	..	83.2	..	..	..	..
Asia	South East Asia	Philippines	86.8	..	..	87.4	..	..	..	..	91.9	..	..
Asia	South East Asia	Thailand	..	..	..	98.1	..	..	98.1	..	..	98.7	..
Asia	South East Asia	Timor-Leste	..	..	..	..	..	..	80.5	..	..	..	..

Pacific

Region	Subregion	Country	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Americas	Northern America		99.7	..	..	99.3	..	99.7	99.7	99.7	..	..	..
Oceania	Micronesia	Kiribati	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	94.1	..
Oceania	Melanesia	Papua New Guinea	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	61.1	..	..
Oceania	Polynesia	Tonga	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	98.2	..

Central and East Asia

Region	Subregion	Country	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Asia	Central Asia	Kazakhstan	..	99.8	..	..	..	99.9	..	..	..	..	..
Asia	Central Asia	Kyrgyzstan	..	..	99.6	..	99.3	..	..	..	99.2	..	..
Asia	Eastern Asia	Mongolia	96.5	..	..	..	97.9	..	..	..	98.6	..	..
Asia	Central Asia	Tajikistan	..	..	98	..	..	..	..	98.9	..	..	..

Source: UIS BDDS, March 2021

All tables can be found in the companion data book.

SDG Target 4.2 – Early childhood

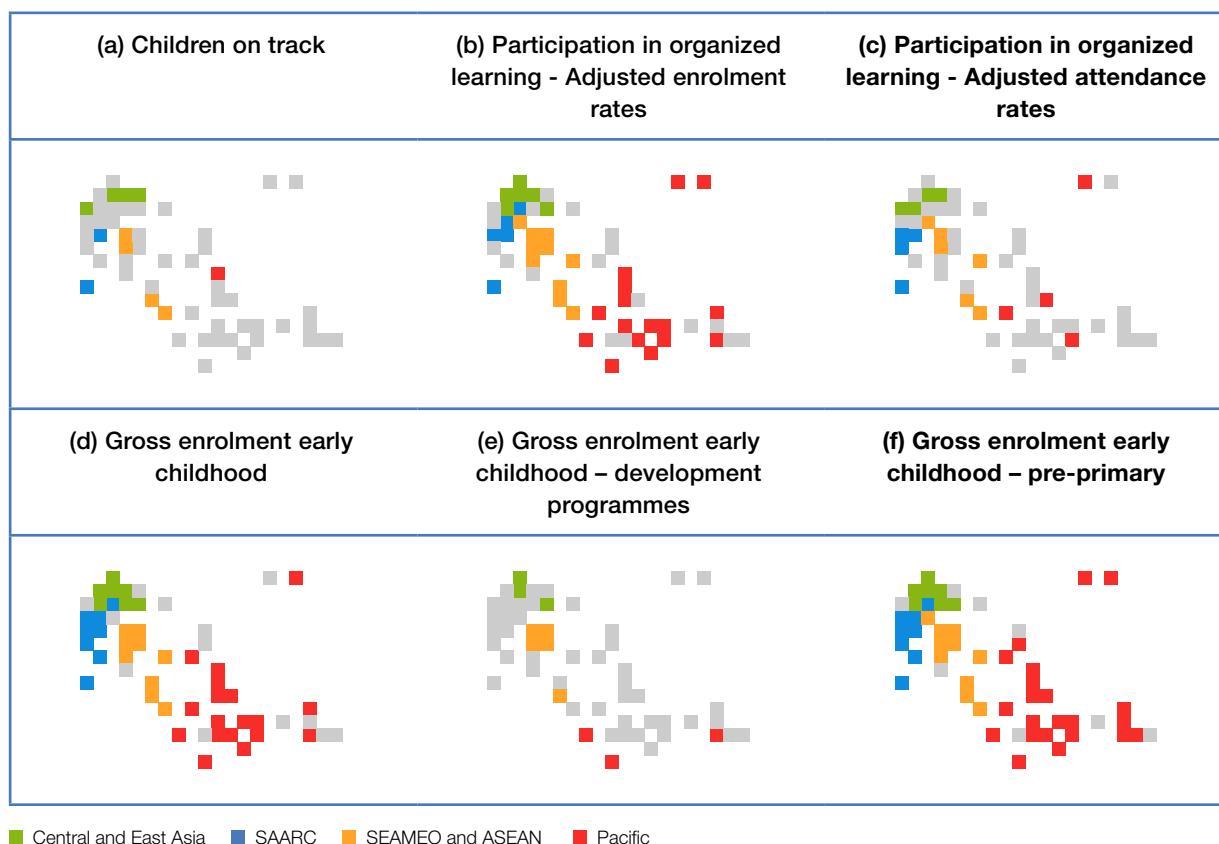
“By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education”

Related regional policy priority areas and outcomes

SAARC Priority Area	SEAMEO Priority Area	ASEAN Policy Area / Outcome	PacREF Policy Area / Outcome	Roadmap for Education 2030
Priority 2: Ensuring educational equity and inclusion	Priority 1: Achieving universal early childhood care and education		Learning pathways 3: Our youngest learners (pre-schoolers) are prepared to engage in formal schooling	Tracks 1 and 3

SDG Target 4.2 relates to SAARC Priority Area 2 “*ensuring educational equity and inclusion.*” The target also relates to SEAMEO Priority Area 1 that focuses on early childhood care. In the Pacific subregion, PacREF addresses these issues in the “Learning Pathways” policy area. Tracks 1 and 3 of the Roadmap for Education 2030 specifies actions for monitoring the achievement of this target. ASEAN policy outcomes do not specifically address this level of education.

Data availability for Target 4.2 in the Asia-Pacific is low. **Figure 9** shows that data for Indicator 4.2.1, which considers “*the proportion of children aged 24-59 months who are developmentally on track in health, learning and psychosocial well-being,*” are missing for almost 80% of countries. Data coverage for adjusted enrolment is higher than attendance: 30% of countries lack data for the former indicator compared with 56% for the latter. For the most part, gross enrolment rates are available for early childhood education and pre-primary.

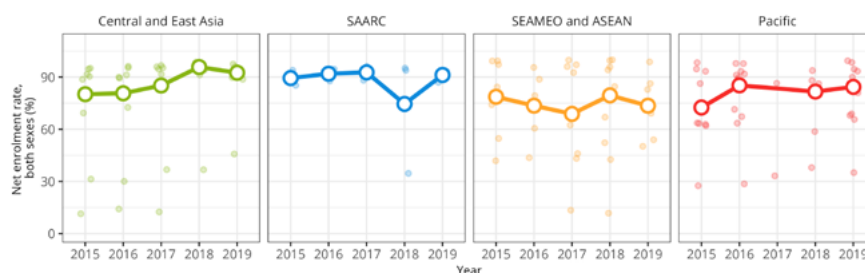
Figure 9: Data availability for SDG Global Indicator 4.2.1, by country, 2015–2020

The participation rate in organized learning one year before the official primary entry age is shown in **Figures 10 and 11**. Over half of all countries in the Asia-Pacific have data for the net enrolment rate. It is, however, important to note the disparities across subregions, with many countries reporting figures below this level.

There is no uniform participation rate in early childhood education among countries in the Asia-Pacific. For example, Samoa, in the Pacific and Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, in Central Asia, have the lowest levels of participation in their respective regions. Similarly, among SEAMEO and ASEAN member countries, Myanmar, Cambodia and Timor-Leste report participation below 50%. On the opposite side of the spectrum, countries with close to 100% participation are Vietnam, Thailand and Brunei in South and South East Asia; Fiji, Cook Islands in the Pacific; Hong Kong and Mongolia in Central and Eastern Asia.

Data for Indicator 4.2.1 are available for only a few countries in the SAARC framework. The reported values are quite similar for Maldives, Pakistan, Nepal. Pakistan and Maldives reported values close to 90%, and Nepal is slightly lower. Bhutan has the lowest reported value with 35% of children participating in early childhood education in 2018. See **Table 8** for more data.

Figure 10: Adjusted net enrolment rate, one year before the official primary entry age, both sexes (%), 2015–2020



In terms of attendance, 21 data points are available for the Asia-Pacific region, with only Thailand and Turkmenistan reporting twice on this indicator. Most reported values are above 50%, only Afghanistan, Papua New Guinea and Tajikistan having reported values below, with the latter having the lowest point (18%).

Data for the adjusted net enrolment rate are available across a larger number of countries and years. This indicator measures the number of children at age 1 and before the official entry age to primary education, participating in an organized learning programme and expressed as a percentage of the total population of the same age. In SAARC, Pakistan and the Maldives both reported participation rates of 93% of children in an organized learning programme in 2019. Bhutan has only one data point, reporting only 35% participation in 2018.

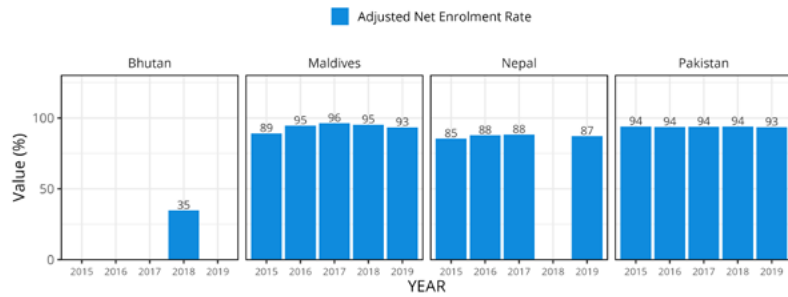
SEAMEO countries have a more diverse situation. While Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam and Malaysia (2015) report participation rates close to 100%, others like Cambodia, Timor and Lao PDR are situated between 50% and 70%. Lao PDR and Cambodia have increased participation rates since 2015, while in Timor Leste, participation has decreased. Myanmar had the lowest participation rate of 12% in 2018.

The Pacific subregion shows a similar variation. New Zealand, Cook Islands, Fiji, Nauru, Tuvalu and Tokelau reported participation rates above 90%. Australia and Niue reported 86% and 81%, respectively in 2018 and 2019. The Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands reported participation of around 70%, while the lowest participation rates were found in Vanuatu (though the most recent data available are from 2015). Participation in Samoa increased by five percentage points.

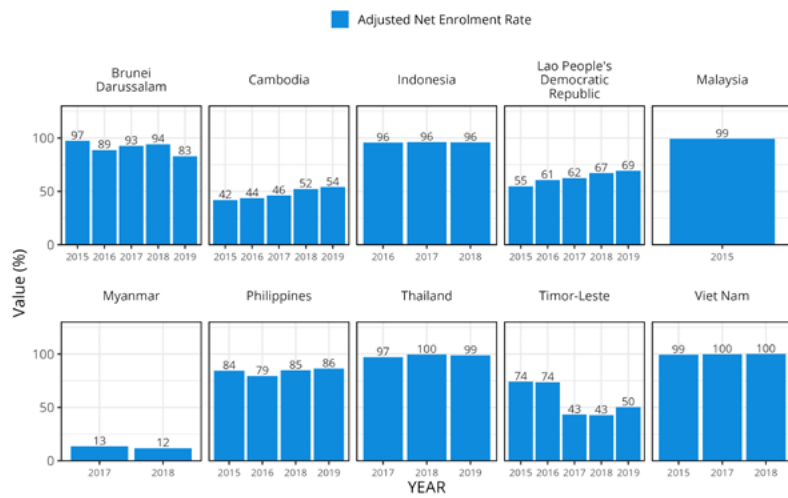
In Central Asia, Mongolia reported participation rates above 95% while in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, participation rates are at 90%. In relation to its counterparts, Tajikistan has the lowest figures, with 12% reported in 2017. In East Asia, Hong Kong and the Republic of Korea have high participation rates of almost 100%, while Macau reported an 89% participation rate in 2019.

Figure 11: Adjusted net enrolment rate, one year before the official primary entry age, both sexes (%)

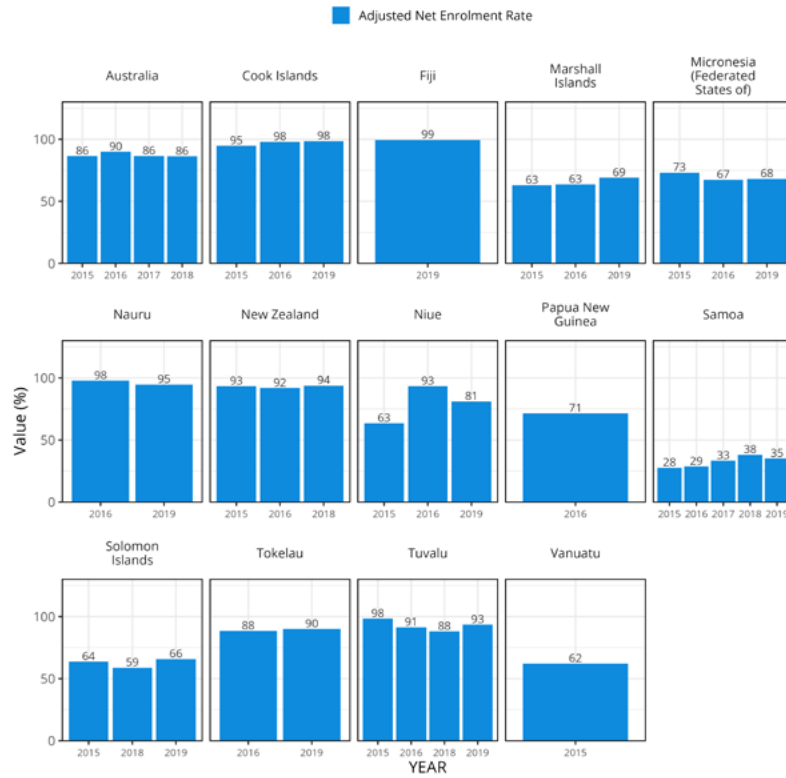
a) SAARC



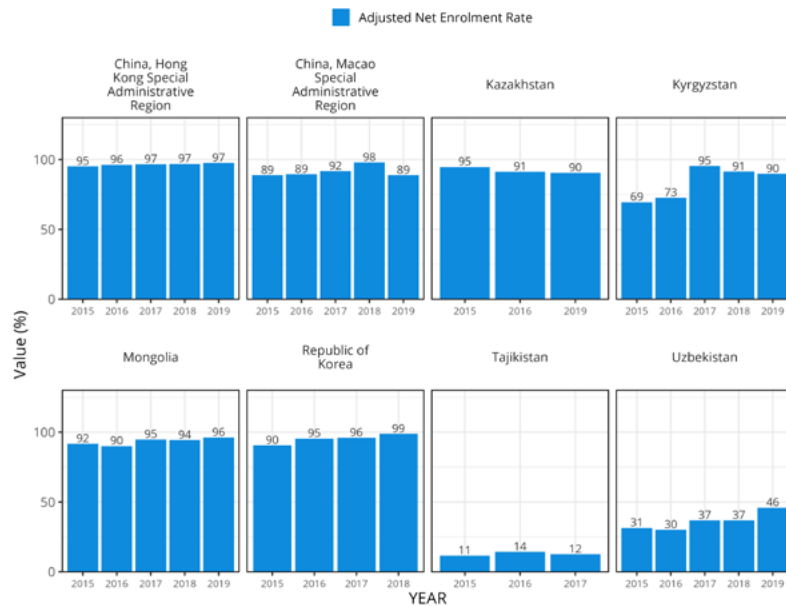
b) SEAMEO



c) Pacific



d) Central and East Asia

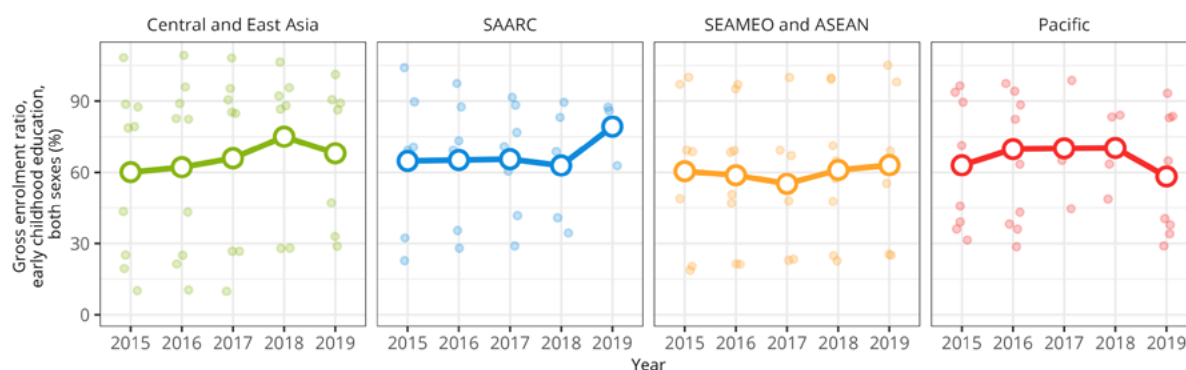


In terms of the gross enrolment ratio (GER), the same dispersion can be noticed with a similar situation across both levels of early childhood education (see **Figure 12**). Pre-primary (ISCED 02) has a slightly higher mean in all regions; there are countries that are close or beyond 100%¹⁴ and others below 25%.

For countries belonging to the SEAMEO and ASEAN frameworks, Philippines and Malaysia reported the highest values (above 95%), while Timor Leste and Lao PDR reported the lowest (up to 25%). In between, with enrolment ratios ranging from 45% to 70%, are Indonesia, Thailand, Brunei and Vietnam. In the Pacific, the highest enrolment ratios are reported in Tokelau, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Cook Islands. The lowest reported values are in Micronesia, Samoa, Fiji and Marshall Islands with values around 30% between 2015 and 2019.

In Central and East Asia, Hong Kong, Macau, China, South Korea and Mongolia are at the top, while Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan are at the lowest portion between 10% and 40%. Tajikistan has particularly low enrolment rates of around 10%.

Figure 12: Gross enrolment ratio, early childhood education and pre-primary (ISCED 0), by subregion, both sexes (%), 2015–2020



¹⁴ The Gross enrolment ratio (GER) can exceed 100% due to the inclusion of over-aged and under-aged students because of early or late entrants, and grade repetition. In this case, a rigorous interpretation of GER needs additional information to assess the extent of repetition, late entrants, etc.

Table 8: SDG Indicator 4.2.2, adjusted net enrolment rate, one year before the official primary entry age, both sexes (%)**SAARC**

Region	Subregion	Country	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Asia	South Asia	Bhutan	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	34.6	..	41.4
Asia	South Asia	Maldives	..	..	..	..	..	89.1	94.5	96.2	95.1	93.2	..
Asia	South Asia	Nepal	..	82.2	..	82.8	88.7	85.3	87.7	88.2	..	87.0	..
Asia	South Asia	Pakistan	..	..	..	..	94.5	93.9	93.5	93.7	93.9	93.4	..

SEAMEO

Region	Subregion	Country	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Asia	South East Asia	Brunei Darussalam	99.3	99.0	100.0	97.9	100.0	97.2	88.7	92.6	94.1	82.9	..
Asia	South East Asia	Cambodia	36.8	..	43.0	..	..	41.9	43.6	46.0	52.2	54.0	..
Asia	South East Asia	Indonesia	86.5	..	99.2	99.4	99.2	..	95.6	96	95.8	..	..
Asia	South East Asia	Lao People's Democratic Republic	35.6	37.5	42.6	47.9	52.3	54.7	60.6	62.4	66.9	69.2	..
Asia	South East Asia	Malaysia	85.9	..	95.1	94	98.4	99.3	..	..	..	..	..
Asia	South East Asia	Myanmar	8.8	..	..	..	..	..	..	13.5	11.8	..	..
Asia	South East Asia	Philippines	..	..	..	..	..	84.3	79.3	..	84.6	86.3	..
Asia	South East Asia	Thailand	98.5	99.8	97.8	99.9	99.5	..	..	97.1	99.5	98.7	..
Asia	South East Asia	Timor-Leste	..	..	..	55.0	61.1	74.1	73.5	43.2	42.6	50.2	..
Asia	South East Asia	Viet Nam	90.4	93.8	91.4	95.5	97.6	99.3	..	99.7	99.9	..	..

Pacific

Region	Subregion	Country	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Oceania	Australia and New Zealand	Australia	52.6	..	..	80.1	82.7	86.3	89.8	86.4	86.2	..	..
Oceania	Polynesia	Cook Islands	..	..	..	97.4	94.1	94.7	97.8	..	..	98.4	..
Oceania	Melanesia	Fiji	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	99.4	..
Oceania	Micronesia	Marshall Islands	..	..	..	..	..	62.8	63.5	..	..	68.8	..
Oceania	Micronesia	Micronesia (Federated States of)	..	..	..	..	..	73.0	67.3	..	..	68.0	..
Oceania	Micronesia	Nauru	..	..	88.1	..	..	..	97.8	..	..	94.5	..
Oceania	Australia and New Zealand	New Zealand	..	..	..	..	91.5	93.3	91.8	..	93.8	..	..
Oceania	Polynesia	Niue	..	..	..	..	..	63.4	93.3	..	..	81.0	..
Oceania	Melanesia	Papua New Guinea	..	..	..	..	..	..	71.4	..	..	..	..
Oceania	Polynesia	Samoa	25.6	28.3	24.5	..	27.8	27.5	28.6	33.2	38.0	35.1	..
Oceania	Melanesia	Solomon Islands	..	..	..	59.5	62.2	63.6	..	..	58.7	65.6	..
Oceania	Polynesia	Tokelau	..	..	..	..	..	..	88.4	..	..	90.0	..
Oceania	Polynesia	Tuvalu	..	..	..	..	..	98.3	91.2	..	88.0	93.4	..
Oceania	Melanesia	Vanuatu	..	..	..	..	..	62.0	..	..	..	..	..

SDG Target 4.3 – TVET and higher education

“By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university”

Related regional policy priority areas and outcomes

SAARC Priority Area	SEAMEO Priority Area	ASEAN Policy Area / Outcome	PacREF Policy Area / Outcome	Roadmap for Education 2030
Priority 5: Promoting acquisition of skills for life and for work	Priority 4: Promoting technical and vocational education and training (TVET)	SUB-GOAL 4: Support the development of the TVET sector as well as lifelong learning in the region PRIORITY AREA 4.1: Maximizing access to TVET for employment and sustainable development	Learning Pathways 1. An enabling policy environment, which is rights based with appropriate resourcing, for TVET models and relevancy increased school-based decision making and flexibility in the facilitation of learning Student outcomes and wellbeing 2. Improved participation and success rates at all levels, especially in ECCE, secondary and TVET	Track 2

All regional frameworks in the Asia-Pacific devote space to TVET making the connection to SDG Target 4.3 very relevant. SAARC Priority Area 5 calls for “promoting acquisition of skills for life and for work”. The target also relates to SEAMEO Priority Area 4 and ASEAN sub-goal 4 which focus specifically on TVET. In the Pacific region, PacREF addresses TVET in the Learning Pathways policy area and defines two specific outcomes devoted to this dimension. Actions related to monitoring the achievement of this target are part of Track 2 of the Roadmap for Education 2030.

Unfortunately, data on the global indicator that measures the participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training are missing for 65% of countries. For the specific indicator that monitors participation in technical-vocational programmes, data are missing for 40% of countries.

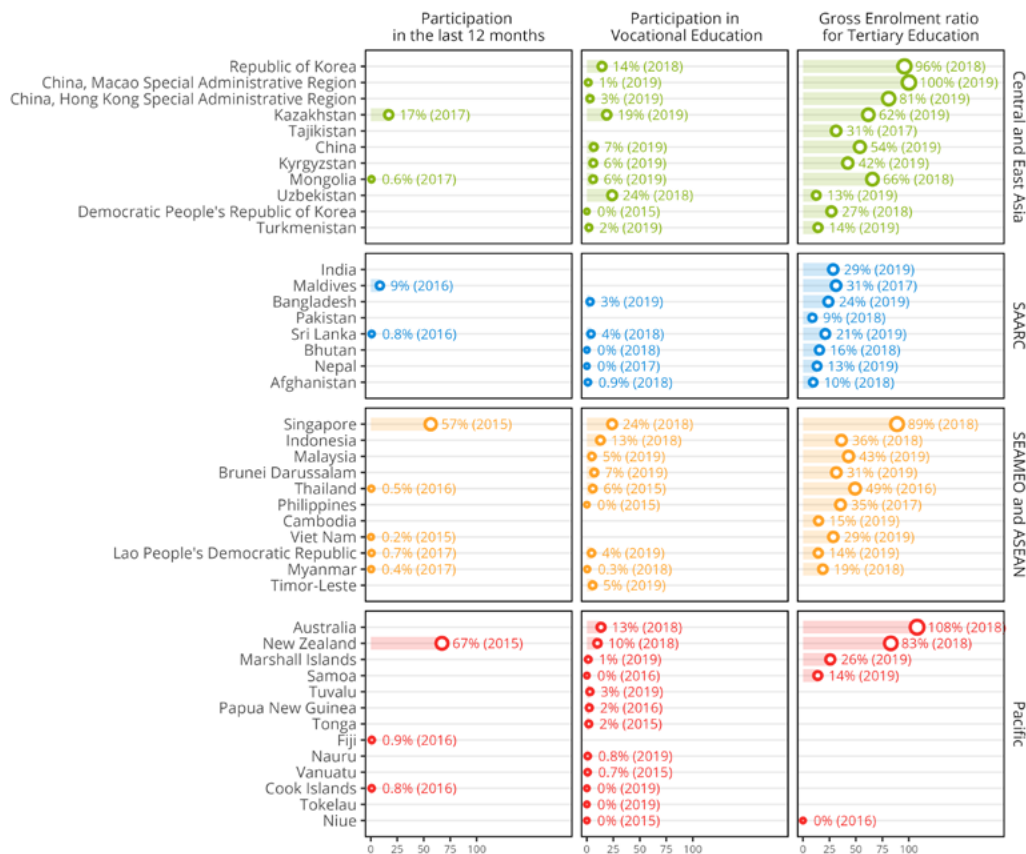
Figure 13 shows that, besides Singapore and New Zealand, which in 2015 reported participation rates above 50%, all other countries reported low participation between 2015 and 2017. In SAARC countries, Maldives reported almost 10% participation of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education in 2016, while in Sri Lanka participation is below 1%. All other countries besides Singapore in SEAMEO/ASEAN frameworks reported similar figures. In Central Asia, Mongolia is at the same level, while Kazakhstan reported 16.9%.

In terms of the proportion of youth enrolled in vocational education, SAARC member countries Bangladesh and Sri Lanka reported 3% to 4% of youth were involved in such programmes in 2019 and 2018. In Afghanistan, Nepal and Bhutan, participation is below 1%.

In South East Asia, Singapore has the highest figures with almost 24% participation. Data for Thailand, Timor Leste, Lao PDR, Malaysia and Brunei show youth and adult participation of 5% to 7%. In Philippines and Myanmar participation is below 1%.

In the Pacific subregion, besides Australia and New Zealand, which reported participation in vocational education of around 10%, participation of youth in TVET programmes is low. For example, in Tuvalu it was under 3% in 2019. For this indicator, data collection is more constant in a few countries and it is interesting to note that while participation in Australia in 2019 shrank to one half of 2018's figure, New Zealand doubled participation in the same period.

Figure 13: Global and thematic indicators for TVET, latest data available



- Participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training in the last 12 months, both sexes (%)
- Proportion of 15 to 24 year-olds enrolled in vocational education, both sexes (%)
- Gross enrolment ratio for tertiary (%)

In terms of gross enrolment ratio for tertiary education (see **Figures 13c and 14**), India and Maldives have among the highest ratios at around 30%. In 2019, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh reported 24% and 21% gross enrolment, respectively, with Bangladesh gaining six percentage points since 2016. Bhutan and Nepal reported ratios below 20% in the period, while Pakistan and Afghanistan reported values below 10%, the lowest in SAARC subregion.

In SEAMEO, five years following graduation from upper secondary school, 90% of this age cohort in Singapore is enrolled in tertiary education. According to the latest reported data, in Thailand 49% of the same age group is enrolled in tertiary education while in Malaysia 43% of this population is enrolled. The latter has reported a decrease of three percentage points since 2015, while the former has only one data point available in 2016. With lower tertiary enrolment levels overall, Indonesia, Philippines and Vietnam reported values around 30% and Myanmar 19%. Indonesia gained a few percentage points since 2015. Lao PDR and Cambodia are lagging in the subregion with only 15% of the population enrolled in tertiary five years after graduating from upper secondary school.

In the Pacific, Australia and New Zealand have the highest gross enrolment in tertiary education. Australia reported enrolment above 100%¹⁵ while in New Zealand data showed tertiary enrolment of 83% in 2018. Marshall Islands and Samoa reported 26% and 14% enrolment ratios (Niue reported a ratio below zero in 2016).

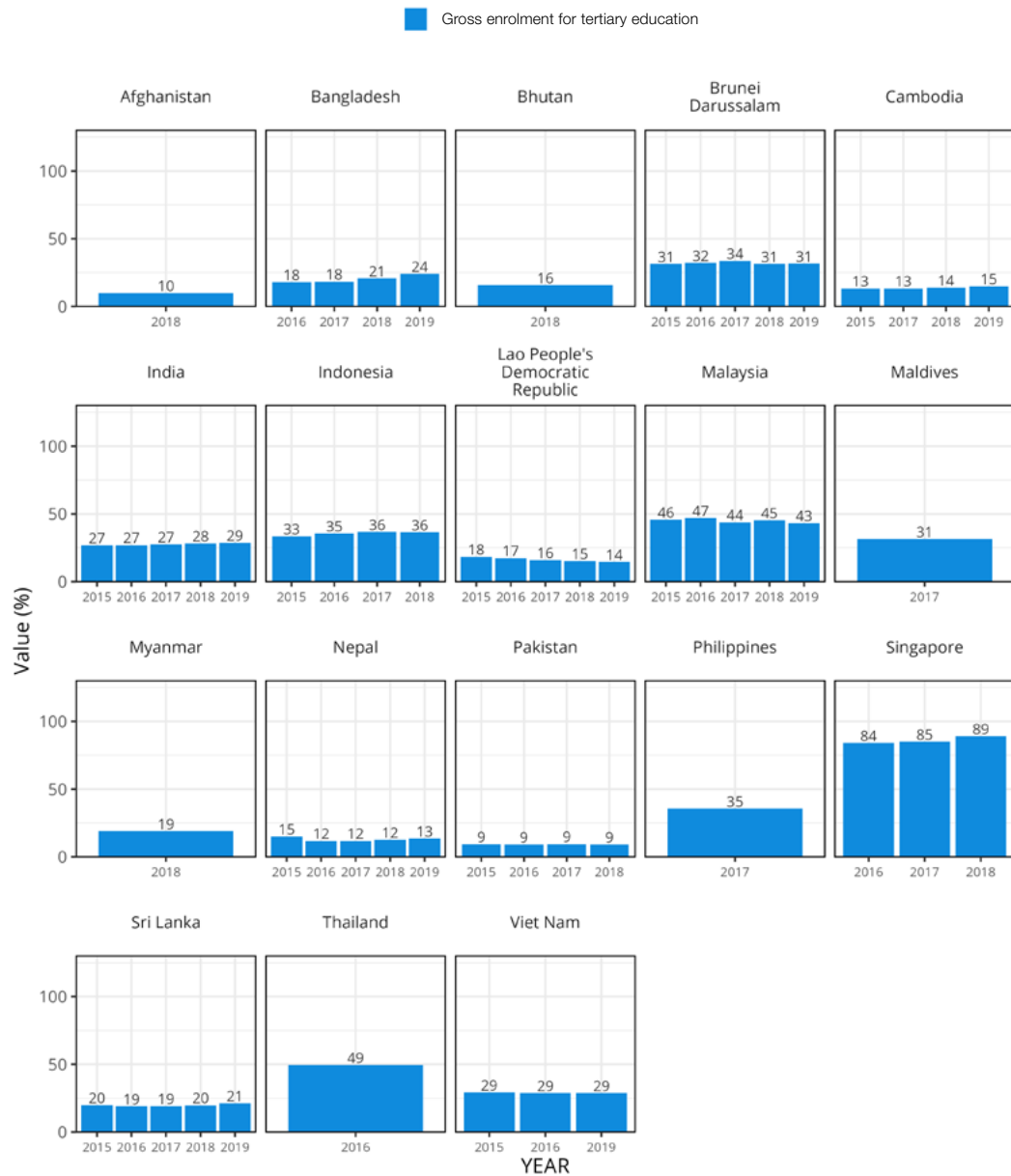
In Central Asia, 65% of youth in Mongolia and Kazakhstan were enrolled in tertiary education five years following graduation from upper secondary school in 2018 and 2019, respectively. The latter reported an increase of 15 percentage points from 2015 to 2018. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have enrolment ratios of 31% and 42%, respectively. Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan reported ratios above 15% in 2019.

In East Asia, Macao and South Korea have a gross enrolment ratio of close to 100%. Hong Kong reported that 81% of youth were enrolled in tertiary education in 2019 five years after leaving upper secondary school, while in China it was 54% in the same year. All three show an increase in the period, especially Macao where enrolment jumped 20 percentage points in 2019 from 2015. China also reported an almost 10% increase in enrolment between 2015 and 2019. North Korea had the lowest enrolment of 26% reported in 2018, unchanged since 2015.

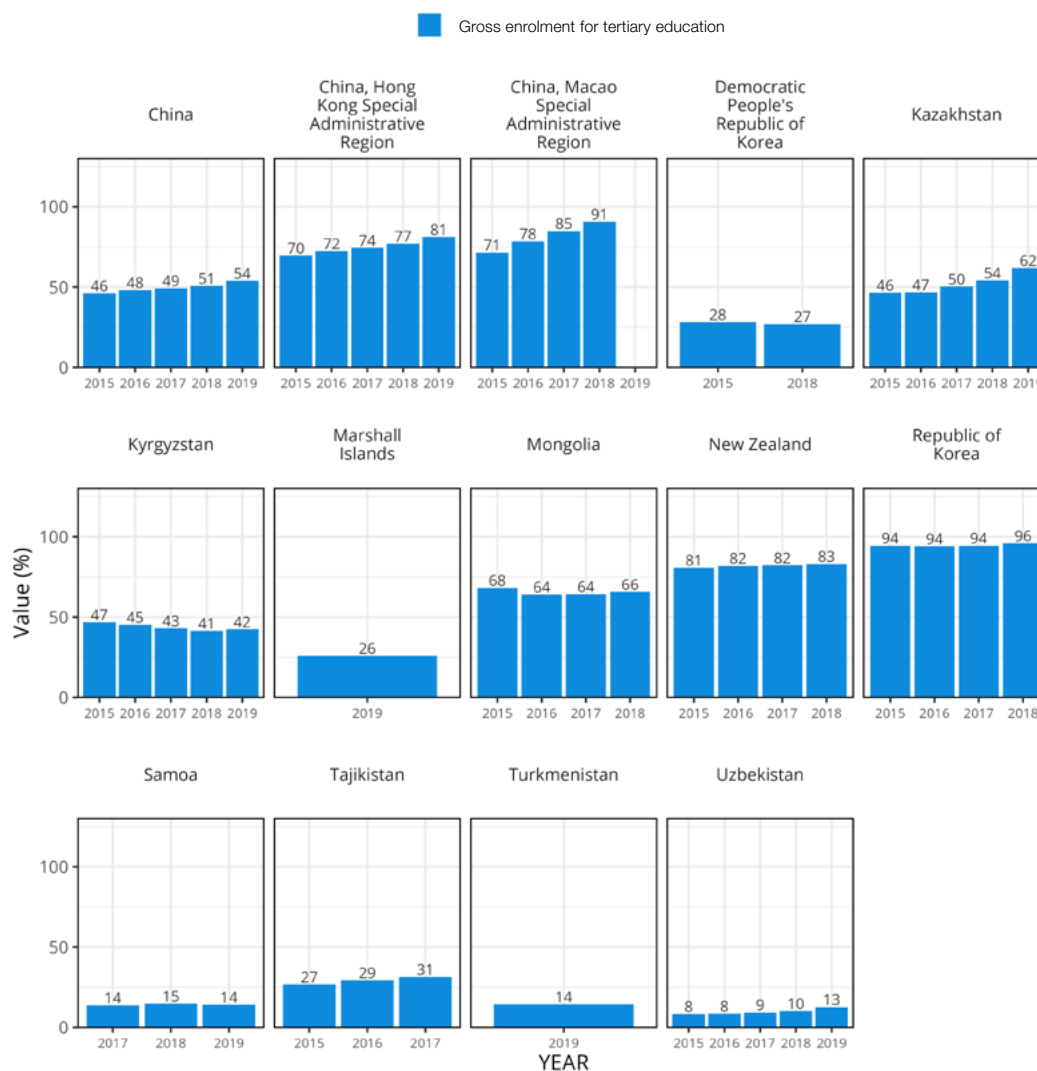
15 Gross enrolment includes students of all ages and repetition and for that reason can exceed the population of the age group that officially corresponds to the level of education – leading to ratios greater than 100%.

Figure 14: Gross enrolment ratio for tertiary education (%), 2015–2020

a) SAARC and SEAMEO



b) Pacific, Central and East Asia



Enrolment in vocational education among 15- to 24-year-olds is low across the Asia-Pacific. Only Australia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Singapore have reported enrolment above, or close to, 20%. South Korea reported enrolment of 14% in 2018, a figure that is stable during the period. China, Brunei, Mongolia, Kyrgyzstan, New Zealand and East Timor have enrolled an average of 5% of 15- to 24-year-olds. East Timor shows an important increase since 2015, coming from only 2% in 2015 to 5% in 2019. New Zealand reported that enrolment doubled from 2018 to 2019 (see **Figure 15**).

Figure 15: Proportion of 15- to 24-year-olds enrolled in vocational education (VE), both sexes (%), 2015–2020

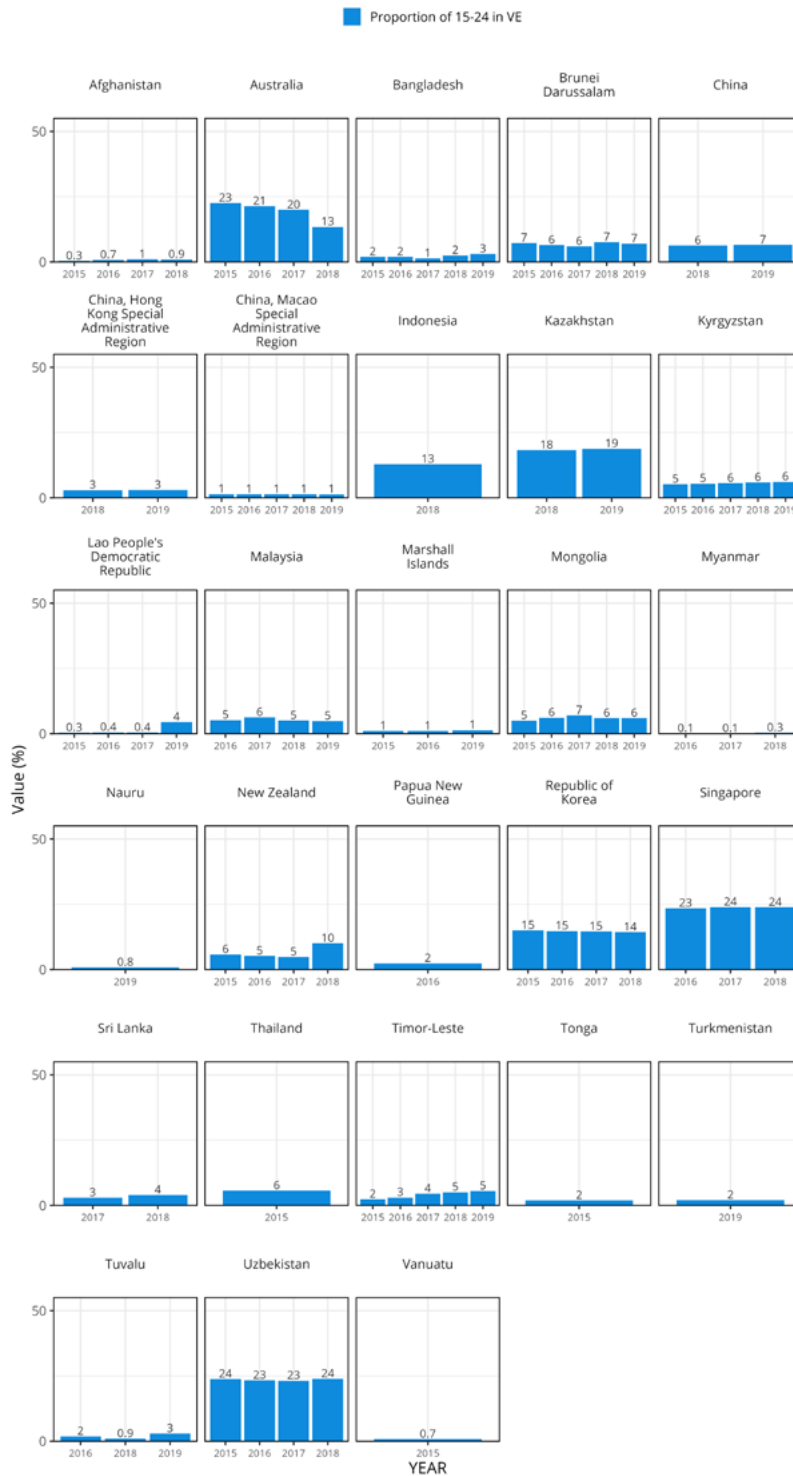


Table 9: SDG Indicator 4.3.2, gross attendance ratio for tertiary education, both sexes (%)**SAARC**

Region	Subregion	Country	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Asia	South Asia	Afghanistan	..	5.8	..	..	..	12.6	..	..	..	..	..
Asia	South Asia	Bangladesh	..	12.8	..	..	16.2	..	..	..	..	20.2	..
Asia	South Asia	Maldives	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	33.4	..	..	..
Asia	South Asia	Pakistan	..	..	12.5	..	..	..	..	..	14.6	..	..

SEAMEO

Region	Subregion	Country	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Asia	South East Asia	Indonesia	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	35.2	..	..	..
Asia	South East Asia	Lao People's Democratic Republic	..	..	11.0	..	..	..	..	12.6	..	..	..
Asia	South East Asia	Myanmar	..	..	..	..	..	..	17.7	..	..	..	..
Asia	South East Asia	Philippines	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	58.4	..	..
Asia	South East Asia	Thailand	..	..	..	27.2	..	..	44.7	..	..	29.9	..
Asia	South East Asia	Timor-Leste	..	..	..	..	..	..	18.1	..	..	..	..

Pacific

Region	Subregion	Country	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Oceania	Micronesia	Kiribati	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	4.3	..
Oceania	Melanesia	Papua New Guinea	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	3.7	..	..
Oceania	Polynesia	Tonga	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	13.4	..

Central and East Asia

Region	Subregion	Country	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Asia	Central Asia	Kazakhstan	..	44.2	..	..	..	44.3	..	..	..	..	..
Asia	Central Asia	Kyrgyzstan	..	..	40.3	..	43.1	..	..	..	31.5	..	..
Asia	East Asia	Mongolia	..	..	..	..	51.5	..	..	..	49.7	..	..
Asia	Central Asia	Tajikistan	..	..	20.3	..	..	..	..	24.5	..	..	..
Asia	Central Asia	Turkmenistan	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	13.4	..

SDG Target 4.4 – Skills for work

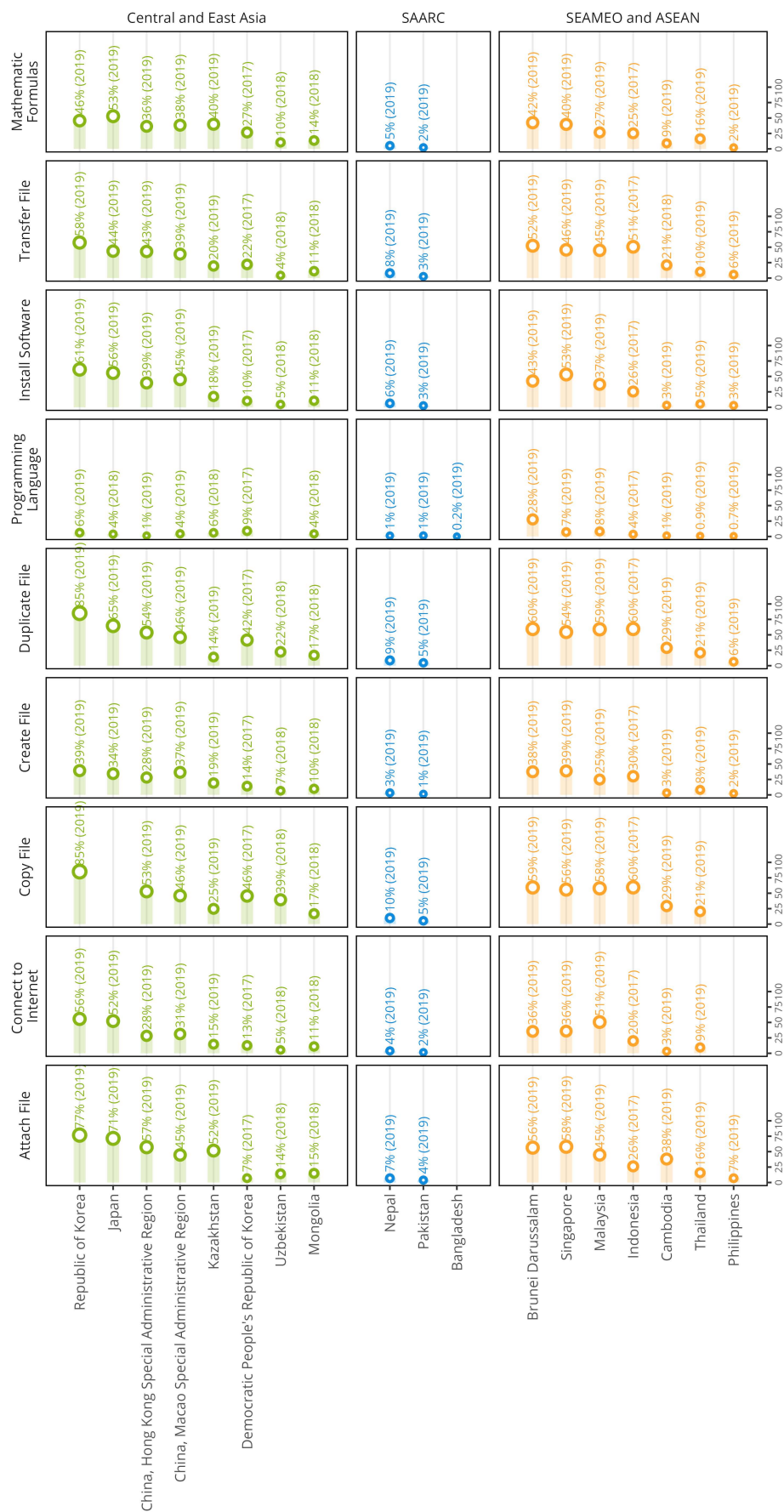
“By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship”

Related regional policy priority areas and outcomes

SAARC Priority Area	SEAMEO Priority Area	ASEAN Policy Area / Outcome	PacREF Policy Area / Outcome	Roadmap for Education 2030
Priority 6: Harnessing the potential of ICTs	Priority 4: Promoting technical and vocational education and training (TVET)	SUB-GOAL 3: Strengthen the use of ICT PRIORITY AREA 3.1: Expanding and improving human and institutional capacity in educational software development and online instructional design to enhance access to quality education PRIORITY AREA 3.2: Strengthening capacity to access and use digital learning through ICT in ASEAN Member States; as well as providing other capacity building programmes to support this	Learning Pathways 4. Linked pathways between levels of schooling and beyond	Tracks 2, 3 and 4

SDG Target 4.4 is very relevant for all education frameworks in the Asia-Pacific as it focuses on numeracy and ICT capabilities which are priorities in the region. The SAARC relation to Target 4.4 is with Priority 6, *“Harnessing the potential of ICTs”*. As for Target 4.3, the SEAMEO framework relationship can be established with Priority 4 on TVET. The ASEAN framework has a sub-goal that looks at strengthening the use of ICT and two priority areas: 3.1 which seeks institutional reinforcement on digital skills aimed to improve availability of for distance learning; and 3.2 which focuses on students’ capabilities to access and use such systems. In the Pacific subregion, PacREF can also be linked to SDG Target 4.4 through the Learning Pathways policy area and the more general Outcome 4 which looks at student capacities at school and beyond. Actions related to monitoring the achievement of this target are part of Tracks 2, 3 and 4 of the Roadmap for Education 2030.

Figure 16: ICT skills, both sexes, last available value (%), latest data available



The main indicator in this target is 4.4.1, the “*proportion of youth and adults with information and communications technology (ICT) that is broken down by type of skill.*” Basic skills courses cover the most common usages of a computer, including a majority of the following: understanding the basic notions of computer manipulation; managing computer files, word processing, using spreadsheets and databases; creating presentations; finding information and communicating using computers; and being aware of social and ethical implications of internet use (see **Figure 16** and **Table 10**).

Data on ICT skills are available for 30% of the countries of the Asia-Pacific and there are no data for the Pacific subregion. ICT skills have been measured regularly in Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong, South Korea and Indonesia. In Central Asia, Kazakhstan and Mongolia have data points for five out of nine ICT indicators. In addition, Indicator 4.4.2 tracks youth and adult attainment rates, but there are only 27 data points in the UIS database.

In SAARC member countries, data on ICT use are available only for India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. In India, around 10% of youth and adults are capable of creating and transferring files. Ten percent are also capable of recognizing a mathematical formula. Pakistan and Bangladesh have measurements for all indicators and figures above 5% for all of them. Data points since 2015 are available for Pakistan and show no major change.

In South East Asia, 35% to 55% of youth and adults in Brunei, Singapore and Malaysia have ICT skills for basic operations – more than in other subregion. For the most advanced skills, however, children and youth in these three countries have only a slightly better grasp of ICT. It is interesting to note the relatively high rates of understanding a programming language in Brunei (27%). At the lower end of the spectrum, the proportion of the population in Cambodia, Thailand and Philippines with ICT skills that meet the criteria for SDG Target 4.4 remains below 30% and in some indicators below 5%. Indonesia is in between, with 25% to 50% of the population comfortable with the most basic operations.

In East Asia, over half the population in the Republic of Korea meet Target 4.4 work skills for most indicators. Surprisingly, the proportion knowing a programming language is low in comparison to most basic skills. Hong Kong and Macau have a similar performance, while Japan has the highest ratio of people with ICT-related work skills after Korea. In Central Asia, Kazakhstan has the highest concentration of ICT skills across the population.

Table 10: SDG Indicator 4.4.1, ICT skills: Proportion of youth and adults who have written a computer program using a specialized programming language, both sexes (%)

SAARC

Region	Subregion	Country	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Asia	South Asia	Bangladesh	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	0.2	..
Asia	South Asia	Pakistan	..	..	..	..	..	..	1.5	..	..	1.4	..

SEAMEO

Region	Subregion	Country	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Asia	South East Asia	Brunei Darussalam	..	..	..	..	..	..	17.0	..	27.7	27.7	..
Asia	South East Asia	Cambodia	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	0.1	..	1.4	..
Asia	South East Asia	Indonesia	..	..	..	..	..	..	3.5	3.5	..	..	..
Asia	South East Asia	Malaysia	..	..	..	..	..	2.3	..	7.5	7.8	8.2	..
Asia	South East Asia	Philippines	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	0.7	..
Asia	South East Asia	Singapore	..	..	..	..	4.3	6.0	6.3	6.3	7.4	7.1	..
Asia	South East Asia	Thailand	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1.1	0.9	..

Central and East Asia

Region	Subregion	Country	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Asia	East Asia	China, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	2.7	1.3	..
Asia	East Asia	China, Macao Special Administrative Region	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	7.1	4.4	..
Asia	East Asia	Japan	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	0.6	3.8	..	..
Asia	Central Asia	Kazakhstan	..	..	..	..	..	2.7	4.3	4.8	5.9	6.3	..
Asia	East Asia	Mongolia	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	4.2	2.8	..
Asia	East Asia	Republic of Korea	..	..	..	..	..	4.8	4.4	4.9	5.6	6.1	..

Table 11: SDG Indicator 4.4.3, educational attainment: at least some primary (ISCED 1), population over age 25, both sexes (%)**Central and East Asia**

Subregion	Country	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Central Asia	Kazakhstan	..	..	..	99.9	..
Central Asia	Uzbekistan	..	..	..	100.0	..
East Asia	China, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region	95.4	..	95.7	..	..
East Asia	China, Macao Special Administrative Region	..	89.8	..	..	..
East Asia	Republic of Korea	95.5	..	..	..	..

South and East Asia

SAARC	Bangladesh	54.7	56.3	57.4	58.4	61.1
SAARC	Bhutan	..	..	32.4	..	..
SAARC	Pakistan	..	49.7	48.8	..	..
SEAMEO	Cambodia	22.5	..	..	..	..
SEAMEO	Indonesia	77.6	80.2	..	78.4	..
SEAMEO	Philippines	..	..	84.0	..	..
SEAMEO	Singapore	86.7	86.1	86.0	87.9	..
SEAMEO	Thailand	..	65.7	..	66.8	..
Pacific	Australia	..	..	99.7	99.7	..

SDG Target 4.5 – Equity

“By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations”

Related regional policy priority areas and outcomes

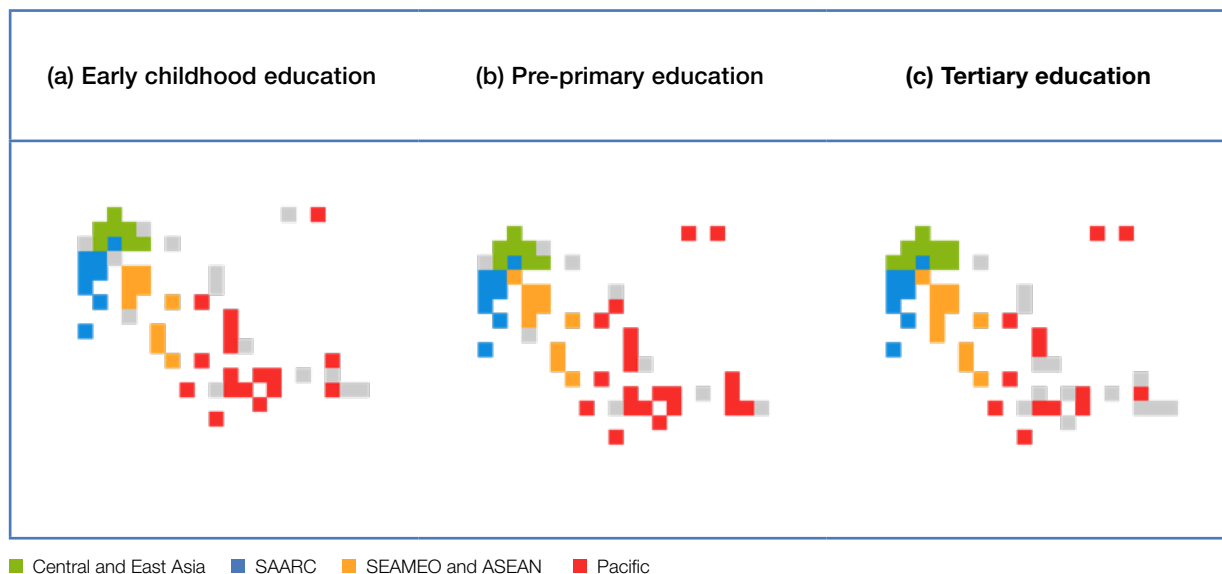
SAARC Priority Area	SEAMEO Priority Area	ASEAN Policy Area / Outcome	PacREF Policy Area / Outcome	Roadmap for Education 2030
Priority 2: Ensuring educational equity and inclusion	Priority 2: Addressing barriers to inclusion	SUB-GOAL 2: Enhance the quality and access to basic education for all, including the disabled, less advantageous and other marginalized groups	Quality and relevance 3. Curriculum and programmes, with appropriate pedagogy are inclusive, rights based, promote gender equality, flexible and responsive to innovation and change and are adaptable to new learning opportunities.	Tracks 1, 2 and 3
Priority 3: Achieving gender equality		PRIORITY AREA 2.1: Promoting inclusive schools through improved access and provision of basic education to marginalized and out- of-school children		

Equity is also an important dimension in all Asia-Pacific education frameworks. For SAARC member countries, SDG Target 4.5 is related to Priority 2, “ensuring educational equity” and Priority 3, “ensuring gender equality”. Similarly, Priority 2 under the SEAMEO framework addresses barriers to inclusion. The ASEAN framework includes persons with disabilities, less advantageous and other marginalized groups in sub-goal 2 and is intended to promote inclusivity in schools. The Pacific subregion addresses equity in the quality and relevance policy area and the adaptation of curricula. Actions related to monitoring the achievement of this target are part of Tracks 1, 2 and 3 of the Roadmap for Education 2030.

The global indicators used to monitor Target 4.5 are the various parity indices calculated for education indicators that can be disaggregated in the following ways: female/male, rural/urban, bottom/top wealth quintile and others such as disability status, indigenous peoples and conflict-affected. Only a few disaggregated data points are available in the Asia-Pacific (see **Figure 17**). One is the adjusted gender parity index (GPIA) calculated for the gross intake ratio into the last grade of primary and lower secondary education. Around 80% of countries in the region are represented with at least one data point. There are also disaggregated data on gross enrolment ratio for early childhood, pre-primary

and tertiary education. Around 25% of countries lack disaggregated data on equity measures for early childhood and tertiary education. There are data for 85% of countries at the pre-primary level.

Figure 17: Data availability for the gross enrolment ratio, adjusted gender parity index (GPIA), by level of education



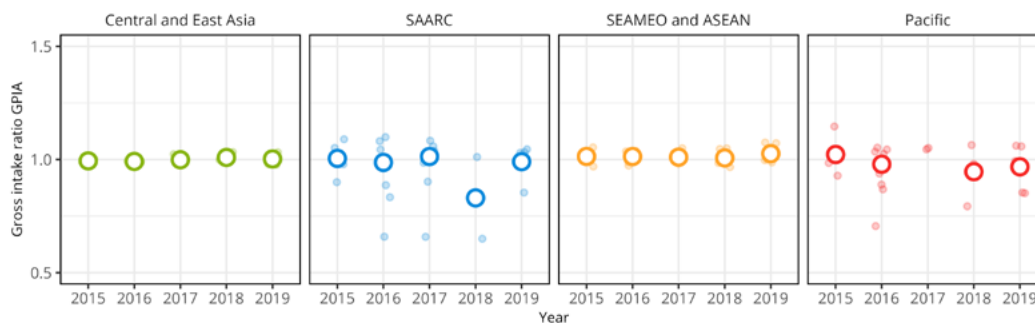
On intake, a few countries still do not reach gender parity in primary school (see **Figure 18**). In the SAARC region, Afghanistan reported a GPIA of around 0.65 between 2016 to 2018, where 1 is equivalent to gender parity. Numbers above 1 suggest girls are favoured, while a GPIA below 1 indicates boys are favoured. Pakistan and the Maldives have GPIA slightly higher (0.85). India, Nepal and Bhutan have a GPIA equal or above to 1. In the last grade of lower secondary school, the GPIA in Afghanistan are lower below 0.60, indicating that girls are at a greater disadvantage. For the other countries, the GPIA is similar at both levels¹⁶.

In South East Asia, most countries are close to parity. Lao PDR has the lowest GPIA for primary and lower secondary. In the Pacific, the lowest GPIA are reported for Niue, Tuvalu, Cook Islands, Nauru and Papua New Guinea (0.85). In Tuvalu, Cook Islands and Niue the GPIA has fallen in the latest reported year in both levels. In Central and East Asia, all countries and years are close to parity.

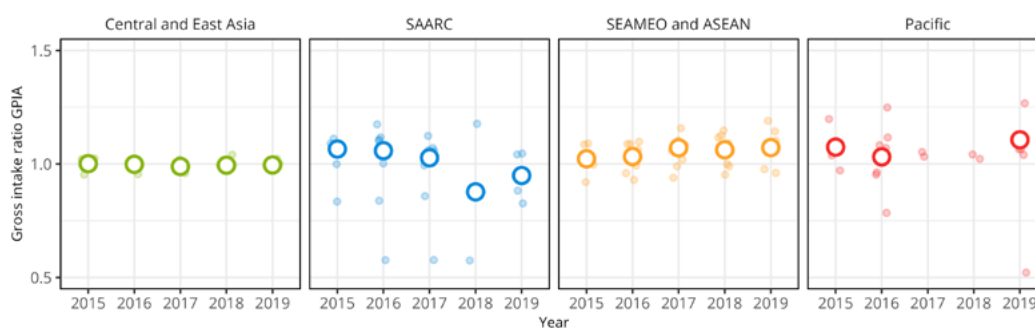
¹⁶ A value of less than "1" represents disparity in favour of the category in the denominator: males for GPIA (Figure 17 and 18) and urban for LPIA (Figure 19).

Figure 18: Gross intake ratio to the last grade (GIRLG), adjusted gender parity index (GPIA) by education level, 2015–2020

a) GIRLG of primary education, adjusted gender parity index (GPIA)



b) GIRLG of lower secondary general education, adjusted gender parity index (GPIA)

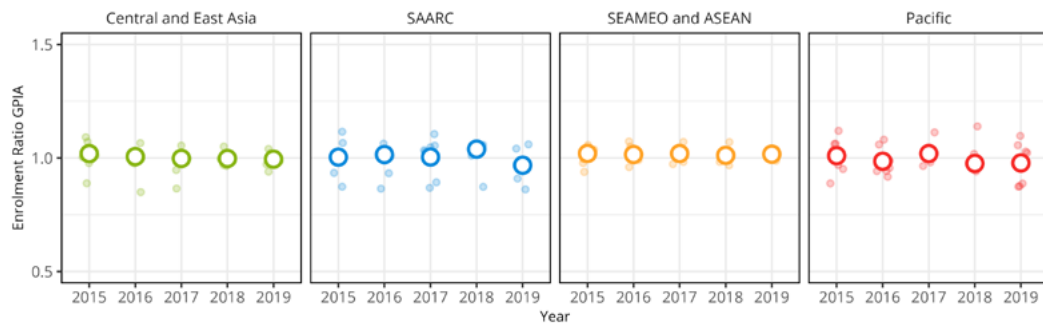
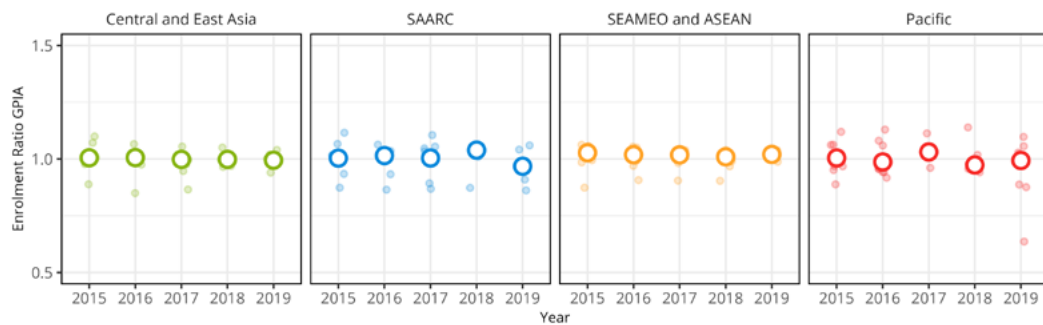
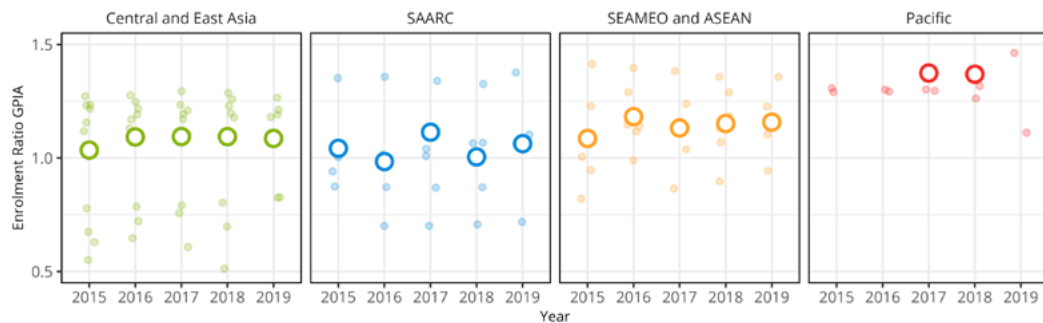


In terms of enrolment (see **Figure 19**), Pakistan and Nepal have the lowest gender parity index for early childhood while Sri Lanka has more girls enrolled at this level. In South East Asia, the lowest parity index can be found in Thailand and Vietnam at around 0.95. In Central Asia, Tajikistan has the lowest parity index (0.84), indicating that more boys than girls are enrolled in early childhood education. In East Asia, girls have a slight in advantage in Hong Kong.

In the Pacific, the parity levels are around 1 in early education. In Samoa and the Cook Islands the GPIA improved over the five years under consideration. At the pre-primary level, Niue has the lowest parity (0.6). Tokelau and Tuvalu have parity indexes below 0.9.

In regards to tertiary education, Central Asia and East Asia parity favours the advantaged groups (boys and urban) in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. In Uzbekistan, the index improved from 0.62 to 0.82 from 2015 to 2019 (see **Figure 19c** and **Table 12**). In Mongolia, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan the girls have an advantage. In East Asia, girls have in advantage in Macao, Hong Kong and China. In the Pacific, enrolment of girls is higher in all countries, especially in Australia (1.3) and Polynesia (1.5).

Data indicate that greater gender parity exists across the Asia-Pacific at lower levels of education. In contrast, enrolment by gender in tertiary education varies much more between countries in all regions often favouring girls.

Figure 19: Gross enrolment ratio, adjusted gender parity index (GPIA), 2015–2020**a) Early childhood education****b) Pre-primary****c) Tertiary education**

Comparing completion rates in rural and urban locations – the adjusted location parity index (LPIA) – shows that while some countries have achieved parity, in general, there is a disparity in favour of urban children. This discrepancy increases along with the education level (see **Figure 20**).

Among SAARC member countries, India, Maldives and Bangladesh are closer to having urban-rural parity at the primary level, but living in a city is still an advantage when it comes to secondary school. The highest disparities in the LPIA are evident in Afghanistan and Pakistan, while Nepal is in an

intermediate situation in the subregion. In SEAMEO, Philippines has a similar LPIA for the three levels, slightly favouring urbanites. Thailand and Indonesia have reported figures close to parity in primary and lower secondary, but disparities remain in upper secondary, again with urban children more likely to be in school than their rural counterparts. Timor and Lao PDR have data for primary and lower secondary and both countries show higher disparities at the latter level. In the Pacific, Tonga reported LPIA at all three levels of education. Kiribati reported disparities favouring urbanites in the lower secondary and Papua New Guinea in both primary and lower secondary levels.

All countries in Central Asia have reported urban-rural parity in school enrolment of primary-aged students. At the lower and upper secondary levels, Mongolia lags behind, again with urban children at an advantage. Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan have parity index levels somewhat below 1 in upper secondary, indicating some degree of disparity in favour of children living in urban settings.

Figure 20: Completion rate, primary and secondary education, adjusted location parity index (LPIA), 2015–2020



Table 12: SDG Indicator 4.5.2, gross enrolment ratio for tertiary education, adjusted gender parity index (GPIA)**SAARC**

Region	Subregion	Country	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Asia	South Asia	Afghanistan	..	0.3	..	..	0.3	..	..	..	0.3	..	..
Asia	South Asia	Bangladesh	..	0.7	0.7	..	0.7	..	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	..
Asia	South Asia	Bhutan	0.6	0.7	0.7	0.8	..	..	..	..	1.0	..	1.1
Asia	South Asia	India	0.7	0.8	..	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.1	1.1	..
Asia	South Asia	Maldives	..	..	..	..	1.6	..	..	1.7	..	..	..
Asia	South Asia	Nepal	0.6	0.7	..	0.8	..	0.9	1.0	1.0	1.1	1.1	..
Asia	South Asia	Pakistan	..	0.9	1.0	1.0	1.1	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9	..	..
Asia	South Asia	Sri Lanka	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.2	1.4	1.4	1.3	1.3	1.4	..

SEAMEO

Region	Subregion	Country	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Asia	South East Asia	Brunei Darussalam	1.5	1.4	1.4	1.5	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4
Asia	South East Asia	Cambodia	0.6	0.6	..	..	..	0.8	..	0.9	0.9	0.9
Asia	South East Asia	Indonesia	0.9	0.9	1.0	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	..
Asia	South East Asia	Lao People's Democratic Republic	0.8	0.7	0.8	0.9	0.9	0.9	1.0	1.0	1.1	1.1
Asia	South East Asia	Malaysia	1.3	1.2	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.2	1.1	1.1	1.2	1.2
Asia	South East Asia	Myanmar	..	1.3	1.2	..	..	..	..	..	1.3	..
Asia	South East Asia	Philippines	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	..	..	1.2	..	..
Asia	South East Asia	Singapore	..	..	..	..	..	..	1.1	1.1	1.1	..
Asia	South East Asia	Thailand	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.3	1.3	..	1.3	..	..	..
Asia	South East Asia	Viet Nam	1.0	1.0	..	0.9	1.1	1.0	1.2	..	..	..

Pacific

Region	Subregion	Country	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Oceania	Australia and New Zealand	Australia	..	..	..	..	..	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	..
Oceania	Micronesia	Marshall Islands	..	..	1.0	..	..	..	..	..	..	1.1
Oceania	Australia and New Zealand	New Zealand	..	..	..	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	..
Oceania	Polynesia	Samoa	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1.5	1.5	1.5

SDG Target 4.6 – Literacy and Numeracy

“By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy”

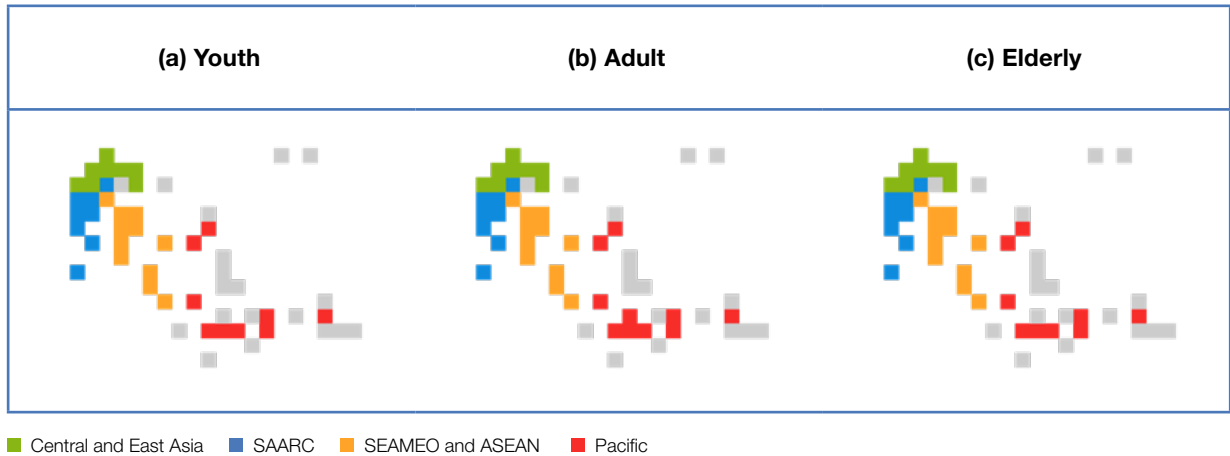
Related regional policy priority areas and outcomes

SAARC Priority Area	SEAMEO Priority Area	ASEAN Policy Area / Outcome	PacREF Policy Area / Outcome	Roadmap for the Education 2030
			Student outcomes and wellbeing 1. Increased percentages of learners achieve expected levels of literacy and numeracy at all levels of education but particularly by the end of the primary cycle	Track 1

SDG Target 4.6 has few direct linkages with regional policies. Literacy and numeracy are included broadly in SAARC framework. Although recognized in the Agenda 2016-2020 as a major challenge, SEAMEO also do not include a specific priority in these issues. Using the same approach, ASEAN Policy outcomes do not address this target specifically. In the Pacific region, on the other hand, PacREF has a direct relation with the target in the “students outcomes and wellbeing” policy area. Actions related to monitoring the achievement of this target are part of Track 1 of the Roadmap for Education 2030.

Most countries in the Asia-Pacific lack data on the global indicators in general and the thematic indicator that looks at literacy rates is missing for one-third of countries across all age cohorts (see **Figure 21**).

Figure 21: Data availability for youth and adult literacy rates

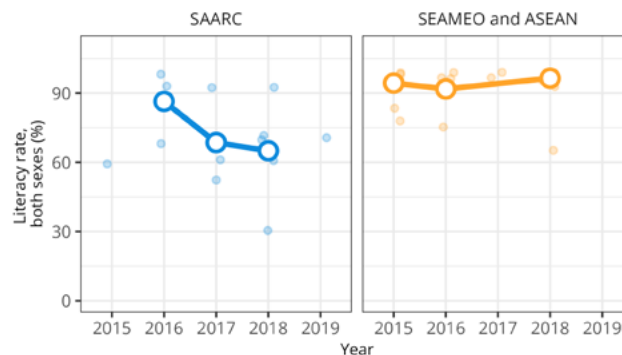


Overall, **Figure 22** shows that SAARC member countries have lower literacy rates than countries in South East Asia. SAARC countries also tend to be less homogeneous. For example, while the literacy rate in Afghanistan is only 30%, in Sri Lanka the rate is 92% (2018). In SEAMEO, only Timor Leste, Myanmar and Cambodia have literacy rates above 80%. Progress over time, however, cannot be verified as there is only one data point for each of these countries.

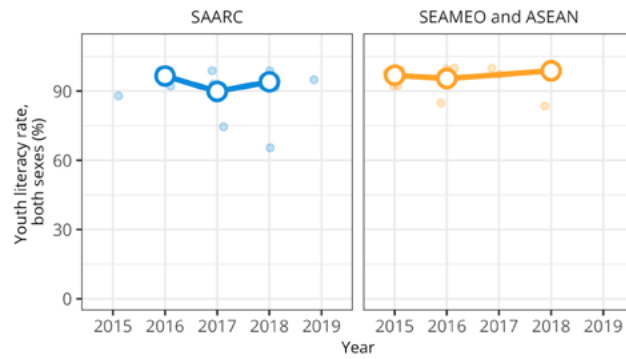
Countries belonging to both frameworks have better literacy ratios among young people. The youth literacy rate in Afghanistan, for example, is double that of the literacy rate for the general population and the elderly. Bangladesh and Pakistan have literacy rates around 80% among youth, while India is slightly above with 92%. In South East Asia, only Timor and Myanmar have literacy rates below 85% (see **Table 13**).

Figure 22: Youth, adult and elderly literacy rates, both sexes (%), 2015–2020

a) Literacy rate, population 25 to 64 years old, both sexes (%)



b) Youth literacy rate, population 15 to 24 years old, both sexes (%)



c) Elderly literacy rate, population over 65 years old, both sexes (%)

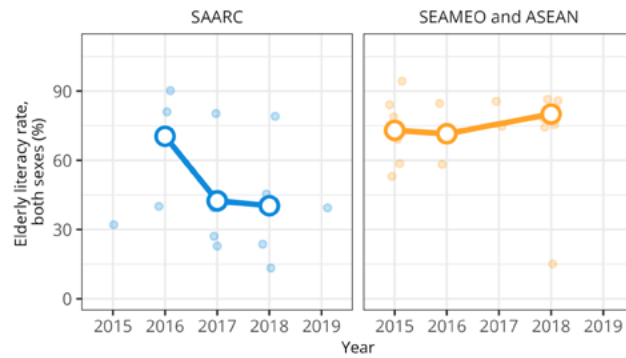


Table 13: SDG Indicator 4.6.2, youth literacy rate, population 15 to 24 years old, both sexes (%)**SAARC**

Region	Subregion	Country	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Asia	South Asia	Afghanistan	..	47,0	..	..	..	..	..	..	65.4	..	..
Asia	South Asia	Bangladesh	..	78,0	77.8	85.5	85.6	87.9	92.2	93.0	93.3	94.9	..
Asia	South Asia	Bhutan	..	..	86.1	..	..	..	..	93.1	..	..	..
Asia	South Asia	India	..	86.1	..	..	..	..	..	..	91.7	..	..
Asia	South Asia	Maldives	..	..	..	..	99.3	..	98.8	..	..	..	..
Asia	South Asia	Nepal	..	84.8	..	..	..	..	..	..	92.4	..	..
Asia	South Asia	Pakistan	71.3	70.8	72.6	71.6	72.8	..	..	74.5	..	..	..
Asia	South Asia	Sri Lanka	98.2	..	..	..	..	..	98.7	98.9	98.8	..	..

SEAMEO

Region	Subregion	Country	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Asia	South East Asia	Brunei Darussalam	..	99.4	..	..	..	..	..	..	99.7	..	..
Asia	South East Asia	Cambodia	..	..	..	..	90.1	92.2	..	..	..	..	..
Asia	South East Asia	Indonesia	..	98.8	..	..	99.7	99.7	99.7	..	99.7	..	..
Asia	South East Asia	Lao People's Democratic Republic	..	72.1	..	..	..	92.5	..	..	..	..	..
Asia	South East Asia	Malaysia	98.4	..	..	..	..	..	97.6	97.3	96.9	..	..
Asia	South East Asia	Myanmar	..	..	..	..	..	..	84.8	..	..	..	..
Asia	South East Asia	Philippines	..	..	..	98.1	..	99.1	..	..	..	..	..
Asia	South East Asia	Singapore	99.8	99.9	99.9	99.9	99.9	99.8	99.9	99.9	99.9	..	..
Asia	South East Asia	Thailand	96.6	..	..	98.3	..	98.1	..	..	98.1	..	..
Asia	South East Asia	Timor-Leste	79.5	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	83.5	..	..
Asia	South East Asia	Viet Nam	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	98.4	..	..

Pacific

Region	Subregion	Country	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Oceania	Melanesia	Fiji	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	99.7	..	..	..
Oceania	Micronesia	Palau	..	..	..	99.8	..	98.7	..	..	..	..	..
Oceania	Polynesia	Samoa	..	99.2	..	..	..	..	..	..	99.1	..	..
Oceania	Polynesia	Tonga	..	99.4	..	..	..	..	..	..	99.4	..	..
Oceania	Melanesia	Vanuatu	..	..	..	..	95.3	..	..	..	96.3	..	..

SDG Target 4.7 – Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship

“By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and nonviolence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development”

Related regional policy priority areas and outcomes

SAARC Priority Area	SEAMEO Priority Area	ASEAN Policy Area / Outcome	PacREF Policy Area / Outcome	Roadmap for the Education 2030
Priority 11: Ensuring lifelong learning opportunities	Priority 7: Adopting a 21 st century curriculum	SUB-GOAL 5: Complement the efforts of other sectors in meeting the objectives of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) PRIORITY AREA 5.1: Strengthening collaboration between the education and other sectors related to ESD	Student outcomes and wellbeing 3. Programmes developed and implemented that strengthen cognitive, non cognitive and social skills in young people, recognizing “Pacific literacies” ensuring their readiness for the challenges and opportunities they will encounter in life	Track 3

SDG Target 4.7 relates to SAARC Priority Area 11 "ensuring lifelong learning opportunities." It is also related to SEAMEO Priority Area 7 which calls for “*adopting a 21st century curriculum.*” The ASEAN framework defines a sub-goal specifically for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and has a specific priority area to broaden the scope of education towards sustainability issues. The PacREF framework is somewhat related to SDG Target 4.7 in its “*student outcomes and wellbeing*” dimension, more specifically in regards to Outcome 3 which deals with educational programmes. Actions related to monitoring the achievement of this target are part of Track 3 of the Roadmap for Education 2030.

Unfortunately, the global indicator that measures the extent to which (i) global citizenship education and (ii) education for sustainable development are mainstreamed in (a) national education policies, (b) curricula, (c) teacher education and (d) student assessment is mostly missing for countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

SDG Target 4.a – School Environment

“Build and upgrade education facilities that are child disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all”

Related regional policy priority areas and outcomes

SAARC Priority Area	SEAMEO Priority Area	ASEAN Policy Area / Outcome	PacREF Policy Area / Outcome	Roadmap for the Education 2030
4. Improving learning outcomes and promoting quality education	Priority 3: Promoting resiliency in the face of emergencies	SUB-GOAL 2: Enhance the quality and access to basic education for all, including the disabled, less advantageous and other marginalized groups PRIORITY AREA 2.2: Improving the quality of basic education through quality-focused interventions	Quality and relevance 4. Quality learning environment that supports learning at all levels of education	Tracks 1-4

SDG Target 4.a relates to SAARC Priority Area 4 for “*improving learning outcomes and promoting quality education*”. SEAMEO Priority Area 3 deals with the school environment, and particularly its resilience in during emergencies. The ASEAN framework sub-goal 2 deals with access and quality. The same relationship between the quality of learning environments might be established between PacREF and SDG Target 4.a in policy area “quality and relevance,” Item 4. Monitoring the achievement of this target is part of Tracks 1 to 4 of the Roadmap for Education 2030.

Overall, data are available for at least 50% of Asia-Pacific countries in all Target 4.a indicators in all three education levels (primary, lower and upper secondary). The exception is the indicator that measures the proportion of schools adapted to students with disabilities. For this particular indicator, only 25% of countries have data available for all three levels of education. The **Figure 23** and **Table 14** focuses on three areas that concern quality school environments: adaptation to disabilities, availability of computers, and internet connection.

Schools adapted for children with disabilities

In SAARC, data are available only for the Maldives, India and Bangladesh. In 2017, Maldives reported that all schools are adapted for students with disabilities. In India, more recent data indicate that around

70% of schools are adapted. Bangladesh lags behind with 20% of schools adapted for children with disabilities.

In South East Asia, Singapore reported the highest proportion of adapted schools. In Malaysia, 40%, 58% and 47% of schools are adapted for primary, lower and upper secondary schools, respectively. Philippines reported a much lower proportion of schools able to accommodate students with disabilities at 6%, 16% and 13% at primary, lower, and upper secondary schools, while Myanmar has the lowest proportion of adapted schools.

In the Pacific, Niue and the Cook Islands reported in 2019 that all schools are adapted while in Nauru, all schools in the upper secondary are adapted, but only four out of five schools are adapted at the lower secondary level. Samoa reported adaptation of 15% of schools in primary and lower secondary and 45% in upper secondary. Marshall Islands have data from 2016 only for primary reporting that 20% of schools have been adapted for children with disabilities. In 2019, Tuvalu and Tokelau reported proportions below 1% in all three levels.

In Central Asia, data are available only for Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. The latter reported that 30% of schools are adapted across all three education levels. Kazakhstan reported 6% and 12% for the primary and lower secondary, but a high proportion of 77% for upper secondary. In East Asia, Hong Kong and Macau report that almost all schools are adapted for secondary-aged students. In Macau, the proportion of adapted schools is somewhat lower at the primary level (80%).

Computers and internet

SAARC framework countries show a more heterogeneous picture in terms of availability of computers and an internet connection. Among primary schools, the Maldives and Sri Lanka have the highest proportion of schools equipped with computers. In the Maldives 73% of primary schools are equipped, and in Sri Lanka half of them are. Bhutan, Bangladesh and India reported that around 15% of schools are equipped with computers. All schools in the Maldives have an internet connection. Bhutan has the second highest proportion of connected primary schools, followed by Sri Lanka where 15% of schools have an internet connection. In India, only around 5% of primary schools have internet. In secondary schools, the proportion is higher. In Bhutan, 98% of schools have computers. In the other countries, on average, 70% to 80% of schools have computers. The exception is lower secondary in India, where the proportion is 40%. An internet connection is available in most secondary schools in Maldives and Bhutan. In Bangladesh, 40% of secondary schools have an internet connection. In Sri Lanka the proportion is 30%. India reported 52% in the upper secondary, but only 20% in lower secondary (see **Table 14**).

In South East Asia, Singapore, Brunei, Malaysia and Thailand report that almost all schools are equipped with both computers and internet. Brunei has not reported on available internet connections. Besides these three countries, the Philippines reported 80% of the schools were equipped with computers, though an internet connection is less available: with just 30% of schools at the primary level having access, 65% and 80% of schools in lower and upper secondary, respectively. The proportion of schools equipped with computers in Indonesia ranges from 40% in primary to 70% in upper secondary. The same variation is also reported for internet access. Myanmar has the lowest figures in the region.

The proportion of schools with computers at the primary level is below 1%, 3% in lower secondary and 25% in upper secondary. An internet connection is available for half of these schools.

In the Pacific, Tokelau, Niue, Nauru, Cook Islands and Australia reported that all schools have computers. Niue, Cook Islands and Australia also reported that all schools have an internet connection. In the Marshall Islands around 90% of schools have computers. In Tuvalu, primary and lower secondary schools have more computers than those at the upper secondary level. According to its 2019 reports, one half of schools at this level are equipped. In terms of internet connection, Tuvalu and Tokelau report figures below 1%. Around 15% of primary schools in Samoa and Solomon Islands have computers. In lower secondary, Samoa reported the same proportion, while Solomon Islands reported 30%. In upper secondary, the situation of these two countries is the opposite, Samoa reports that 100% of schools have computers while in the Solomon Islands, the proportion of equipped schools is 42%. Samoa is better connected: 30% of schools in primary and lower secondary, and 100% in upper secondary, have internet. Solomon Islands reported that at most 14% of schools at the upper secondary level are connected.

In Central Asia, Mongolia reported that 90% of schools are equipped with computers at the secondary level. An internet connection is available in 70% of primary schools, 77% of lower secondary schools and 89% of upper secondary schools. In Uzbekistan, 96% of primary schools, 72% of the lower secondary schools and 100% of upper secondary schools are equipped with computers. An internet connection is available in almost 90% of primary and lower secondary schools and almost all in upper secondary. Kyrgyzstan reported that almost 90% of primary and secondary schools have computers, but not all of them have an internet connection. The higher proportion is at the upper secondary level where 60% of schools have an internet link. Turkmenistan reported that all schools at all levels are equipped with computers, but only 30% have an internet connection.

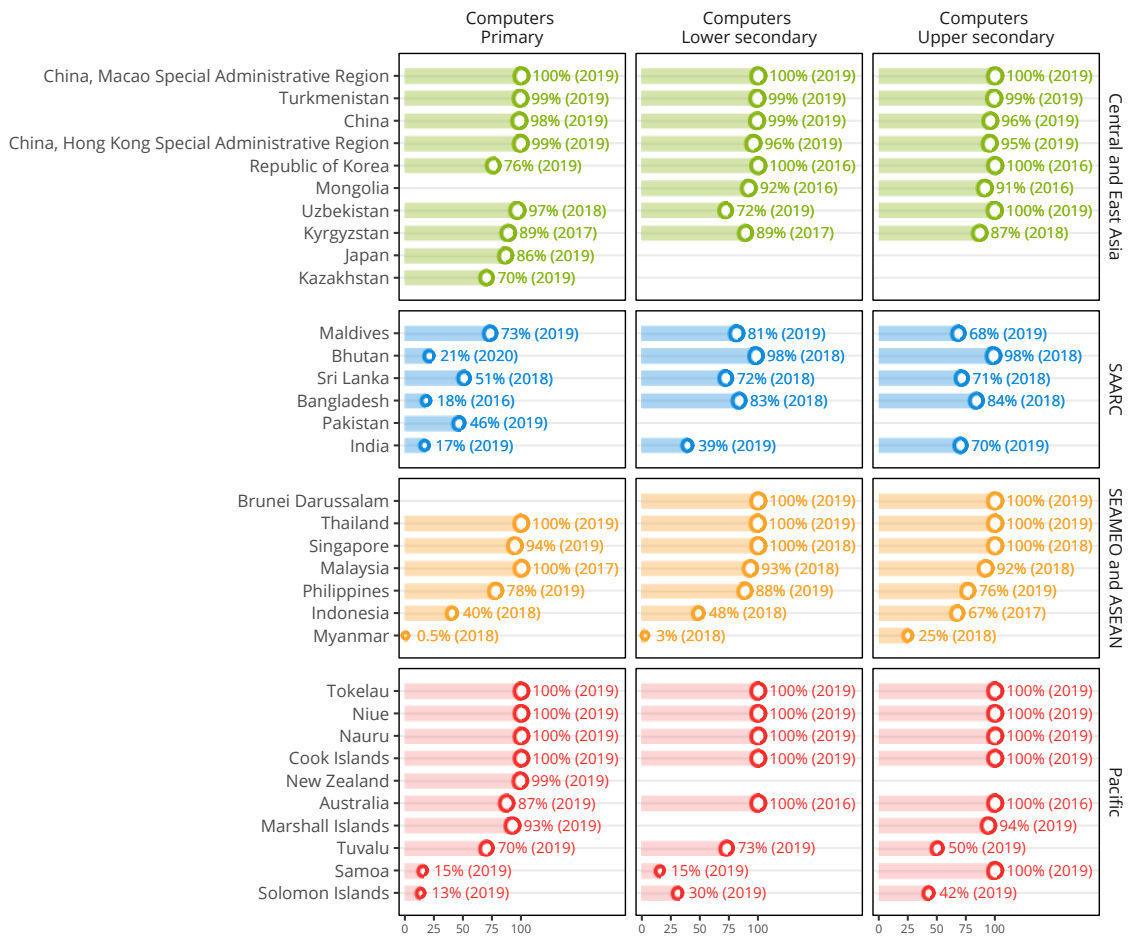
In East Asia, China, the Republic of Korea, Macao and Hong Kong, reported that 100% of the schools are equipped with computers and an internet connection.

Figure 23: Proportion of schools offering basic services, by type of service (latest data available)

a) Adapted infrastructure and materials for students with disabilities



b) Computers



c) Internet (primary and secondary)

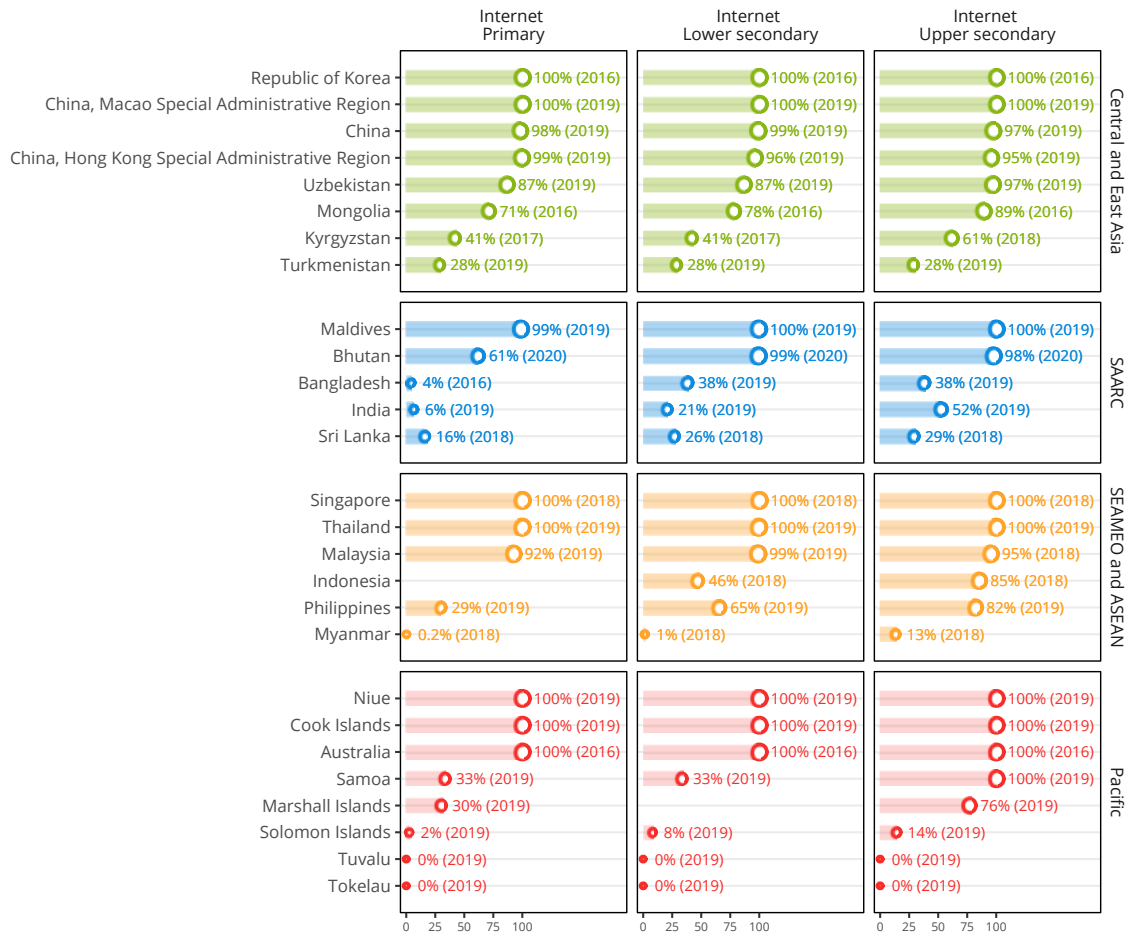


Table 14: SDG Indicator 4.a.1, proportion of primary schools with access to the internet for pedagogical purposes (%)**SAARC**

Region	Subregion	Country	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Asia	South Asia	Bangladesh	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	49.3
Asia	South Asia	Bhutan	..	..	..	..	..	45.5	..	..	51.6	..	61.4
Asia	South Asia	India	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	6.4	..
Asia	South Asia	Maldives	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	100.0	98.6	98.6	..
Asia	South Asia	Sri Lanka	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	15.8	..	..

SEAMEO

Region	Subregion	Country	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Asia	South East Asia	Malaysia	..	90.2	..	..	..	..	99.3	100.0	97.2	92.2	..
Asia	South East Asia	Myanmar	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	0.2	0.2	..	..
Asia	South East Asia	Philippines	..	..	..	..	..	22.6	22.7	26.6	31.4	29.3	..
Asia	South East Asia	Singapore	..	..	..	..	..	..	100.0	100.0	100.0	..	..
Asia	South East Asia	Thailand	..	98.8	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	99.8	..

Pacific

Region	Subregion	Country	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Oceania	Australia and New Zealand	Australia	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	..	..	..	..
Oceania	Polynesia	Cook Islands	..	..	..	..	..	..	100.0	..	..	100.0	..
Oceania	Micronesia	Marshall Islands	..	..	..	..	..	..	25.5	..	..	29.8	..
Oceania	Polynesia	Niue	..	..	..	..	..	..	100.0	..	..	100.0	..
Oceania	Polynesia	Samoa	..	..	..	..	..	..	13.8	13.8	..	32.9	..
Oceania	Melanesia	Solomon Islands	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	0.0	2.5	..

Central and East Asia

Region	Subregion	Country	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Asia	East Asia	China	..	..	..	..	..	..	85.6	92.5	96.2	97.8	..
Asia	East Asia	China, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region	..	..	..	..	..	..	99.2	98.9	99.2	99.4	..
Asia	East Asia	China, Macao Special Administrative Region	..	..	..	..	..	..	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	..
Asia	Central Asia	Kyrgyzstan	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	41.4	..	..	..
Asia	East Asia	Mongolia	..	..	..	..	..	..	70.7	..	..	..	..
Asia	East Asia	Republic of Korea	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	..	..	..	..
Asia	Central Asia	Turkmenistan	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	28.2	..
Asia	Central Asia	Uzbekistan	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	90.7	88.7	86.5	..

SDG Target 4.b – Scholarships

“By 2020, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes, in developed countries and other developing countries”

Related regional policy priority areas and outcomes

SAARC Priority Area	SEAMEO Priority Area	ASEAN Policy Area / Outcome	PacREF Policy Area / Outcome	Roadmap for the Education 2030
12. Strengthening partnership and collaboration	Priority 6: Promoting harmonization in higher education and research			Track 2

SDG Target 4.b might be related to SAARC Priority Area 12 which calls for “*strengthening partnership and collaboration*”. SEAMEO Priority Area 6 focuses on harmonization in higher education and research which can also be measured by scholarships. ASEAN and PacREF education objectives are more difficult to link to this SDG target. Monitoring the achievement of this target is part of Track 2 of the Roadmap for Education 2030.

Data are available for 70% of the countries (see **Figure 24**). SEAMEO/ASEAN framework countries receive the most overseas development assistance (ODA) support in the form of scholarships. The mean ODA support for scholarships in the subregion was US\$ 18 million during the period analysed. In particular, Philippines, Indonesia and Vietnam are important recipients of this type of foreign aid. **Figure 25** shows that SAARC member countries have received an average of US\$ 9.9 million in the last five years and within this subregion, India and Pakistan are the largest recipients of ODA scholarship funds (see **Table 15**). Students in Central and East Asia received an average of US\$ 6.5 million. In East Asia, the largest recipient is China, where students received an average of US\$ 23 million in the period. In Central Asia, the largest recipient is Mongolia.

Figure 24: Data availability on ODA flows, 2015–2020

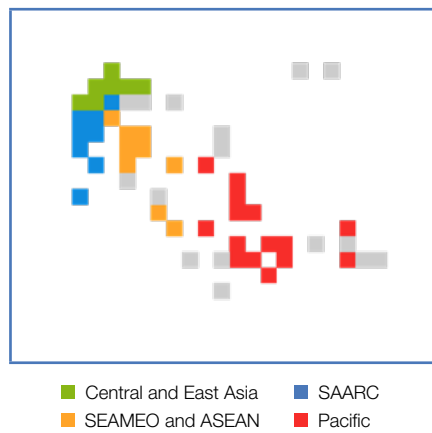


Figure 25: Volume of ODA flows for scholarships, by subregion (constant US\$), 2015–2020

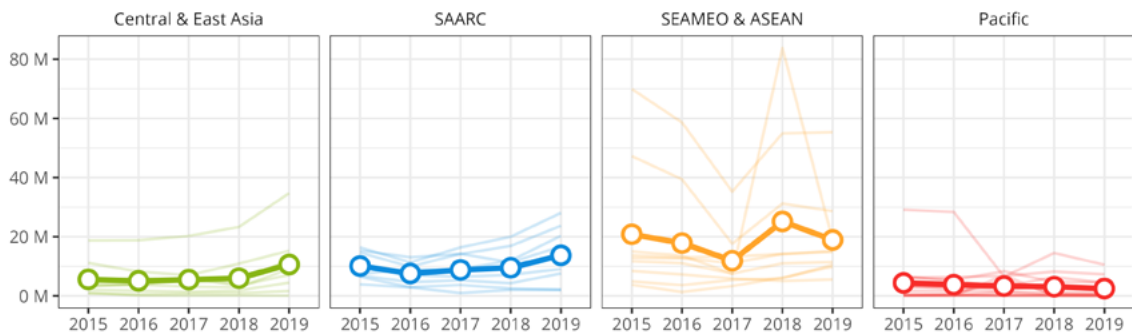


Table 15: SDG Indicator 4.b.1, Volume of official development assistance flows for scholarships by sector and type of study, constant US\$**SAARC**

Region	Subregion	Country	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Asia	South Asia	Afghanistan	4,167,696	4,877,029	8,346,894	16,505,026	8,187,220	7,436,644	8,926,024	9,098,929	11,900,477	20,310,549
Asia	South Asia	Bangladesh	18,187,263	21,804,656	19,508,740	19,614,777	19,496,111	14,609,276	9,885,033	14,238,067	11,321,508	16,692,826
Asia	South Asia	Bhutan	4,450,914	5,659,739	9,611,777	8,184,605	7,289,827	6,429,733	2,980,354	3,686,599	2,504,168	2,153,340
Asia	South Asia	India	22,898,792	20,342,127	19,323,159	23,013,984	18,102,321	16,392,707	11,321,755	16,389,724	20,003,654	28,054,496
Asia	South Asia	Maldives	2,801,736	2,706,787	4,181,192	4,596,076	3,489,161	3,916,628	2,866,209	998,596	2,053,763	1,997,056
Asia	South Asia	Nepal	9,137,799	10,595,418	7,942,329	7,797,471	5,956,437	6,933,193	4,666,820	5,273,611	4,301,992	7,605,785
Asia	South Asia	Pakistan	14,324,970	10,933,170	14,051,144	15,635,364	16,046,145	15,319,399	13,075,345	14,146,139	16,901,411	23,712,125
Asia	South Asia	Sri Lanka	8,053,382	10,642,502	10,587,537	11,375,778	10,746,336	9,781,992	7,012,722	6,476,625	7,158,642	9,078,961

SEAMEO

Region	Subregion	Country	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Asia	South East Asia	Cambodia	9,968,083	13,229,712	14,338,245	16,056,896	24,156,772	13,735,801	13,003,458	13,321,272	14,135,101	14,854,767
Asia	South East Asia	Indonesia	68,688,294	61,798,530	68,229,695	78,007,091	74,771,498	69,962,391	58,622,667	35,267,623	54,947,739	55,364,743
Asia	South East Asia	Lao People's Democratic Republic	12,211,138	11,848,324	11,266,524	14,218,444	15,556,464	11,720,339	11,049,725	7,542,448	11,006,607	11,430,190
Asia	South East Asia	Malaysia	11,395,397	12,964,504	7,340,653	3,193,403	6,940,404	3,749,736	1,334,668	3,329,097	6,215,313	9,856,018
Asia	South East Asia	Myanmar	7,993,958	10,700,386	7,989,846	9,521,318	11,621,653	12,801,210	12,729,783	11,082,886	14,212,337	15,244,114
Asia	South East Asia	Philippines	23,928,966	16,908,958	19,152,748	21,709,409	20,481,053	15,055,769	13,622,878	7,559,141	83,818,020	18,853,960
Asia	South East Asia	Thailand	18,559,958	21,899,557	16,127,019	16,507,770	17,571,372	4,912,508	3,636,619	5,408,710	5,930,471	10,567,707
Asia	South East Asia	Timor-Leste	4,130,302	4,492,039	6,213,215	7,231,515	6,751,412	8,409,211	7,268,212	5,900,402	5,040,642	5,536,614
Asia	South East Asia	Viet Nam	50,833,989	51,132,079	55,612,496	67,141,000	64,890,318	47,274,836	39,405,078	17,637,611	31,208,352	28,666,533

Pacific

Region	Subregion	Country	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Oceania	Polynesia	Cook Islands	270,000	497,854	479,435	646,580	574,674	247,689	497,556	108,513	307,585	151,650
Oceania	Melanesia	Fiji	6,553,814	6,624,092	4,520,587	4,710,286	5,524,231	6,569,959	5,108,169	3,056,403	6,429,019	4,395,700
Oceania	Micronesia	Kiribati	6,026,960	4,712,613	4,229,385	2,319,404	2,167,877	3,169,351	3,104,633	2,101,773	3,596,308	2,927,067
Oceania	Micronesia	Marshall Islands	226,733	275,317	249,454	218,679	192,913	107,213	71,163	6,915,555	107,256	36,653
Oceania	Micronesia	Micronesia (Federated States of)	258,115	86,427	72,034	131,942	136,384	196,179	160,984	1,343,056	259,549	169,047
Oceania	Micronesia	Nauru	339,825	440,842	11,058	331,637	444,534	711,744	533,560	5,374,543	794,309	678,106
Oceania	Polynesia	Niue	232,630	384,170	148,530	407,305	182,187	145,132	263,818	255,073	402,049	413,782
Oceania	Micronesia	Palau	34,280	52,754	111,339	190,162	217,244	112,206	124,030	200,148	96,441	73,215
Oceania	Melanesia	Papua New Guinea	16,037,945	18,154,192	18,057,924	29,150,424	22,989,016	29,140,754	28,369,199	6,507,809	14,500,009	10,525,603
Oceania	Polynesia	Samoa	5,793,337	6,284,612	6,603,817	7,288,107	6,649,072	6,233,705	6,420,266	6,725,018	8,210,096	7,305,303
Oceania	Melanesia	Solomon Islands	4,832,952	6,001,649	5,545,842	6,470,607	5,535,323	6,391,079	5,408,385	8,310,902	4,697,550	4,670,227
Oceania	Polynesia	Tokelau	215,766	..	18,923	..	26,567	..	104,897	58,724	7,337	508
Oceania	Polynesia	Tonga	2,358,447	2,583,855	2,943,704	3,298,377	3,341,916	3,396,847	2,271,091	3,219,506	3,007,556	2,606,114
Oceania	Polynesia	Tuvalu	947,078	900,471	806,947	1,203,557	1,409,925	1,778,109	1,639,510	1,517,350	1,132,443	1,029,972
Oceania	Melanesia	Vanuatu	4,453,247	4,021,359	3,464,708	4,237,908	3,897,167	3,356,784	2,890,695	4,235,609	3,184,469	2,424,929

Central and East Asia

Region	Subregion	Country	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Asia	East Asia	China	268,505,673	283,306,330	103,119,887	32,731,301	30,220,548	18,745,894	18,825,993	20,274,467	23,317,839	34,734,341
Asia	East Asia	Democratic People's Republic of Korea	413,283	265,924	388,384	496,158	352,937	964,948	127,311	114,310	152,075	109,714
Asia	Central Asia	Kazakhstan	3,456,463	3,985,621	3,273,403	3,836,619	2,711,680	3,200,091	3,913,822	5,143,693	4,385,217	12,432,276
Asia	Central Asia	Kyrgyzstan	3,571,715	4,391,063	4,052,105	3,610,704	3,476,110	3,469,192	3,720,992	3,148,413	2,918,243	9,138,942
Asia	East Asia	Mongolia	11,784,868	18,763,934	13,421,288	14,128,075	15,410,300	11,146,293	8,225,750	6,987,325	10,910,526	15,277,617
Asia	Central Asia	Tajikistan	825,490	1,661,423	1,839,113	1,986,329	2,005,398	2,037,186	1,707,546	1,420,592	1,843,676	4,491,520
Asia	Central Asia	Turkmenistan	873,184	782,439	556,366	634,883	790,884	921,482	572,316	828,172	957,067	1,652,951
Asia	Central Asia	Uzbekistan	3,981,510	6,623,002	5,277,165	5,041,965	5,296,897	4,239,850	3,738,476	6,131,682	3,492,484	7,118,125

SDG Target 4.c – Teachers

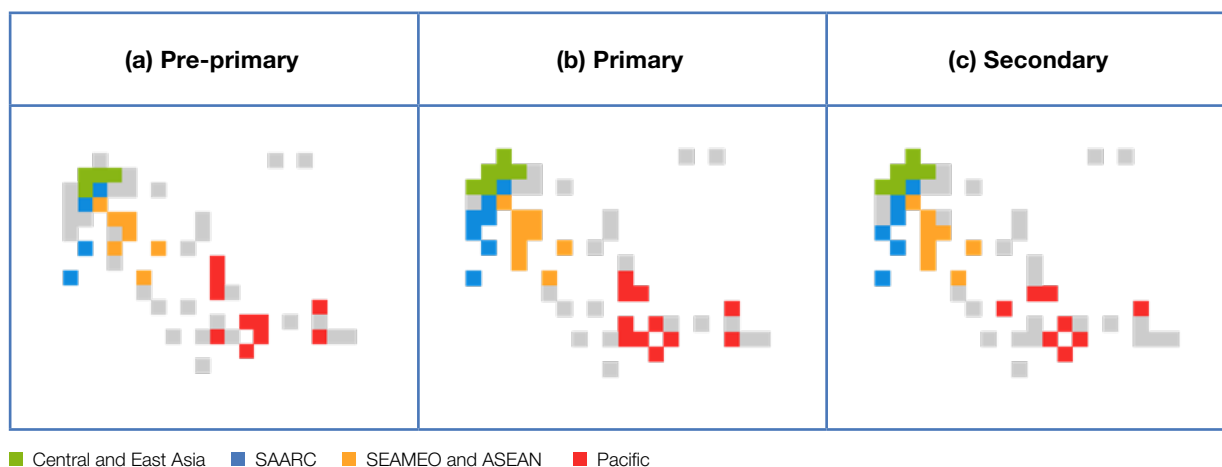
“By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing States”

Related regional policy priority areas and outcomes

SAARC Priority Area	SEAMEO Priority Area	ASEAN Policy Area / Outcome	PacREF Policy Area / Outcome	Roadmap for the Education 2030
Priority 7: Improving the quality and relevance of teacher development programmes	Priority 5: Revitalizing teacher education	SUB-GOAL 8: Provide capacity-building programmes for teachers, academics and other key stakeholders in the education community PRIORITY AREA 8.1: Promoting education exchange week to conduct comprehensive, multi-level, and wide-ranging exchanges and cooperation PRIORITY AREA 8.2: Enhancing teachers’ competencies for 21 st century skills	The teaching profession 1. All teachers and school leaders in the Pacific are qualified and certified professionals able to demonstrate their competencies against approved standards 2. All teachers and school leaders are supported, through a range of modalities, in developing new skills and knowledge to create better outcomes for students 3. The teaching profession holds status in the Pacific and due to this, parents and the community have unreserved confidence in teachers and schools	Tracks 1, 3 and 4

SDG Target 4.c finds correspondence with all regional frameworks. The SAARC framework has included improving the quality and relevance of teacher development programmes as a priority. The SEAMEO framework prioritizes revitalizing teachers’ education. ASEAN has a similar sub-goal to provide teachers with online training to meet the demands of the 21st century. PacREF includes three outcomes related to the teaching profession. Monitoring the achievement of this target is part of Tracks 1, 3 and 4 of the Roadmap for Education 2030.

The global indicator of the target measures the proportion of teachers with the minimum required qualifications, by education level. Data on pre-primary education are available for half of the countries. At the primary and secondary levels, 40% of countries have data points (see **Figure 26**).

Figure 26: Data availability on the proportion of teachers with the minimum required qualifications

Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and the Maldives, members of the SAARC framework, have some data points for all three levels. Bhutan reported that 100% of teachers are trained in all three levels. At the pre-primary education level, the remaining countries have training rates above 80%. Maldives improved the proportion of trained teachers by eight percentage points since 2015 at this level. Nepal reported 97% of primary level teachers are trained and Maldives has a proportion close to 90%, ten percentage points above the 2015 figures. Bangladesh and India have the lowest figures. India reported in 2019 that 73% of teachers are trained, while in Bangladesh the proportion is 50% (2017). At the secondary level, Bangladesh reported that 60% of teachers are trained.

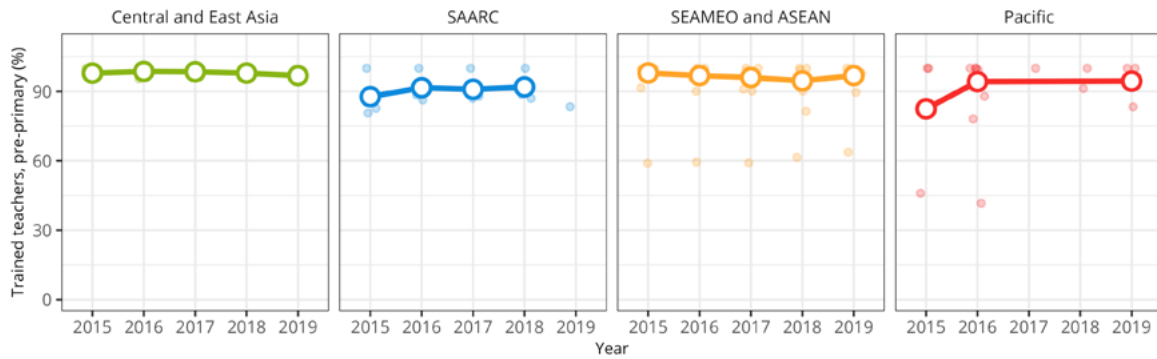
Among SEAMEO member countries, in Cambodia and the Philippines all teachers for pre-primary, primary and secondary school levels are trained (see **Figure 27** and **Table 16**). Singapore reported the same for secondary level education. Vietnam also reported a high proportion of trained teachers in pre-primary, while Lao PDR and Malaysia reported a proportion of 90%. Brunei lags behind in the region with 60% of teachers trained at the pre-primary and primary levels. The proportion of trained teachers at the secondary level are higher, close to 90%. Lao PDR, Vietnam and Malaysia reported figures close to 100% for primary schools, while Brunei has the lowest figures of 86% in 2019. Brunei gained five percentage points since 2015.

In the Pacific, Samoa, Nauru and Niue have reported, since 2015, that all teachers are trained. In Tokelau, 60% of teachers are trained (2019). In primary school, all teachers are trained in Cook Islands, Micronesia and Nauru. The Solomon Islands proportion of trained teachers increased from 59% in 2015 to 82% in 2019. The Pacific country with the lowest proportion of trained teachers is Tokelau, at 57%. There are only a few data points for the Pacific. At this level, it is interesting to note that Tokelau also has the lowest proportion in secondary school, below 30%.

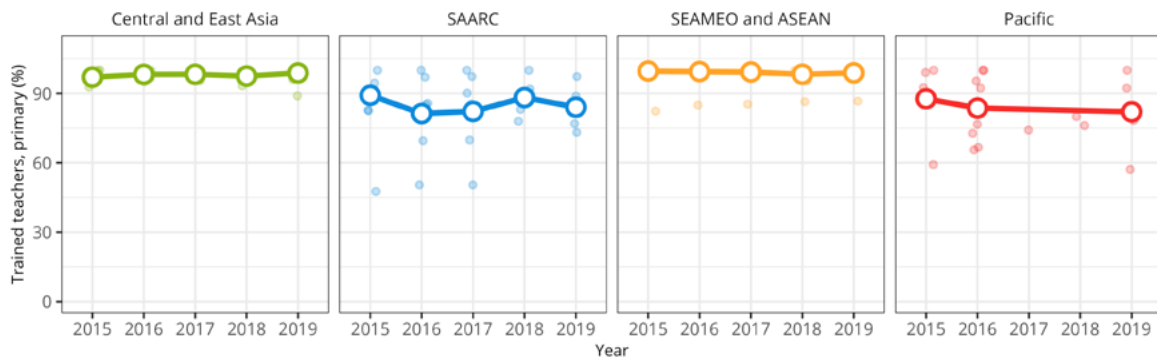
Mongolia and Uzbekistan in Central Asia reported that almost all teachers are trained in pre-primary and primary schools. In both countries, the proportion has been in a slight decline since 2015. Kazakhstan reported that all teachers are trained at the primary level. East Asia only has data for Macau and Hong Kong. In the former, almost all teachers are trained in pre-primary and primary, while in the latter, figures are stable at around 95%.

Figure 27: Proportion of teachers with the minimum required qualifications, both sexes (%), by level, 2015–2020

a) Pre-primary



b) Primary



c) Secondary

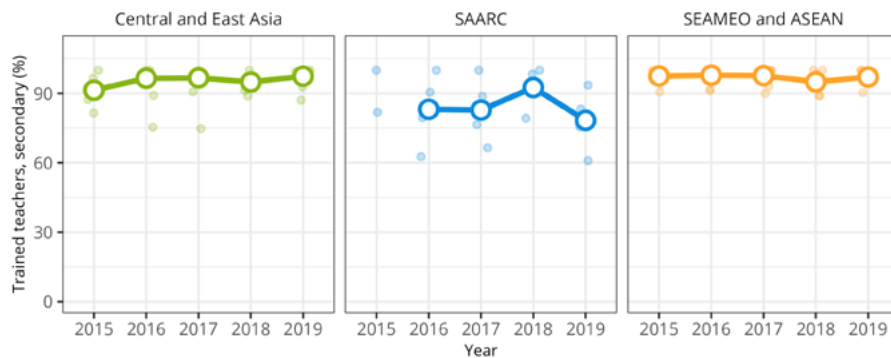


Table 16: SDG Indicator 4.c.2, pupil-trained teacher ratio in primary education (headcount basis)**SAARC**

Region	Subregion	Country	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Asia	South Asia	Bangladesh	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	59.6	..	..	..
Asia	South Asia	Bhutan	..	..	..	..	..	40.0	38.0	34.6	34.7	..	32.0
Asia	South Asia	India	..	..	..	..	..	..	50.7	46.9	..	37.8	..
Asia	South Asia	Maldives	15.2	15.2	14.7	12.4	14.0	12.5	12.0	11.3	11.2	10.9	..
Asia	South Asia	Nepal	43.3	36.7	29.7	27.8	25.6	24.5	23.1	21.5	..	20.3	..
Asia	South Asia	Pakistan	48.0	48.1	49.3	50.1	55.4	56.2	..	..	56.5	59.6	..
Asia	South Asia	Sri Lanka	29.1	29.2	..	29.6	..	26.9	27.2	26.8	26.5	..	..

SEAMEO

Region	Subregion	Country	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Asia	South East Asia	Brunei Darussalam	13.0	12.8	12.0	11.9	11.7	12.2	12.0	11.9	11.5	11.3	..
Asia	South East Asia	Cambodia	48.9	47.8	45.7	46.9	44.6	45.5	42.5	41.7	41.7	41.9	..
Asia	South East Asia	Lao People's Democratic Republic	30.2	28.6	27.9	26.1	25.6	24.5	23.5	23.0	23.0	22.2	..
Asia	South East Asia	Malaysia	13.2	12.8	12.4	12.2	11.6	11.5	11.6	11.8	..	..	..
Asia	South East Asia	Myanmar	28.3	..	..	..	27.7	..	..	..	25.6	..	..
Asia	South East Asia	Philippines	..	..	..	..	31.4	30.3	29.0	29.1	27.1	25.7	..
Asia	South East Asia	Singapore	..	..	..	..	..	..	15.2	14.8	14.6	..	..
Asia	South East Asia	Thailand	..	..	..	..	15.4	16.9	16.7	16.9	..	13.0	..
Asia	South East Asia	Viet Nam	20.2	19.8	19.5	..	19.2	19.3	19.7	19.7	20.3	21.9	..

Pacific

Region	Subregion	Country	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Oceania	Polynesia	Cook Islands	..	16.5	15.5	17.4	18.6	17.4	18.2	..	..	16.7	..
Oceania	Melanesia	Fiji	..	30.8	28.0	..	..	..	..	..	..	21.2	..
Oceania	Micronesia	Kiribati	..	..	..	..	..	49.4	35.4	..	..	..	..
Oceania	Micronesia	Micronesia (Federated States of)	..	..	..	..	..	..	22.6	..	..	..	..
Oceania	Micronesia	Nauru	..	..	..	..	..	..	40.2	..	..	..	..
Oceania	Polynesia	Niue	..	..	..	..	..	17.2	16.8	..	..	43.4	..
Oceania	Melanesia	Solomon Islands	34.4	36.5	35.2	32.5	31.4	43.5	38.4	34.8	33.4	29.9	..
Oceania	Polynesia	Tokelau	..	..	..	..	..	..	17.8	..	..	13.9	..
Oceania	Polynesia	Tonga	..	..	..	25.9	22.5	23.4	..	..	..	..	..
Oceania	Polynesia	Tuvalu	..	..	..	..	..	..	22.4	..	19.5	20.3	..

Central and East Asia

Region	Subregion	Country	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Asia	East Asia	China, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region	15.9	15.4	15.1	14.6	14.4	14.2	14.2	14.2	13.8	13.7	..
Asia	East Asia	China, Macao Special Administrative Region	19	17.3	16	15.5	15.5	14.6	14.2	13.8	13.7	13.7	..
Asia	Central Asia	Kazakhstan	..	..	..	..	16.9	16.2	18.6	20.8	19.6	17.2	16.8
Asia	Central Asia	Kyrgyzstan	35.5	35.8	33.2	26.6	27.2	28.2	26.4	26.1	..	..	..
Asia	East Asia	Mongolia	31.0	29.8	29.0	27.6	27.2	..	29.7	..	32.6	34.2	..
Asia	Central Asia	Tajikistan	27.1	24.8	24.5	24.1	22.4	22.3	22.2	22.3	..	..	..
Asia	Central Asia	Turkmenistan	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	25.9	..
Asia	Central Asia	Uzbekistan	17.8	15.6	..	..	..	..	..	21.4	21.7	21.1	..

SDG 4 – Finance

“Governments must allocate 4-6% of their gross domestic product and/or 15-20% of total public expenditure to education, ensuring efficient spending and prioritizing the most marginalized groups”

The target on education finance was endorsed globally by the 160 signatory countries of the Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for the implementation of the SDG 4. As such, these targets do not need to be included explicitly in the regional monitoring frameworks.

Two indicators are used to monitor education finance. The first is Indicator 1.a.2 measuring the proportion of total government spending on essential services, a global indicator part of SDG 1, and SDG 4 when education services are concerned. The second is education expenditure as a share of GDP. Both finance indicators are included in the set of seven benchmark indicators that are used to monitor progress towards SDG 4 at both regional and country levels.

Expenditure as a part of Total Government Expenditure

Indicator 1.a.2 is expressed as the expenditure on education as a percentage of total government expenditure (%). Eighty data points for the countries in the Asia-Pacific are available from 2015 to 2020. Once data is added from other sources¹⁷, a total of 221 data points can be used to analyse the regional trends within this period.

Mean expenditure on education as a share of total expenditure is between 10% and 20% in all Asia-Pacific subregions for the period examined. **Figure 28** shows that except for Central and East Asia, the mean expenditure has been declining since 2017. In Central Asia, expenditure has been increasing since 2015 and all countries exceeded the minimum expenditure target in 2019. In East Asia, Hong Kong and Korea spent the minimum expected of 15% while Japan reported figures closer to 10%.

Among SAARC member countries, Bhutan has the highest investment in education as a share of GDP. However, since 2015, the country reduced its share in expenditure on education by five percentage points but remains on track to meet the upper target of 20%. Afghanistan, Maldives, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh have reported spending around 10% on education in 2019 (2018 for Sri Lanka), slightly less than expenditure in 2015.¹⁸

SEAMEO regional means are more stable, but some decline in expenditure on education as a proportion of total government expenditure can be seen in 2019/2020. This is primarily because countries that spend more in the subregion, like Indonesia and Malaysia, and were close to expenditures of 20% on

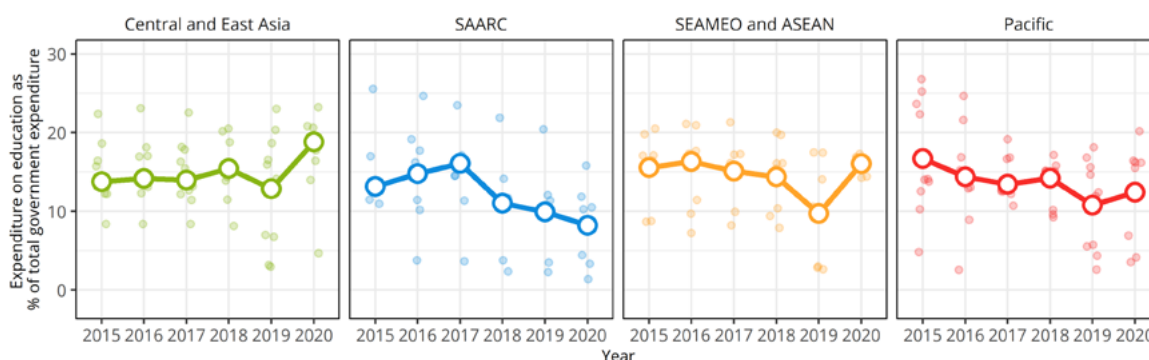
¹⁷ Data on total general government expenditure were previously collected from countries through the annual questionnaire but currently are from the International Monetary Fund's World Economic Outlook database since January 2014. Data downloaded from BDDS was boosted using data from the Public Expenditure Review (PER) and BOOST programs from the World Bank, IMF's Government Finance Statistics (GFS database) and data collected in national sources on actual and budgeted annual expenditure.

¹⁸ Using data published by National Ministries, Pakistan and India have the lowest share of expenditure as a share of total expenditure – below 5% in the last five years. Also using national sources, Nepal reported total expenditure of 4.4% in 2019.

education in 2015, are slightly above the minimum of 15% in the latest years. Singapore and Thailand are also above the minimum but more stable within this period. The Philippines and Vietnam are slightly below the minimum threshold for this period. Myanmar and Timor-Leste have the lowest values on education expenditure in this subregion. Myanmar reports 10% in 2019 while in Timor-Leste this figure is less than 8% of the total expenditures that was allotted to educational services.

The Pacific subregion had the highest variation in 2015 and the difference between countries has been declining since then. In 2019, Micronesia, Fiji and Samoa had the highest share of expenditure above the threshold of 15%. Tonga, Vanuatu, Kiribati and Samoa increased their expenditure within this period, while Fiji, Marshall Islands and Micronesia reduced their share of expenditure on education. New Zealand also reported a small dip in educational expenditure going slightly below the minimum target. Nauru and Papua New Guinea have the lowest investment, with the share of expenditure on educational services below 5% of total government spending.

Figure 28: Expenditure on education as a percentage of total government expenditure, 2015–2020



Government expenditure on education as a part of GDP

Mean expenditure on education as a share of GDP is the second indicator on finance. **Figure 29** shows that by this metric, the education finance average is above the minimum target of 4% in the Pacific and Central and East Asia for the period 2015 to 2020.

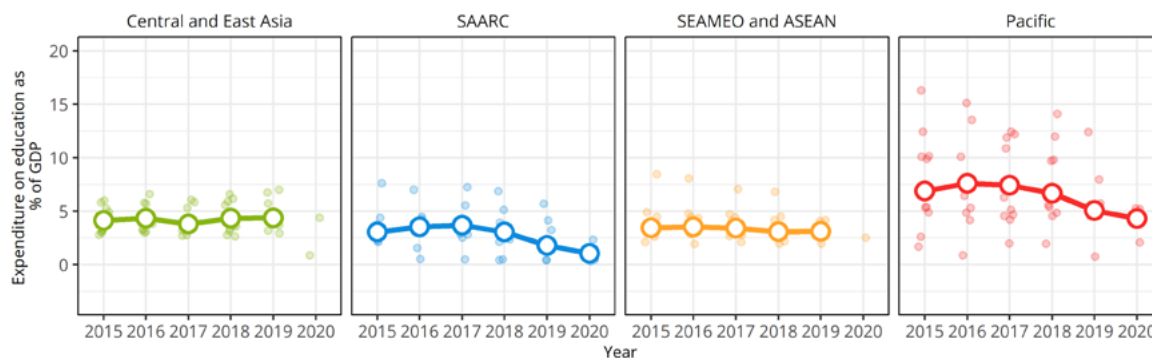
In the Pacific, the mean was above the 6% target until 2018. It is the subregion with the highest variance between countries. While some countries spend more than 10% of their GDP on education, others have shares below 3%. This is the case for Papua New Guinea and Marshall Islands in both extremes. Most countries have stable figures for this indicator. The exceptions are Nauru, Micronesia and Marshall Islands – both countries have decreased education expenditure as a percentage of GDP. Kiribati shows the highest increase by three percentage points from 2015 to 2019 (12.4%).

Among SAARC countries, government spending on education as a proportion of GDP has fallen since 2018 and the mean share of expenditure is the lowest among the subregions. Bhutan and the Maldives are above the minimum threshold. The former has an education expenditure that is two percentage points less than in 2015, while in the Maldives spending has remained unchanged. Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka are lagging behind with expenditures between 2% and 3%.¹⁹

For SEAMEO member countries, the mean expenditure as a share of GDP is more stable within this period. Individually, all countries show a small decline since 2015. Timor-Leste, Vietnam and Malaysia are spending above the minimum share. Although Timor has seen the share of spending on education dip by two percentage points, it is still the only country to spend more than the upper target of 6% (2018). Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, Cambodia and Singapore spend between 2.1% (Cambodia) and 3.2% (Philippines) on education, as a proportion of GDP. Myanmar spends the least in the subregion with a share below 2% in 2019.

In Central Asia, only Kazakhstan is below the target in 2019 with education expenditure of 3.7% of GDP. Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan have increased their spending since 2015 and are now above the upper threshold with 7% and 6.7%, respectively. Tajikistan and Mongolia have similar situations in 2015 with expenditure of 4.9% and 5.7%, respectively, in 2019. In East Asia, Hong Kong and South Korea increased their financing of education and reported expenditures above the minimum threshold in 2019. China is decreasing the share of their GDP that is invested in education, going from 3.8% in 2015 to 3.5% of the GDP in 2018. Macao is below the target with an expenditure on education of 2.9% of the GDP for education.²⁰

Figure 29: Expenditure on education as a proportion of GDP, 2015–2020



19 Similarly, as for the previous indicator, Pakistan and India have the lowest share of expenditure as a share of GDP – below 0.5% in the last three years.

20 National sources in Japan indicate an expenditure of 0.86% of the GDP.

Key Challenges in Monitoring Education 2030

Education 2030 calls for robust monitoring, reporting, and evaluating of indicators from early childhood to adult education. A country's ability to report on all SDG 4 indicators will depend on having all the mechanisms in place to collect, analyse and disseminate the data. While most countries in the Asia-Pacific have an Education Management Information System (EMIS) as a key pillar of their data administration, diverse challenges to monitoring the progress on SDG 4 remain.

Many countries do not have clear national benchmarks for SDG 4 indicators

Although many countries have adapted SDG 4 targets and indicators to local conditions, very few have clearly established national benchmarks for the seven indicators agreed at the 6th meeting of the TCG in 2019.²¹ In the absence of national benchmarks, it is difficult for countries to prioritize their policies and monitor achievement and progress towards SDG 4.

Fragmented country EMIS make it difficult to compile data from different sources to produce indicators for monitoring SDG 4

Most countries in the Asia-Pacific have developed functional EMIS, but most of them were designed to collect data and information for previous development goals (e.g., Education For All and the Millennium Development Goals). Further, they primarily focus on collecting/compiling data on education access and participation, rather than the quality of education. Data on education provided through religious institutions (fully accredited), data on TVET, higher education and sometimes early childhood education, are not part of EMIS in many Asia-Pacific countries, and are managed separately. Furthermore, other data management systems apply different data standards and methodologies, increasing the complexity of creating comparable data and improving data coverage over the range of SDG 4 indicators.

Lack of disaggregated data hinders the measurement and monitoring of inclusive education

The Education 2030 Agenda has a strong focus on equity. Yet without disaggregated data across a wide range of areas it becomes impossible to track the equity component inherent in SDG 4 indicators. Current national data production in many Asia-Pacific countries is limited to certain levels of disaggregation (e.g., sex, and location), while data on disabilities, economic status, and ethnicity – which are important for developing inclusive education policies – are lacking.

Lack of harmonized data on learning assessments poses challenges for monitoring learning

Monitoring SDG 4 goes beyond measuring access and participation. Rather, SDG 4 calls for monitoring learning outcomes at different levels of education (e.g., Grade 2 or 3, end of primary and end of lower secondary). Most countries in the Asia-Pacific lack large-scale learning assessment data, or they conduct irregular assessments due to resource constraints. The region does not have standardized assessment programmes for the whole region. However, PILNA assessments have been conducted in the Pacific and the recently developed SEA-PLM is available in South East Asia. Some countries have been participating in international assessments (e.g., PISA and TIMSS). Many countries have national assessment programmes at different levels, however, transferring data from such assessments to internationally comparable learning outcomes data is challenging.

21 For more information on the specific process and the seven indicators chosen for benchmarking please see: <http://tcg.uis.unesco.org/benchmarks/>

Lack of culture of data sharing and cooperation

Although many types of data and indicators are collected by different departments and ministries, they are not generally shared and are not easily accessible publicly. Establishing cooperation among data producers for effective monitoring of the Education 2030 Agenda is still a challenge for many Asia-Pacific countries. Information from Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and other non-traditional education providers which might collect data on aspects of education which are not covered by the traditional education providers should be taken into consideration to fill the data gaps.

Availability and use of household survey data for monitoring SDG 4 is limited

While most countries in the Asia-Pacific collect data from administrative sources, using data from household surveys or other alternative sources is not common practice. Further, even if countries were to use existing household surveys, the results are not always compatible with the needs of SDG 4 indicators. There are also issues regarding the concepts and definitions used in various household surveys, along with the sample frame design which would ensure availability of data disaggregation required for SDG 4.

Lack of human, technical and financial resources hinder the production of high quality, timely data for SDG 4

Resources, especially financial, are needed to ensure the production of high quality data. Data production in the Asia-Pacific should be strengthened through installing appropriate technologies, updating systems, and hiring qualified personnel. However, the costs put these improvements out of reach for many countries. The public financial allocation for data collection and management is low in lower-middle income and low-income countries requiring reliance on donors to fund and undertake surveys, and developing and maintaining national EMIS.

Lack of human capacity in data analysis and use is common

Although countries in the Asia-Pacific are producing data from different sources, data analysis that is relevant for education policymaking is limited, often due to staff capacities. Poor understanding of the methodologies, data definitions and interpretation techniques, hinder the full use of data for advocacy, identification of issues and challenges, and setting priorities for education policy.

The Way Forward

In the face of multiple challenges, the following recommendations are intended to strengthen monitoring systems so they can better analyse and assess inputs and outcomes to align education systems, and national policies and objectives with the Education 2030 Agenda.

Establish regional benchmarks for SDG 4 indicators and support countries in setting up national benchmarks for SDG 4 indicators

Establishing regional and national benchmarks would help regional bodies and partners develop appropriate strategies at regional and subregional levels to support countries' SDG 4 objectives and to monitor progress at the regional level. The on-going work on setting up regional benchmarks is bringing regional partners together. This partnership should support the process of endorsing regional benchmark levels at regional and global high level political forums.

Transform a national data production system while harnessing the data revolution

Countries need to improve their data production systems to improve the data coverage across sub-sectors (ECCE, basic education, higher education, TVET, NFE etc.) with common standards and classification systems while improving the efficiency of data production and dissemination. Countries should explore the use of improved ICTs, multiple statistical databases, and integrate them across sectors. The school census questionnaires should be improved/updated to ensure all variables needed to produce SDG 4 indicators are collected.

Move to individual student-based EMIS to generate disaggregated data

The traditional data collection system gathers data at an aggregate level which are often not able to generate sufficiently disaggregated data to measure inequities in education. Many countries have successfully transitioned their EMIS to capture data at the level of individual students and teachers. Such systems help track students and teachers in real time. They also incorporate data on learning outcomes, generating more policy-relevant, timely data, including the risk of dropping out. Countries should be supported to move to such systems with appropriate technological and capacity development support.

Strengthening learning outcomes data collection/compilation at national and regional levels

Tracking learning through regular assessments that are aligned with national and international needs will enable policymakers to identify systemic inefficiencies that can lead to grade repetition and early school leaving.²² International standards and national priorities, however, as well as individual aspirations, need to find agreement so as not to mutually barricade one another. This includes not accepting increasingly lower standards in assessments with the purpose of ranking international comparisons more highly as well as not excluding learners from assessments that may reduce the national average. Policy changes should include learning assessments as part of the education system. Specific guidelines would help to inform education practitioners and policymakers of the current state of their education and learning outcomes.

²² UIS (2017). More Than One-Half of Children and Adolescents Are Not Learning Worldwide. UIS fact sheet. Available at: <http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/fs46-more-than-half-children-not-learning-en-2017.pdf> (19 January 2018)

Promoting policy linking initiatives to generate internationally comparable data on learning

Initiatives like policy linking which allow countries to use their existing assessments – sub-national, national, and cross national – for reporting on global student learning outcome indicators, namely SDG Indicator 4.1.1 (a, b, and c) could be promoted in the region. Policy linking works by linking student assessments to the Global Proficiency Framework (GPF), which describes the global minimum proficiency levels expected of students at Grades 1 to 9 in reading and mathematics.²³

Build a culture of data sharing through establishing a multisectoral coordination mechanism

A multisectoral coordination mechanism at the national level should bring all subsectors and departments together to discuss data and monitoring challenges and develop appropriate strategies for generating high quality data for SDG 4. Such coordination mechanisms should discuss data collection mandates for various indicators and provide clear roles and responsibilities for producing data and disseminating through standard common platforms.

Undertake regular audits of data quality

High quality data are crucial for education planning and monitoring. To ensure the quality of the data, a regular data audit should be conducted to assess the policy environment of data collection and management, the adequacy of technical, human and financial resources for data production in all the subsectors, and the methodological soundness of the statistical production process. Such audits should also assess the coverage, accuracy, and timeliness of data production at various levels – school, district, regional, national – identify issues, and suggest remedial actions.

Developing regional and national capacity development programmes

Improved capacity is important at all levels of the monitoring process, including ensuring that policymakers recognize the importance and value of data. Improved technical skills and specialization for staff who conduct different types of collection, analysis, and evaluation, as well as continuous training and promotion opportunities, will attract and retain qualified professionals. Regional partners should engage in developing appropriate capacity development programmes such as regional and national training programmes, consultations and developing handbooks and guidebooks on various aspects of statistical capacity development.

Set up a regional partnership for generating SDG 4 data and producing key indicators for regional benchmarks

There are various regional organizations working on different areas of education monitoring including data generation and data collection as well as regional and national capacity development. To harmonize those efforts, there is a need to set up a regional partnership mechanism in education monitoring. The Thematic Working Group on Education 2030+ could serve as a platform to develop such mechanisms. The partners promote, advocate and support countries in collecting data for producing the minimum set of indicators as identified in the regional benchmarks for all countries in the region.

23 Please see the UIS's GAML website for more information on policy linking methodologies: <http://gaml.uis.unesco.org/policy-linking/>

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Annex – Indicators List

SDG Indicator	SDG Target	Indicator Name
4.1	4.1.1	Proportion of students at the end of primary education achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in mathematics, both sexes (%)
4.1	4.1.1	Proportion of students at the end of lower secondary education achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in mathematics, both sexes (%)
4.1	4.1.1	Proportion of students at the end of lower secondary education achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in reading, both sexes (%)
4.1	4.1.1	Proportion of students in Grade 2 or 3 achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in mathematics, both sexes (%)
4.1	4.1.1	Proportion of students in Grade 2 or 3 achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in reading, both sexes (%)
4.1	4.1.1	Proportion of students at the end of primary education achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in reading, both sexes (%)
4.1	4.1.2	Completion rate, primary education, both sexes (%)
4.1	4.1.2	Completion rate, lower secondary education, both sexes (%)
4.1	4.1.2	Completion rate, upper secondary education, both sexes (%)
4.1	4.1.3	Gross intake ratio to the last grade of primary education, both sexes (%)
4.1	4.1.3	Gross intake ratio to the last grade of lower secondary general education, both sexes (%)
4.1	4.1.4	Out-of-school rate for children of primary school age, both sexes (%)
4.1	4.1.4	Out-of-school rate for adolescents and youth of lower and upper secondary school age, both sexes (%)
4.2	4.2.2	Adjusted net enrolment rate, one year before the official primary entry age, both sexes (%)
4.2	4.2.2	Adjusted net attendance rate, one year before the official primary entry age, both sexes (%)
4.2	4.2.4	Gross enrolment ratio, early childhood education, both sexes (%)
4.2	4.2.4	Gross enrolment ratio, pre-primary, both sexes (%)
4.3	4.3.1	Participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training in the previous 12 months, both sexes (%)
4.3	4.3.2	Gross enrolment ratio for tertiary education, both sexes (%)
4.3	4.3.2	Gross attendance ratio for tertiary education, both sexes (%)
4.3	4.3.3	Proportion of 15-24 year-olds enrolled in vocational education, both sexes (%)
4.4	4.4.1	Proportion of youth and adults who have sent e-mails with attached files (e.g. document, picture, video), both sexes (%)
4.4	4.4.1	Proportion of youth and adults who have connected and installed new devices (%)
4.4	4.4.1	Proportion of youth and adults who have copied or moved a file or folder (%)
4.4	4.4.1	Proportion of youth and adults who have created electronic presentations with presentation software (%)
4.4	4.4.1	Proportion of youth and adults who have used basic arithmetic formulae in a spreadsheet, both sexes (%)
4.4	4.4.1	Proportion of youth and adults who have wrote a computer program using a specialised programming language, both sexes (%)

SDG Indicator	SDG Target	Indicator Name
4.4	4.4.1	Proportion of youth and adults who have found, downloaded, installed and configured software, both sexes (%)
4.4	4.4.1	Proportion of youth and adults who have transferred files between a computer and other devices, both sexes (%)
4.4	4.4.1	Proportion of youth and adults who have used copy and paste tools to duplicate or move information within a document, both sexes (%)
4.5	4.5.1	Completion rate, primary education, adjusted location parity index (LPIA)
4.5	4.5.1	Completion rate, lower secondary education, adjusted location parity index (LPIA)
4.5	4.5.1	Completion rate, upper secondary education, adjusted location parity index (LPIA)
4.5	4.5.1	Gross intake ratio to the last grade of primary education, adjusted gender parity index (GPIA)
4.5	4.5.1	Gross intake ratio to the last grade of lower secondary general education, adjusted gender parity index (GPIA)
4.5	4.5.1	Gross enrolment ratio, early childhood education, adjusted gender parity index (GPIA)
4.5	4.5.1	Gross enrolment ratio, pre-primary, adjusted gender parity index (GPIA)
4.5	4.5.1	Gross enrolment ratio for tertiary education, adjusted gender parity index (GPIA)
4.6	4.6.2	Youth literacy rate, population 15-24 years, both sexes (%)
4.6	4.6.2	Adult literacy rate, population 15+ years, both sexes (%)
4.6	4.6.2	Elderly literacy rate, population 65+ years, both sexes (%)
4.a	4.a.1	Proportion of primary schools with access to computers for pedagogical purposes (%)
4.a	4.a.1	Proportion of primary schools with access to electricity (%)
4.a	4.a.1	Proportion of primary schools with access to Internet for pedagogical purposes (%)
4.a	4.a.1	Proportion of lower secondary schools with access to computers for pedagogical purposes (%)
4.a	4.a.1	Proportion of lower secondary schools with access to electricity (%)
4.a	4.a.1	Proportion of lower secondary schools with access to Internet for pedagogical purposes (%)
4.a	4.a.1	Proportion of upper secondary schools with access to computers for pedagogical purposes (%)
4.a	4.a.1	Proportion of upper secondary schools with access to electricity (%)
4.a	4.a.1	Proportion of upper secondary schools with access to Internet for pedagogical purposes (%)
4.a	4.a.1	Proportion of primary schools with access to adapted infrastructure and materials for students with disabilities (%)
4.a	4.a.1	Proportion of lower secondary schools with access to adapted infrastructure and materials for students with disabilities (%)
4.a	4.a.1	Proportion of upper secondary schools with access to adapted infrastructure and materials for students with disabilities (%)
4.b	4.b.1	Volume of official development assistance flows for scholarships by sector and type of study, constant US\$
4.c	4.c.1	Proportion of teachers with the minimum required qualifications in primary education, both sexes (%)
4.c	4.c.1	Proportion of teachers with the minimum required qualifications in pre-primary education, both sexes (%)
4.c	4.c.1	Proportion of teachers with the minimum required qualifications in secondary education, both sexes (%)
4.c	4.c.2	Pupil-trained teacher ratio in primary education (headcount basis)
Finance	1.a.2	Expenditure on education as a percentage of total government expenditure (%)
Finance	...	Government expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP (%)

Synthesis Table

Mapping Asia-Pacific Policy Areas and Strategies and SDG 4 Targets

SDG Targets	SAARC Goals	SEAMEO Priorities	ASEAN Policy Area / Outcome	PacREF Policy Area / Outcome
Target 4.1 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes	1 - Expanding educational access and accelerate OOSC reduction	Priority 2 – Addressing Barriers to Inclusion	SUB-GOAL 2: Enhance the quality and access to basic education for all, including the disabled, less advantageous & other marginalized groups	Student Outcomes and Wellbeing 2. Improved participation and success rates at all levels, especially in ECCE and secondary and TVET
Target 4.2 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education	2 - Ensuring educational equity and inclusion	Priority 1 – Achieving Universal Early Childhood Care and Education		Learning Pathways 3. Our youngest learners (preschoolers) are prepared to engage in formal schooling
Target 4.3 By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university	5 - Promoting acquisition of skills for life and for work	Priority 4 – Promoting technical and vocational education and training (TVET)	SUB-GOAL 4: Support the development of the TVET sector as well as lifelong learning in the region PRIORITY AREA 4.1: Maximizing access to TVET for employment and sustainable development	Learning Pathways 1. An enabling policy environment, which is rights based with appropriate resourcing, for TVET models and relevancy increased school-based decision making and flexibility in the facilitation of learning. Student outcomes and wellbeing 2. Improved participation and success rates at all levels, especially in ECCE, secondary and TVET

SDG Targets	SAARC Goals	SEAMEO Priorities	ASEAN Policy Area / Outcome	PacREF Policy Area / Outcome
Target 4.4 By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship	6 - Harnessing the potential of ICTs	Priority 4 – Promoting technical and vocational education and training (TVET)	SUB-GOAL 3: Strengthen the use of ICT PRIORITY AREA 3.1: Expanding and improving human and institutional capacity in educational software development and online instructional design to enhance access to quality education PRIORITY AREA 3.2: Strengthening capacity to access and use digital learning through ICT in ASEAN Member States; as well as provide other capacity building programmes to support this	Learning Pathways 4. Linked pathways between levels of schooling and beyond
Target 4.5 By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations	3 - Achieving gender equality 2 - Ensuring educational equity and inclusion	Priority 2 – Addressing Barriers to Inclusion	SUB-GOAL 2: Enhance the quality and access to basic education for all, including the disabled, less advantageous & other marginalized groups PRIORITY AREA 2.1: Promoting inclusive schools through improved access and provision of basic education to marginalized and OOSC	Quality and relevance 3. Curriculum and programmes, with appropriate pedagogy are inclusive, rights based, promoted gender equality, flexible and responsive to innovation and change and are adaptable to new learning opportunities.

SDG Targets	SAARC Goals	SEAMEO Priorities	ASEAN Policy Area / Outcome	PacREF Policy Area / Outcome
Target 4.6 By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy				<p>Student Outcomes and Wellbeing</p> <p>1. Increased percentages of learners achieve expected levels of literacy and numeracy at all levels of education but particularly by the end of the primary cycle.</p>
Target 4.7 By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and nonviolence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development	11 - Ensuring lifelong learning opportunities	Priority 7 – Adopting a 21 st Century Curriculum	SUB-GOAL 5: Complement the efforts of other sectors in meeting the objectives of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)	<p>Student Outcomes and Wellbeing</p> <p>3. Programmes developed and implemented that strengthen cognitive, non cognitive and social skills in young people, recognizing “Pacific literacies” ensuring their readiness for the challenges and opportunities they will encounter in life.</p>
Target 4.a Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all	4 - Improving learning outcomes and promoting quality education	Priority 3 – Promoting Resiliency in the Face of Emergencies	SUB-GOAL 2: Enhance the quality and access to basic education for all, including the disabled, less advantageous & other marginalized groups	<p>Quality and relevance</p> <p>4. Quality learning environment that supports learning at all levels of education</p>
			PRIORITY AREA 2.2: Improving the quality of basic education through quality-focused interventions	

SDG Targets	SAARC Goals	SEAMEO Priorities	ASEAN Policy Area / Outcome	PacREF Policy Area / Outcome
Target 4.b By 2020, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes, in developed countries and other developing countries	12 - Strengthening partnership and collaboration	Priority 6 – Promoting harmonisation in higher education and research		
Target 4.c By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing States	7 - Improving the quality and relevance of teacher development programmes	Priority 5 – Revitalizing Teacher Education	SUB-GOAL 8: Provide capacity-building programmes for teachers, academics and other key stakeholders in the education community PRIORITY AREA 8.1: Promoting Education Exchange Week to conduct comprehensive, multi-level, and wide-ranging exchanges and cooperation. PRIORITY AREA 8.2: Enhancing teachers' competencies for 21 st century skills	The Teaching Profession 1. All teachers and school leaders in the Pacific are qualified and skilled certified professionals who are able to demonstrate their competencies against approved standards. 2. All teachers and school leaders are supported, through a range of modalities, in developing new skills and knowledge to create better outcomes for students. 3. The teaching profession holds status in the Pacific and due to this, parents and the community have unreserved confidence in teachers and schools.



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