What's the Difference?

Confronting Factors that Affect Gender Equality in Education

GIRLS TOO! EDUCATION FOR ALL *UNGEI*

East Asia and Pacific Regional UNGEI

Goals for Gender Equality in Education

The six Education for All goals:

- Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.

- **Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to, and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality.**

- Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes.

- **Achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.**

- **Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.**

- Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

Millennium Development Goal 3:

Promote gender equality and empower women

Target: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015.

East Asia and Pacific Regional UNGEI

Since its launch in May 2002, the East Asia and Pacific Regional UN Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) has sought to establish networks and partnerships among experts and organizations promoting gender equality in education. The goal of the regional group is to ensure the availability of quality education for all girls and boys across the region. The group works within the framework of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); the Dakar Framework for Action, Education for All; the Beijing Platform for Action; and the World Fit for Children.

Partner organizations at the regional level include Bahá'í International Community; Education Development Center (EDC); International Labour Organization (ILO) Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific; Plan Asia Regional Office; Save the Children Sweden, Southeast Asia and the Pacific Regional Office; Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) Secretariat; Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) Regional Support Team, Asia Pacific; United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP); United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau for Education; United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) East Asia and Pacific Regional Office; and World Vision Foundation of Thailand.

Key Issues

Beyond gender parity

Gender parity indices indicate that parity or near-parity has been achieved in primary education enrolment (equal proportions of girls and boys enrolled in primary education) in the region. Of the 19 countries with available data for 2005, 16 had reached the target of gender parity in primary education, part of the first time-bound target of the Dakar Framework for Action, Education for All. Five countries were close to achieving the target, but there were still fewer girls in comparison with boys in primary school. At the secondary education level, 9 countries had achieved gender parity by 2005.

Despite progress in education enrolment, countries in the region are still far from achieving gender equality in education, a goal that goes beyond gender parity and access to education (gender equality *to* education). Gender equality also includes equality in the quality of education received and in teaching and learning processes (gender equality *in* education) as well as in the opportunities available through education (gender equality *through* education).

Within classrooms, gender biases persist in textbooks and learning materials, with women and men often portrayed in stereotypical roles (e.g., girls looking after younger siblings, women doing housework, boys playing football, men as policemen, doctors or leaders, etc.), and in the practices of teachers and their interaction with students. Girls/women and boys/men still often pursue what are considered typically 'feminine' or 'masculine' academic and training fields.

For example, the fields of education and the humanities are in most cases dominated by women, while there are few women studying engineering. The teaching profession is predominantly female in many parts of the region, particularly at the lower education levels, with few male role models for boys in their early years in school. Other countries are faced with a lack of qualified female teachers, especially in remote and rural areas. School management and administration are often dominated by men, with low female representation at these decision-making levels.

The following table shows the Gender Parity Index (GPI) of enrolment ratios in primary, secondary and tertiary education in the East Asia and Pacific region.

Gender Parity Index (GPI) of enrolment ratios for East Asia and the Pacific

Less girls/women			Parity	Less boys/men		
Far from the goal (GPI below 0.80)	Intermediate (GPI 0.80 to 0.94)	Close to the goal (GPI 0.95 to 0.96)	Goal achieved (GPI 0.97 to 1.03)	Close to the goal (GPI 1.04 to 1.05)	Intermediate (GPI 1.06 to 1.25)	Far from the goal (GPI above 1.25)
Primary Education						
		Indonesia, Lao PDR, Solomon Islands, Thailand, Tonga	Australia, Brunei, Cambodia, Fiji, Japan, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Marshall Islands, Mongolia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Philippines, Samoa, Vanuatu			
Secondary Education						
Cambodia, Lao PDR, Papua New Guinea	Niue, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Vanuatu	Australia	China, Cook Islands, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Myanmar, Singapore, Timor-Leste, Viet Nam	Brunei, Marshall Islands, Thailand	Fiji, Kiribati, Malaysia, Micronesia, Mongolia, Nauru, New Zealand, Palau, Philippines, Samoa, Tonga	
Tertiary Education						
Cambodia, Indonesia, Republic of Korea, Lao PDR, Vanuatu, Viet Nam	Japan		China		Australia, Fiji, Philippines, Thailand	Brunei, Malaysia, Marshall Islands, Mongolia, New Zealand, Tonga

Note: This is based on the net enrolment ratio for primary education and the gross enrolment ratios for secondary and tertiary education for countries for which data were available.
Source: UNESCO. 2007. Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2008. Education for All by 2015: Will we make it?

Furthermore, achieving gender parity has not necessarily led to equality in education outcomes in the region. Even in those cases where there are higher proportions of girls than boys enrolled in secondary and tertiary education, the question remains as to whether this has really translated into changes in gender equality in economic, social and political spheres after girls leave school. In the transitions from school to work, women are often consigned to professions such as teachers and caregivers, and wide gaps remain in women's estimated earned income compared with men. Women's participation in public life and in leadership positions remains low, and women and girls continue to be victims of gender-based discrimination and violence. Moreover, poverty remains largely feminized in this region.

The many faces of bias

National aggregate figures for gender parity may not fully reflect local realities and often mask disparities at the sub-national level, with pockets of unreached children, mostly girls, from ethnic minorities, migrant families, or among those who are displaced by conflict or natural disasters, who are poor, who are child labourers, who live in remote areas, or have disabilities. The barriers to education based on gender biases may be compounded by these factors. These children are often also vulnerable to various forms of social exploitation and denied their right to education.

An ethnic minority girl at Hoang Thu Pho primary school, Bac Ha District, Lao Cai Province, Viet Nam

Gender parity in net attendance ratio in secondary or higher education, Viet Nam, 2006
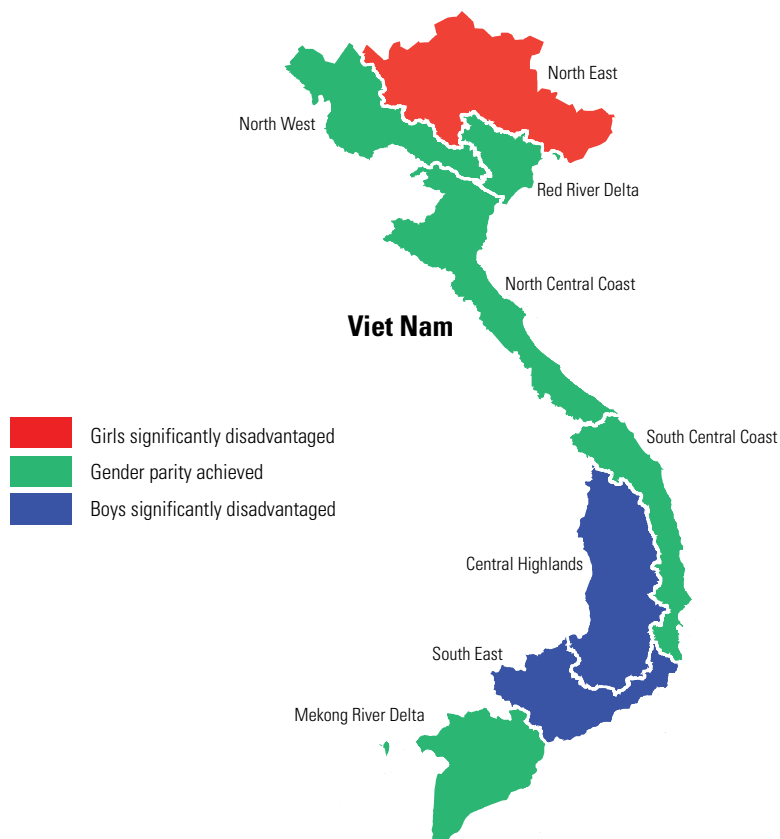
Source: GSO. 2006. Viet Nam Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2006, Final Report. Hanoi, Viet Nam: General Statistics Office.

The case of Viet Nam highlights the importance of digging deeper and looking at sub-national level data to gain a better understanding of where the gender disparities are. At the national level, the GPI for the net attendance ratio in secondary and higher education is 1.02 (UNICEF estimate calculated with results from the Viet Nam Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey), indicating that gender parity has been achieved (within the gender parity band of 0.97 and 1.03). However, a closer look at the sub-national level reveals a more varied picture, with significant disparities to the disadvantage of girls in the North East and to the disadvantage of boys in the South East and Central Highlands regions, calling for targeted action to address the gender disparities in these areas.

Boys too!

In this region, both girls and boys face obstacles in their participation in school, underlining the fact that promoting gender equality is not just about women and girls, but men and boys as well. While gains have been made towards universal primary education and many countries have achieved or are close to achieving gender parity in primary school enrolment, gender parity has not yet been reached at the secondary education level, with boys at the disadvantage in some cases. Of the 31 countries for which data were available, 14 had lower proportions of boys enrolled in secondary education than girls in 2005, including Fiji, Malaysia, Mongolia, Thailand, the Philippines, Samoa and Tonga. One reason for this is that boys are often co-opted to work full-time to earn money, putting an end to their formal learning. In Mongolia, for example, boys drop out of school to contribute to household incomes by working with livestock. Male child labour in this case is very much influenced by poverty. At the tertiary education level, there is a growing trend of higher rates of girls' enrolment, and a 'reverse' gender gap.

UNICEF EAPRO/MGLA00526/Jim Holmes/Mongolia

Bayarkhuu, 11 years old, is often sent out to look after the goats or sheep quite a long distance from his home. It is very common in Mongolia for boys to miss school for this reason.

Recommendations and Strategies

Regional consultations have identified key recommendations and potential strategies to achieve gender equality in education and to address remaining gaps and challenges, some of which are outlined below.

Institutionalize gender mainstreaming in the education system:
In the effort to achieve gender equality in education, it is important to foster an organizational culture in support of gender equality, incorporating a gender perspective in educational policies, plans and programmes at all levels.

Strategies:
- Develop a legal platform for gender mainstreaming
- Build capacity at all levels, including teacher training colleges and among school administrators
- Strengthen institutional mechanisms for mainstreaming gender: Form inter-sectoral/ inter-ministerial gender working groups/task forces/committees
- Ensure the allocation of financial resources to support efforts in gender mainstreaming

Ensure the availability of sex-disaggregated data for refinement in targeting and policy making:

Gaining an understanding of gender gaps in order to take appropriate measures to address these gaps requires, as a first step, the availability of relevant data that are disaggregated by sex. Greater awareness and recognition of the multifaceted nature of disparities faced by girls and boys in the region are also important, calling for the use of a broader bias framework, looking not only at gender bias, but other forms of bias as well. To accurately assess disparities, it is therefore important that data are disaggregated by sex and by other factors such as ethnicity, disability, socioeconomic quintiles, etc.

Strategies:
- Conduct sub-national studies/surveys to identify gender disparities
- Systematically review and validate data

Utilize sex-disaggregated data in policy making, planning, programming, evaluation and budgeting:

It is not sufficient to only collect sex-disaggregated data, but the data must also be utilized to effectively address gender disparities and inequalities. Making the link between research and policy is crucial and there is a need to advocate for more evidence-based policy making derived from both quantitative and qualitative data and information.

Strategies:
- Raise awareness and advocate among policy makers, education planners and implementers on the importance of evidence-based policy making
- Train statisticians, policy analysts and planners, Ministries of Women's Affairs, Ministries of Education, and other sectors/line ministries on analyzing and utilizing sex-disaggregated quantitative and qualitative data and information

Promote female leadership in education:

Even though women are over-represented in the teaching profession in many parts of the region, men often dominate the management positions as school administrators and members of school committees. A more balanced representation of women and men in these positions can contribute to ensuring the needs of both girls and boys are taken into account and the views of men and women are equally heard.

- Review labour market policies and practices, particularly staff development processes and strategies, with regard to salaries, status, benefits, promotion and retirement age from a gender perspective
- Provide awards and incentives for outstanding female teachers and gender-responsive teachers, both male and female
- Build capacity of women in leadership skills
- Raise awareness and advocate for women in leadership positions in the field of education

Ensure gender-responsive teaching and learning processes and materials:

Improving the quality of teaching and learning processes, learning materials and environments, and ensuring that they are gender responsive require gender analysis and the collection of qualitative data, in addition to quantitative data.

Strategies:

- Build capacity of textbook and curriculum writers in developing gender-responsive curricula and learning materials
- Develop learning materials with positive female role models that are free of gender stereotyping
- Conduct on-going and systematic reviews of teaching and learning processes within classrooms and schools, and of learning materials from a gender perspective
- Encourage girls to enter non-traditional occupations and participate in technical and vocational training

Make education services and facilities accessible to all, especially to unreached and at-risk girls:

Promoting child-seeking schools which actively identify out-of-school girls and boys and get them enrolled is critical to ensuring that girls and boys have access to school and are included in learning. Various mechanisms to track out-of-school children can be utilized, such as parent-teacher associations or involving students themselves in conducting mapping exercises to identify peers from their communities who are not in school.

Strategies:

- Build schools in ethnic minority communities
- Recruit female teachers from ethnic minority groups to teach in their own communities and serve as role models for girls to encourage their enrolment
- Offer multi-grade classes
- Provide grant/tuition assistance or scholarships
- Provide dormitories/boarding schools, especially for girls, in cases where distance to school and safety and security may be an issue

- Provide bilingual/multilingual education to address the multiple levels of barriers girls and boys may face in receiving an education
- Provide alternative means of education, such as through non-formal/informal channels
- Advocate for the provision of education services to children of migrant workers, such as through mobile schools designed to meet the particular needs of these communities

Allocate resources for promoting gender equality in education:

Gender budgeting allows for the analysis of budget allocations in the education system to ensure resource allocations match policy pronouncements towards the achievement of gender equality in education. While policies are in place in most countries in the region for mainstreaming gender, there are often gaps at the level of implementation, and resources are a key aspect.

Strategies:

- Review the allocation of resources (financial, human) for promoting gender equality in education
- Advocate for a specific budget for gender programmes
- Develop case studies on gender budgeting initiatives
- Build capacity in gender budgeting
- Assess the impact of gender budgeting initiatives

Monitor and evaluate progress in mainstreaming gender in education systems:

While gender parity indices are calculated and used to monitor progress, the more qualitative aspects of achieving gender equality are often overlooked. Indicators, data and information are needed to assess the extent to which gender equality is being achieved in terms of processes and outcomes, in addition to access.

Strategies:

- Develop indicators for measuring progress in achieving gender equality in education (particularly on processes, achievements, outcomes – qualitative aspects), taking into account the local context
- Conduct studies on female participation in governance of educational processes
- Monitor progress, looking into education and learning outcomes and the link of gender parity to gender equality

Increase knowledge and understanding of gender issues:

Within an organizational structure that supports gender equality, incorporating gender training in pre- and in-service teacher training and training key stakeholders with regard to gender issues and analysis is crucial for generating greater awareness about inequalities that exist and how to address them. It is important that the outcomes of such training are monitored and evaluated to review the application of skills and knowledge gained and to assess changes in practice.

Strategies:

- Train and mobilize teachers/education administrators/managers and other key stakeholders at all levels in promoting gender equality in education
- Conduct regional and country studies on the links between education, employment and political participation and other outcomes, with a focus on more qualitative research and analysis
- Incorporate gender concepts and knowledge of the girl child/women's rights starting at the pre-school level, also including these aspects in life-skills education
- Document and disseminate good practices

UNICEF EAPRO PAPA00046/photographer unknown/Papua New Guinea

East Asia and Pacific Regional UNGEI Publications

Towards Equal Opportunities for All: Empowering girls through partnerships in education (2007)

Access to quality basic education is especially challenging for certain disadvantaged groups, including girls, children living in extreme poverty, ethnic minorities, migrants, children with disabilities, working children, and children without proper registration and documentation. These children are vulnerable to various forms of social exploitation and are often denied their right to education. It is for this reason that the East Asia and Pacific Regional UNGEI came together to publish good practice case studies from the region. The examples highlight stories of overcoming the exploitation of girls and reaching vulnerable or marginalized girls, with cases from Cambodia, China, Indonesia and the Philippines.

Download at: *www.ungei.org/resources/files/UNGEI_book_ Final_250607.pdf*
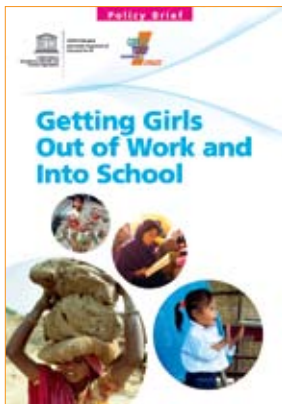
Getting Girls Out of Work and Into School (2006)

Girls' labour constitutes a major obstacle to achieving gender parity and equality in primary and secondary education by 2015, as per the Dakar Framework for Action. Their work – in the form of household chores, domestic servitude, agricultural work and home-based work – can leave them vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. Since the majority of girls who do not attend school are likely to be working, efforts to increase girls' education must go hand-in-hand with efforts to eliminate child labour. What are the causes of girls' labour and what kind of impact does it have on their educational opportunities? This brief, produced jointly by UNESCO Bangkok and the East Asia and Pacific Regional UNGEI answers these questions and provides examples of good practice, as well as strategies to get girls out of work and into school.

Download at: *www.ungei.org/resources/files/unesco_girls_ out_ofwork.pdf*

Gender Definitions

Sex describes the biological differences between men and women, which are universal and determined at birth.

Gender refers to the roles and responsibilities of men and women that are created in our families, our societies and our cultures. The concept of gender also includes the expectations held about the characteristics, aptitudes and likely behaviours of both women and men (femininity and masculinity). These roles and expectations are learned and are not biologically predetermined nor fixed forever. They can change over time and they vary within and between cultures.

Sex-disaggregated data is data on men and women that is collected and presented separately.

Gender parity deals with equality in numbers or proportions of girls/women and boys/men on a specific attribute or variable.

Gender Parity Index (GPI) is the ratio of female to male values of a given indicator. A GPI of 1 (or within the band of 0.97 to 1.03) indicates parity between the sexes. A GPI of above 1 indicates a disparity to the disadvantage of boys, while a GPI of below 1 indicates a disparity to the disadvantage of girls.

Gender analysis is the collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated information. Men and women both perform different roles. This leads to women and men having different experiences, knowledge, talents and needs. Gender analysis explores these differences so policies, programmes and projects can identify and meet the different needs of men and women. Gender analysis also facilitates the strategic use of distinct knowledge and skills possessed by women and men.

Gender equality means that women and men have equal conditions for realizing their full human rights and for contributing to, and benefiting from, economic, social, cultural and political development. Gender equality is therefore the equal valuing by society of the similarities and the differences of men and women, and the roles they play. It is based on women and men being full partners in their home, their community and their society.

Sources: UNESCO Bangkok. 2006. GENIA Toolkit for Promoting Gender Equality in Education. UNESCO. 2007. Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2008. Education for All by 2015: Will we make it?