Towards Gender Equality in Education:
Progress and challenges in Asia-Pacific Region

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April 2009

GIRLS TOO! EDUCATION FOR ALL UNGEI

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Equity, Gender and Quality in Education in Asia-Pacific

Towards Gender Equality in Education:
Progress and Challenges in the Asia-Pacific Region

Technical Paper

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Foreword

In June of 2008 the Global Advisory Committee of UNGEI, with invaluable assistance from UNICEF, took its semi-annual meeting ***on the road*** (a first!)**,** by convening a two-day meeting in Kathmandu, Nepal on: "Equity, Gender and Quality in Education in Asia and the Pacific". What a success it was! Who would have imagined that a technical meeting on gender equality in education would attract education experts from thirteen countries in the region, in addition to representatives from United Nations and other international agencies, civil society and the international media? Was it a reflection of the common need to discuss issues keeping girls out of school or the need to assess access and retention of girls in conflict- and disaster-affected countries? Could it have been the timing, more than half way to the 2015 Millennium goal post?

Though these questions remain unanswered, two facts were convincingly argued at the UNGEI Regional Meeting in Kathmandu: for one there is need for more empirical knowledge at international and country level to better understand the factors leading to quality education and their impact on girls and boys. Secondly, empirical knowledge on gender and education will have to draw on extensive country experiences that are best shared in a wider forum of the kind organized by UNGEI in June 2008.

The technical paper before you was presented to the Kathmandu UNGEI Regional Meeting. It makes a significant contribution to our understanding of the achievements and challenges of gender equality in education in Asia and the Pacific region. While the Asian region is making progress toward reducing gender disparity at primary school level, significant disparities persist within countries, reflecting other socio-economic factors that have a strong bearing on girls. The paper provides us with solid documentation on gender parity, access, retention and survival of girls in primary school and analysis of female participation in the labor force. "*It should be recognized that bringing all girl children to school is not merely an educational action. It transforms attitudes and behavioral dynamics of society, so that gender equality is seen as a value in itself worth pursing",* states the paper. Obviously and fortunately it does not give us all the answers, but it poses many of the best questions. The answers will come through our collective efforts, in partnership for girls' education.

Co-Chairs of the UNGEI Global Advisory Committee

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Senior Education Advisor	Senior Vice President and Director, Global Learning Group
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ACRONYMS

BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (a civil-society organization founded in Bangladesh)
CFA	continuous formative assessment
CFS	child-friendly school
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
ECE	early childhood education
EFA	Education for All
EGS	Education Guarantee Scheme
GEI	gender equality index
GEEI	Gender Equality in Education Index
GEM	gender empowerment measure
GER	gross enrolment rate
GMR	Global Monitoring Report
GNP	gross national product
GPI	gender parity index
ILFE	inclusive learning-friendly environment
LABEP	Lao-Australia Basic Education Project
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NER	net enrolment rate
PISA	Program for International Student Assessment
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNGEI	United Nations Girls' Education Initiative

Towards gender equality in education: Progress and challenges in the Asia-Pacific Region

Executive summary and introduction

Providing universal compulsory primary education has long been a goal pursued by all countries as a basic philosophy. This goal received a new direction through the global vision that evolved during the World Conference on Education for All, held in Jomtien (Thailand) in 1990. The conference called for treating education as a basic need and a fundamental right of every individual. It was stated: "The most urgent priority is to ensure access to, and improve the quality of education for girls and women, and to remove every obstacle that hampers their active participation. All gender stereotyping in education should be eliminated." It was further emphasized that education programmes for women and girls should be designed to eliminate the social and cultural barriers that have excluded them from the benefits of regular education programmes, as well as to promote equal opportunities in all aspects of their lives.

Taking stock of the situation towards the end of the decade following the Jomtien Declaration, it was observed that gender disparities have persisted. Although great strides had been made, nearly two thirds of the children who were denied their right to education were female. Even though girls' education had been extensively documented as the investment that offered the greatest overall returns for economic development, national policies did not reflect this insight. It is in view of such an assessment that the Dakar Declaration on Education for All (EFA), as well as the Millennium Declaration, called upon national governments and the international community to pursue more focussed action and set concrete targets and a time frame for achieving the goal of gender equality in education.

The United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) has been a part of the response to this call at the international level. National governments across the world have also been initiating action plans to meet the goals of universal participation of girls in primary education and moving forward to achieve gender equality at all levels of education and in all spheres of life.

What progress has been made in this regard in the subregions of East Asia and the Pacific and South Asia? Does the quantitative progress also meet concerns of quality and equity? Do the overall figures represent real progress towards the goal of gender equality? Are there specific pockets and clusters within the subregions that continue to lag? These are critical questions that need closer examination. Various assessments during the post-Dakar period indicate substantial progress but significant unevenness across the subregions; they also point to persisting gender and social inequities and serious shortfalls in the quality of provisions and outcomes. There is increasing awareness that actions must move to a different plane – from merely counting the number of children enrolled to ensuring that all children enjoy an equal quality of education without gender, ethnic, caste or class distinctions. This paper attempts to take stock of the progress made with respect to some of these questions in the countries of the South Asia and East Asia and Pacific subregions. It ends with a summary of the persisting challenges that remain to be addressed, suggesting lessons derived from successful good practice in each of them.

Part One examines access and parity issues, with a quantitative review of participation rates and appropriate gender-related issues in access and participation within the two subregions. What do these parity numbers tell us about girls' access to and retention in primary and secondary school?

Part Two follows with a more qualitative review with respect to the equality of education and discusses, in some depth, gender indicators that pertain to the equality of education in the *teaching-learning process* that can make a difference to boys and to girls. It suggests the

disproportionate importance of quality to maintaining girls in school and why this is so. It looks at a number of pertinent 'quality' indicators from a gender perspective to assess equality. These include such areas as curriculum, textbooks, the number and quality of teachers (including female teachers), and what constitutes girl-friendly education and why it appears so important to keeping girls in school.

Part Three examines learning outcomes and looks at 'inputs to outputs'. These include basics such as educational budgets and the prevalence of early childhood education as a stimulant to learning outcomes. It also examines more recent analysis applied to the differential gender dimensions of school testing mechanisms and teacher bias in both subject testing and assessment processes. It concludes with new data on the degree to which there is equality of gender outcomes, especially in the transition from school to the labour market and workforce.

Part Four summarizes those 'left out' of education at each step of the way, in terms of access, the quality of instruction and learning outcomes. These groups, it is argued, should be the real targets of future action: the hard-to-reach and marginalized children, both boys and especially girls, at the bottom of the education ladder, those whose poverty, remote location or lack of power limits their access education or their ability to remain in school. These are 'persistent issues' that urgently remain to be addressed. They are outlined using examples of good practice – related, as above, to access, quality of instruction and learning outcomes – that have to date proved successful and that could be potentially scaled-up for use with these targets.

The paper derives most of its findings from two studies commissioned by UNGEI: one on the South Asian countries and the other on the countries of East Asia and the Pacific.[1] In addition, it draws on several assessments of gender-related progress carried out under the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) framework during recent years and on new data emanating from UNGEI studies. Observations from these reports have been used to draw a broader picture of progress in girls' education and gender equality in the region. Data presented in the text, drawn mainly from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) database, relate to selected countries of the subregions that are critical to registering overall progress by 2015 or illustrate success achieved – thereby showing the way for other countries.

Part one: Participation rates and gender parity: What do the numbers tell?

What does the gender parity index really tell us?

The Dakar Framework for Action for EFA called for the elimination of gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005. Further, it called for achieving gender equality in education by 2015. Reviewing the situation across the world, the *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008* (GMR 2008) concludes, "The gender parity goal has been missed, and gender equality remains elusive." Does this statement reflect the situation in the two subregions of Asia-Pacific? Perhaps, yes. A sweeping conclusion of this kind, however, should not be allowed to undervalue the efforts and progress made during recent years. In fact, figures show that almost every country in the region is closer to the goals than it was.

The measurement of gender parity itself has been a subject of some debate. There is considerable concern that the gender parity index (GPI) can be misleading for assessing true gender equality in education. The gross enrolment rate (GER) and net enrolment rate (NER) measures, when disaggregated by gender, give a picture of the number of children on the school register but tell nothing about whether these children attend regularly, whether they compete grades successfully or whether they have acquired knowledge that they can use outside of school.[2] Several new measurements have been added, such as the gender equality index (GEI) developed by UNESCO for monitoring the EFA goals. But these can result in gender parity indexes measuring only the extent to which boys and girls are equally represented at different levels of education, where there can be complete gender parity despite low levels of access, retention and achievement.

More nuancing is required to pick up on what aspects of gender in education progression need addressing. There have been attempts to merge a country's GPI with its education development index (EDI), with it gender and development index (GDI) and even its gender empowerment measure (GEM) to better reflect such less discernible intangibles as poverty, social discrimination and cultural disadvantages. It is clear, however, that GPIs in Asia-Pacific do not adequately reflect local realities and easily mask disparities at subnational levels. This is particularly true for girls belonging to ethnic minorities, migrant families, those dispossessed by natural calamities or those who live in rural and remote areas, all of whom remain largely unreached and unmeasured.[3]

Yet, despite these debates and some observable progress in quantitative terms, neither the goal of gender parity nor that of gender equality has made sufficient progress. The following section presents a brief picture of the situation in the two Asia-Pacific subregions in a comparative framework with respect to selected indicators of gender parity and equality.

1.1 Bridging gender disparities in education

If eliminating gender disparity at the entry level of education is the concern, worldwide progress is substantial: 94 girls started Grade 1 for every 100 boys in 2005, compared to 91 girls in 1999. The group of countries in South and West Asia is behind the global average, however. It is nonetheless heartening to observe a significant increase in the gender parity index, from 0.83 to 0.92, for this subregion.

Although the Asian region is also making steady progress in reducing gender disparity with respect to secondary enrolment ratios, the situation is far from satisfactory. In particular, South Asia still had only 79 girls enrolled for every 100 boys in 2005. Gender parity figures at tertiary

levels are quite intriguing. UIS data show that, in general, gender disparity in tertiary enrolment has widened in favour of women over the years. However, this is not so in most parts of Asia, where women continue to be at a disadvantage, with GPIs of 0.74 and 0.93 in South and West Asia and East Asia and the Pacific, respectively. This is possibly due to continued low transition rates for girls in different stages of school education (*see figures A1 and A2 in Annex*).

1.1.1 Achieving gender parity: Country prospects

The regional and subregional averages mask more than they reveal of the underlying problems. Educational reality in Asia, home to close to 60 per cent of the world's children, is characterized by high levels of disparity across and within countries. While some countries have achieved near universal participation in basic education, others have continued to lag, particularly those in the South Asian peninsula.

Table 1: Country prospects for achieving parity in primary and secondary education

		Gender parity in secondary education			
		Achieved or likely to be achieved in 2005	Likely to be achieved by 2015	Likely to be achieved by 2025	At risk of not being achieved in 2015 or 2025
Gender parity in primary education	Achieved or likely to be achieved in 2005	Bangladesh, China, Cook Islands, Indonesia, Myanmar, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Sri Lanka	Brunei Darussalam, Fiji, Maldives, Mongolia		Australia Kiribati, Malaysia, Nauru, New Zealand, Philippines, Samoa, Vanuatu
	Likely to be achieved by 2015		Solomon Islands		Cambodia, India, Nepal, Thailand
	Likely to be achieved by 2025				Pakistan
	At risk of not being achieved in 2015 or 2025	Viet Nam	Macao (China)		Lao People's Democratic Republic, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Tokelau, Tonga

Source: Table 5.3, *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008* (based on past trends, 1991–2005, all countries with GPI between 0.97 and 1.03 are considered to have achieved parity).

The gender parity index must be considered with caution as far as figures beyond the universal compulsory education period are concerned. Although one may appreciate Bangladesh's progress in gender parity in primary schooling, for example, it is necessary to be cautious with respect to parity figures at the secondary stage. Data on participation levels and completion rates show the country has a long way to go in improving overall education participation levels, even in primary schooling. Specifically, data show that the survival rate to Grade 5 is only 65 per cent, and the primary cohort completion rate for the school year ending 2004 was only 55 per cent; in addition, the gross enrolment ratio for both boys and girls combined is only 47 per cent at the secondary level.

Similarly, UNESCO data indicate that Myanmar had a 2003 GPI of nearly 0.949, but primary school enrolment was only 84 per cent. The situation of Viet Nam requires greater in-depth analysis because, among countries of the Mekong region, it has generally been doing quite well. The data highlights serious problems with several South Asian countries and also with the small Pacific island countries. Gender parity, therefore, can be used as a benchmark of progress only where a country shows universal completion of primary schooling, not just enrolment, as well as enhanced levels of participation in secondary and tertiary levels.

Some critical questions are being examined in this context. What proportion of children fail to enter even primary school or drop out after enrolling without completing the full cycle? What proportion of the out-of-school children in Asian countries are girls? Are girls moving up and attending secondary school?

1.1.2 Girls among out-of-school children

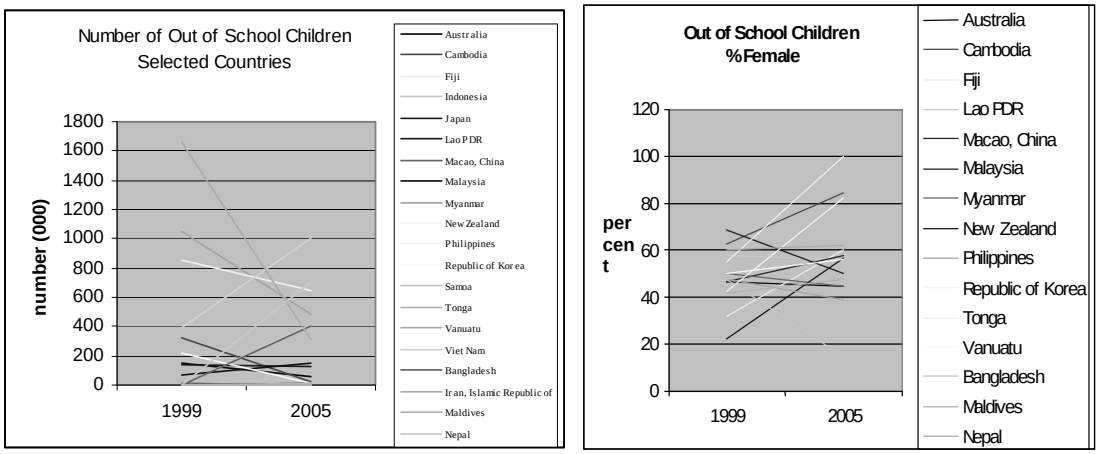
All countries specify the official age for entering primary school and also the age group in which children are supposed to be in the primary cycle of schooling. Data available in this regard raise some critical issues. For instance, in regions that are relatively better developed in educational provision – including East Asia and the Pacific – a substantial proportion of out-of-school children are likely to enter school late. On the other hand, in South and West Asia, the proportion of children who are not likely to enrol in school at all is highest (*see Figure A3 in Annex*).

What proportion of these out-of-school children are girls? Has the situation improved during recent years? Figure 1 shows that there has been a distinct decline in the number of out-of-school children in almost all countries of Asia-Pacific. Between 1999 and 2005, in the 19 countries of the two subregions for which data are available, the general trend has been towards a substantial reduction in the number of out-of-school children. However, the change in the proportion of girls in the total number of out-of-school children is a cause for serious concern, as the general trend is one of increase and not reduction. Even though the sample of countries covered is small, it highlights the need to proactively focus on girls' participation and on making schools more girl-friendly.

1.1.3 Participation in secondary schools

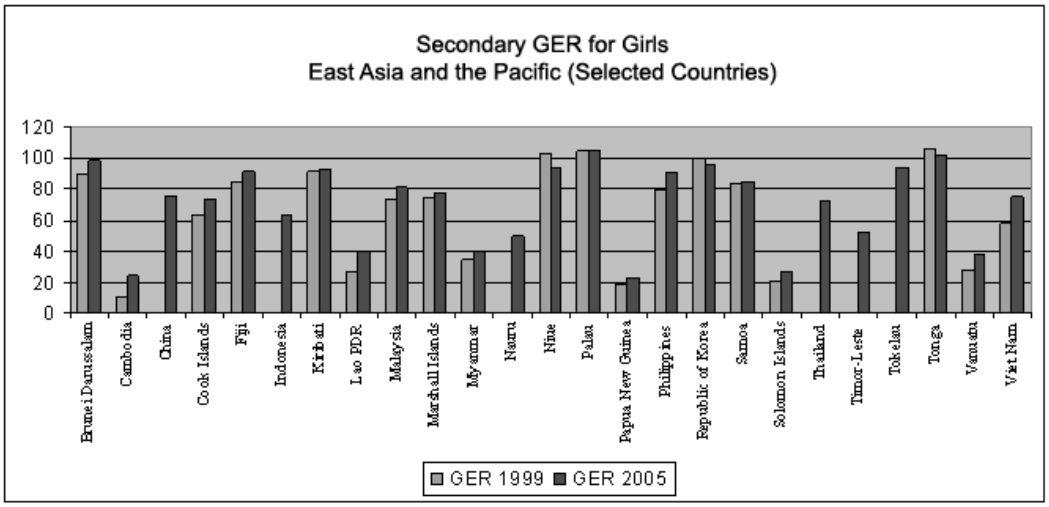
Participation in secondary schools is a good indicator of the quality of primary schools and their capacity to help children complete the primary cycle successfully, facilitating their entry to the secondary stage of schooling. How important is this to girls' education and how well are girls advancing at the secondary level? There are strong indications that secondary level education may provide higher returns for girls. "The economic returns to schooling at the secondary and tertiary level are consistently high (and differentially higher for young women). The gap between the returns for higher and lower school is widening thus putting increasing premium on secondary and tertiary schooling for later success in the labour market[4]."

Figure 1: Out-of-school children and girls' share in selected countries
Source: *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008.*



Indeed this has been estimated at and 18 per cent return on secondary education for girls, versus 14 per cent for boys.[5] In addition to increased economic returns, female schooling at the secondary level is more consistently associated with increased decision-making and mobility for women."[6]

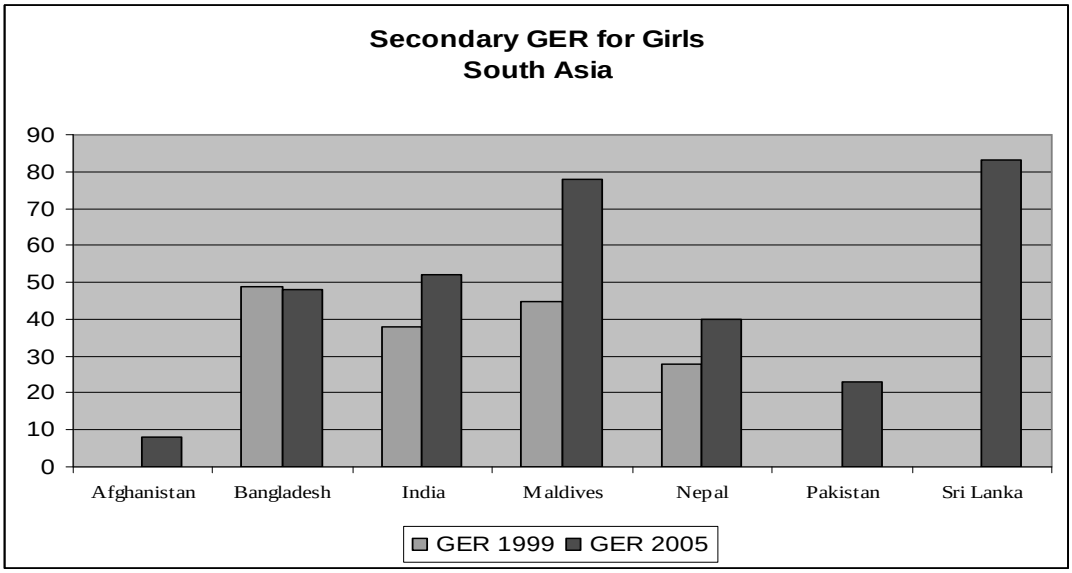
Figure 2: Participation of girls in secondary schooling, East Asia and the Pacific
Source: *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008.*



So how do girls fare? It is definitely not a very encouraging picture, considering that only the gross enrolment ratios are being examined. Some countries are in critical condition, languishing at the 20 per cent level or even less; these include Cambodia, Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands in East Asia and the Pacific, and Afghanistan and Pakistan in South Asia. The Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Nepal are stuck at levels around 40 per cent. Even India, despite improvements, has only one out of every two girls attending secondary school,

while Bangladesh shows a marginally negative trend, slightly receding from the 50 per cent mark in 1999 to approximately 47 per cent, according to the EFA GMR 2008. Boys fare little better, except in some countries of East Asia.

Figure 3: Participation of girls in secondary schooling, South Asia
Source: *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008.*

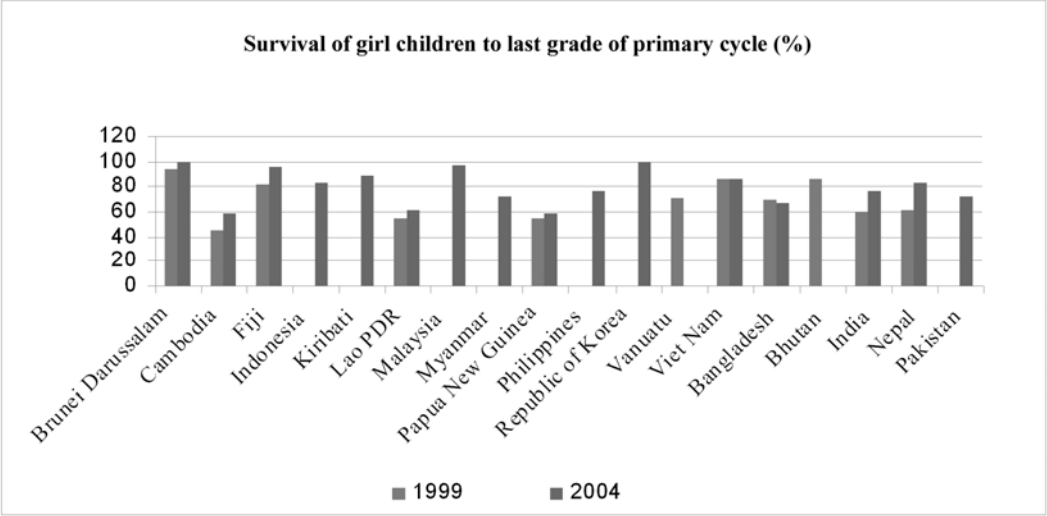


1.1.4 Improving survival rates for girls

Are schools able to retain girls for the full cycle of primary schooling? This is the most important question to be examined with respect to school outcomes. Often, entrance enrolment figures rise, but children do not complete even the first cycle of education.

Survival rates are going up in all countries; only Bangladesh shows a marginal reduction. On average, *10 per cent more girls survived until the end of the last grade of the cycle in 2004 than survived in 1999.* However, the situation is far from satisfactory, as the proportion of girls leaving school before reaching the last grade remains at approximately 30 to 40 per cent. Nevertheless, girls are showing improvement here.

Figure 4: Survival of girl children to last grade of primary cycle (%)
Source: *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008.*



Interestingly, some countries, such as Bangladesh and the Philippines, which show relatively low survival rates, have high overall gender parity scores for primary and secondary education. Almost every country provides special incentives to ensure that children, in particular girl children, complete at least primary education.

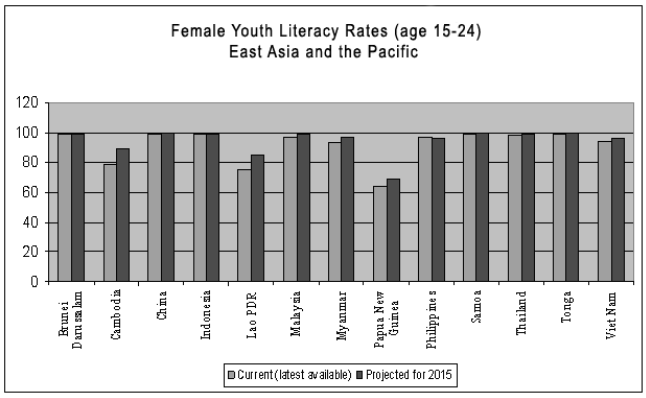
1.1.5 Female youth literacy

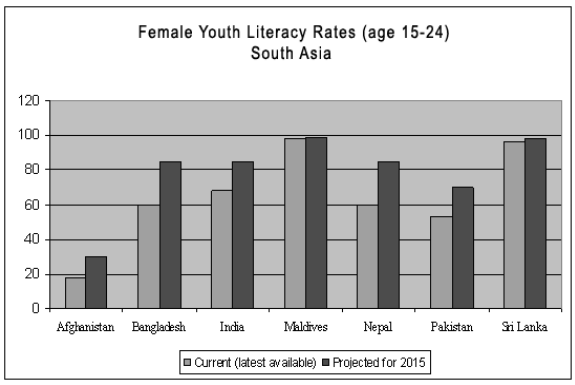
The literacy level among youth in the 15–24 age group is an effective indicator of the progress being made towards gender equality. It also reflects how effective a school system has been during the past decades in enrolling students in school and retaining them for at least the minimum number of years. Reviews of literacy figures show that adult literacy has improved in all countries of the subregions. But is the pace of improvement satisfactory?

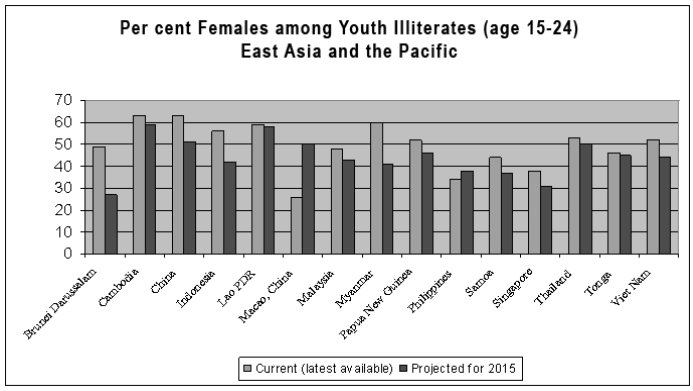
The graphs in Figure 5 indicate the possibility of reaching full female youth literacy by 2015, based on current and past levels of performance. The prospects seem to be very good in many countries. However, in East Asia and the Pacific, Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Papua New Guinea are likely to fall significantly short of meeting the goal by 2015. The situation is also unsatisfactory in South Asia, except in case of Maldives and Sri Lanka. In particular, the situation in Afghanistan, and to a considerable extent in Pakistan, is quite alarming – unless drastic steps are taken to alter the course through more focussed efforts. One positive feature is that except for Afghanistan, all countries of South Asia are likely to register a fast growth in literacy during the coming years.

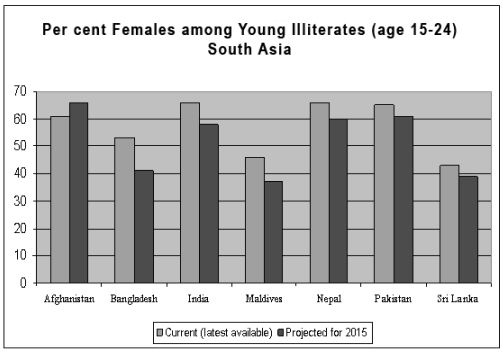
Overall, the outlook for gender equality as reflected by female youth literacy is still not very positive. In almost all the countries, even in those performing relatively well, the share of females among the total number of youth illiterates will remain high in 2015. But we must go well beyond numbers to get a more realistic snapshot of girls' progress in education.

Figure 5: Prospects of improvement in female youth literacy by 2015
Source: *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008.*









Part two: Equality in the teaching and learning processes: Are they girl-friendly enough?

Governments, non-governmental organizations and donor agencies have been working intensively during the last decade and a half to improve girls' access to formal education. These initiatives have had a clear positive impact, drawing more girls into the realm of schooling. Total numbers of girls going to school have swelled everywhere, even if in some countries many girls are still left out. But there is an increasing realization that it is necessary to go beyond merely providing access to education. The focus of the next set of actions should be on what happens to girls who manage to enrol in school, despite handicaps, and how they learn, or do not learn, as the case may be.

What does gender equality mean in education?

Assessing progress towards gender equality, unlike gender disparity, is a complex proposition. The Dakar Framework for Action for EFA does not elaborate on the operational contours of gender equality. However, there is a consensus that gender equality needs to be viewed as a cross-cutting policy goal that applies to all sectors and institutions. In terms of content, the United Nations Millennium Project has suggested that gender equality encompasses three main dimensions: (a) *capabilities*, including education, health, and nutrition; (b) *access to resources and opportunities*, including access to economic assets, such as income and employment, and to political opportunities, such as gender representation in political bodies; and (c) *security*, including reduced vulnerability to violence and conflict. Together, these dimensions contribute to women's individual well-being and enable women and girls to make strategic choices and decisions, that is, to be *empowered*.[7]

But recently, considerably more thought has gone into what gender equality in education should entail. Herz (2004) was one of the first to present a simple formula for improving gender equality in education: making girls' education affordable, making education a practical reality, making schools more girl-friendly and improving education quality.[8] UNESCO developed a Gender Equality Framework that describes four dimensions of gender equality in education – equality of access, equality in the learning process, equality of educational outcomes and equality of external results – reinforcing the need for bringing gender equality *to, within and through* education. The framework describes what each of these dimensions means, *particularly for girls*, and also illustrates practical steps education authorities can take to put them into practice (s*ee Table A1 in the Annex*).

Why does it matter to girls?

How does school quality affect girls' participation and learning? Several studies suggest that standard aspects of school quality have a stronger impact on girls' education than on boys' education[9]. For instance, a study in Bangladesh found that increases in teacher quality raise girls' enrolment or reduce their drop-out probability, while having no effect on boys. It was also observed in the same study that having separate toilet facilities for boys and girls increased girls' enrolment and improved their grades. A study in rural India reported that several measures of school quality have a larger or more significant impact on girls' primary enrolment than that of boys; the most impressive difference came from providing midday meals in schools, which raised female enrolment by 15 per cent. A study in Pakistan found that merit-based grade promotion had a greater impact on girls' school continuation than boys'. It was

> More attention needs to be paid to the educational experiences of girls because access to education of poor quality is no access at all.
> **- Heijnen-Maathuis (2008)**

also observed that in many countries, the school learning environment favoured boys over girls, for such reasons as a lack of female teachers, teachers' unfavourable treatment of girls in class, sexual harassment by male teachers or students, and curricula and textbooks presenting favourable adult role models only for boys, and that these were seen as factors across all regions.[10] Language and relevance of education was seen as a particular factor in East Asia and the Pacific.

To the extent that these factors hinder girls' ability to learn, they reduce parental incentives to invest in their daughters' education, because they reduce the benefits of a daughter's education relative to those of a son's education (in addition to potentially prompting girls' own decisions to withdraw). Addressing such considerations is critical to increasing participation of girls in a sustained fashion and contributing to enhanced levels of learning.[11] To assess more deeply the differential impacts of the quality of education on boys' and girls' learning potential, a deeper look at the indicators that assess quality in education is required. What are governments in the Asia-Pacific region doing to improve the quality of education delivered in schools and enhance learning levels for boys and for girls? This section presents a brief overview of evidence from selected countries and highlights issues for reflection emerging from this evidence.

What are the indicators? The *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008* identifies three sets of provisions that are essential to improving the quality of learning in school, both in general and for girls in particular. These are: **reforming curriculum and textbooks**; **enhancing the number and quality of teachers, including female teachers; and making the teaching-learning process itself**, including the school environment, more **child- and girl-friendly.** All have gender dimensions, challenging or reinforcing equality. All have to be particularly nuanced for impacts on girls' and boys' education.

2.1 Reforming curriculum and textbooks from a gender perspective

Revision of curriculum and textbooks has been on the agenda of almost every country of the Asia-Pacific region in the post-Dakar period. In many of them, curricula remain outmoded and *equality* as a key component of a good curriculum is often missing. Teaching and learning materials, evaluation and assessment procedures and language policy are all components of a curriculum.

> Girls are also believed to be less able to learn mathematics and science, are less interested in studies and less able to learn in general. Teachers need to ensure such bias is not self-perpetuated.
> **Bista (2006)**

Analysis of a curriculum is a useful first step in learning about quality and equality issues. It highlights the importance of asking questions regarding what girls and other previously excluded learners are being taught about themselves, whether they can effectively participate and whether the situations of girls and other learners are enhanced or diminished by the education they receive. A curriculum can reproduce ideas about caste, class, religious and ethnic identities and other divisions. Goals of some curricula are explicitly differentiated by gender.

In some countries, for example, girls are denied access to manual arts, technical subjects or higher mathematics, which can enhance their employment opportunities. If they are permitted to enrol in such courses, they often find that textbooks and teaching are geared mainly to boys. As the Beijing Platform for Action pointed out, "Science curricula in particular are gender-biased. Science textbooks do not relate to women's and girls' daily experience and fail to give recognition to women scientists." Therefore, schools and teachers must shape learning

environments in which the right of children to learn is not linked to their sex. Curriculum developers and reviewers need to develop an understanding of how learners and teachers respond to different materials.

Curriculum development in South Asia tends to be a male dominated process. "In Nepal for example most textbook writers are males with potentially inadequate sensitiveness to gender issues in education. In the then developed materials men are shown as breadwinners, doctors, principals and scientists, and women as nurses, teachers, mothers and servers of food."[12] Textbooks and curricula are being improved, often making programmes competency-based and skills-oriented. This was an explicit goal of recent reform efforts in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Cambodia and Indonesia and has received further impetus from national testing programmes in most of the countries of the region. Recasting the curriculum and textbooks has also become more learner-centred. The National Curriculum Framework developed recently in India advocates for child-centred cooperative learning. Textbooks have been recast to emphasize this approach in the teaching-learning process. Flexibility in accommodating local and cultural diversity has also guided reform efforts in several countries in East Asia, such as some parts of China, which eliminated gender stereotypes and revised teachers' guidebooks in 2004. New supplementary materials and training of curriculum writers for the life skills curriculum was undertaken in the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

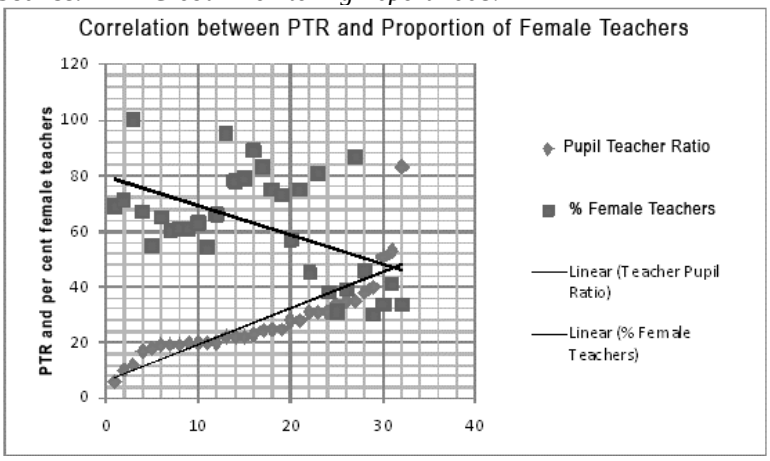
Some countries have initiated 'gender audits' of textbooks to remove stereotyping of sex roles. Mongolia did so in 2005, and in 2007, Thailand carried out a comprehensive review of student textbooks through secondary education, eliminating both the paucity and passivity given to girls and portraying more women as role models in non-traditional areas. There is now greater awareness among curriculum makers and textbook writers of the value of designing more gender-sensitive educational inputs. But taking these efforts beyond specific donor-funded projects and making them a standard feature of national policies and programmes remains a long-term goal.

Reviews of curricula in the Maldives are designed to teach teachers to change their teaching style, encouraging them to:
-present materials in everyday contexts
-enhance group work
-encourage process-oriented teaching
-be problem posers and guides not solvers.
Mohamed & Ahmed (2000)

2.2 Enhancing the number and quality of teachers: The pupil/teacher ratio and teacher training

Three questions are pertinent. First, are there enough teachers? Second, are they professionally equipped to teach effectively? Third, are they sensitive to the different needs of girl and boy students? Moving from improving access to education to improving its quality goes beyond equality of resources. Too many children now in school across the Asia-Pacific region face *unequal learning experiences.*

Figure 6: Correlation between PTR and Proportion of Female Teachers
Source: *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008.*



First, are there enough teachers? This is indicated at the aggregate level by the pupil/teacher ratio (PTR). The EFA GMR 2008 suggests that overall the primary PTR for East Asia fell to 20:1 in 2005, but with several countries much higher: Cambodia (53:1) and Philippines (35:1). South and West Asia still struggle with an average of 39:1, but with huge differentials. In the Pacific, the average PTR was lower (19:1) but with some countries, such as Papua New Guinea (35:1) and Timor-Leste (34:1) higher. Data in the EFA GMR 2008 (*see Figure 6*) show that some countries have serious problems with teacher supply, with national averages in many of them marginally worse than the overall regional average. Moreover, national averages do not give the real picture. There are large variations between schools in all these countries, which indicates that inefficient management of teacher resources is the problem, rather than availability. Further, as noted earlier, most countries are making efforts to recruit more female teachers, which poses additional complications. Interestingly, on average, countries with better teacher supply also seem to have higher proportions of female teachers, according to the EFA GMR 2008 (*see Figure 7*).

Figure 7: Pupil Teacher Ratio
Source: *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008.*

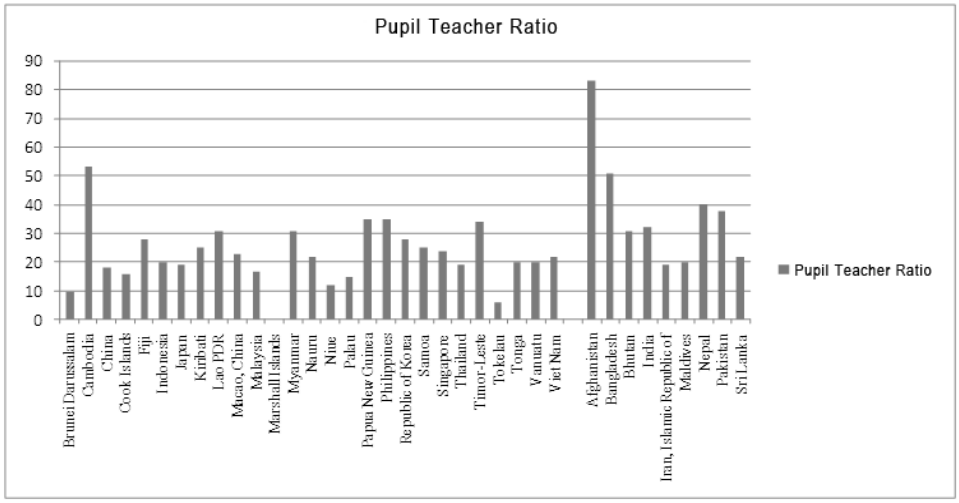


Table 2: Ethnic mismatch in Lao PDR primary schools, 2005 (Source: EFA MDA Report – Lao PDR, 2008).

	Students (%)	Teachers (%)
Lao Loum	63	81
Lao Theung	13	5
Lao Soung	24	14

Second, are teachers professionally equipped? All countries have set official qualifications for becoming a teacher. But do all primary school teachers possess the required professional training? Data on training, available for only seven countries in the East Asia and Pacific subregion, show that more than 70 per cent of teachers in those countries have professional training. But in South Asia, a lack of trained teachers is a serious problem, particularly in Nepal (only 31 per cent of teachers have professional training), Afghanistan (36 per cent), Bangladesh (48 per cent) and the Maldives (64 per cent) (GMR, 2008). Even in countries where more than 70 per cent of teachers have professional training, one finds wide variation across different regions. For instance, in India, the north-eastern states have a very low proportion of trained teachers. In most countries, hilly areas and areas inhabited by ethnic and linguistic minority groups suffer from a lack of trained teachers. The Lao People's Democratic Republic case illustrated in Table 2 highlights this imbalance. Similar situations exist in several countries for religious and linguistic minority groups.

Teachers are the central figures in improving learning in schools. It is widely acknowledged that availability of well-trained and qualified teachers in adequate numbers is the key to improving learning in schools. Throughout South Asia, teacher training and ongoing professional development of teachers (in-service training) has become a priority in the quality improvement of education. But to enable female teachers to also benefit more from in-service training and enhance their professional knowledge and skills, their specific needs must be taken more into account. Professional, institutional and family reasons continue all too often to prevent women from participating in such training courses (Bista, 2006).

Yet, as noted earlier, many poorer countries face serious shortages of qualified teachers. Several of these countries, including India, have resorted to recruiting contract teachers, most of whom are less qualified and receive lower compensation than regular teachers.[13] While such measures may be expedient to meet expanding enrolments, their long-term impact has to be carefully examined. The Global Campaign for Education argues that "a first priority should be improving the status, pay and support of teachers, especially those teachers posted to rural or 'difficult' areas"[14], where gaps still persist in reaching ethnic and minority children. Long-standing quotas for gender parity among rural teachers should be backed up with efforts to extend and improve teacher training facilities in both rural and urban areas and additional incentives and career development opportunities for female teachers willing to work in rural areas. Pre-service teacher training has also been reviewed and revised in many countries in recent years, but only to a limited extent.

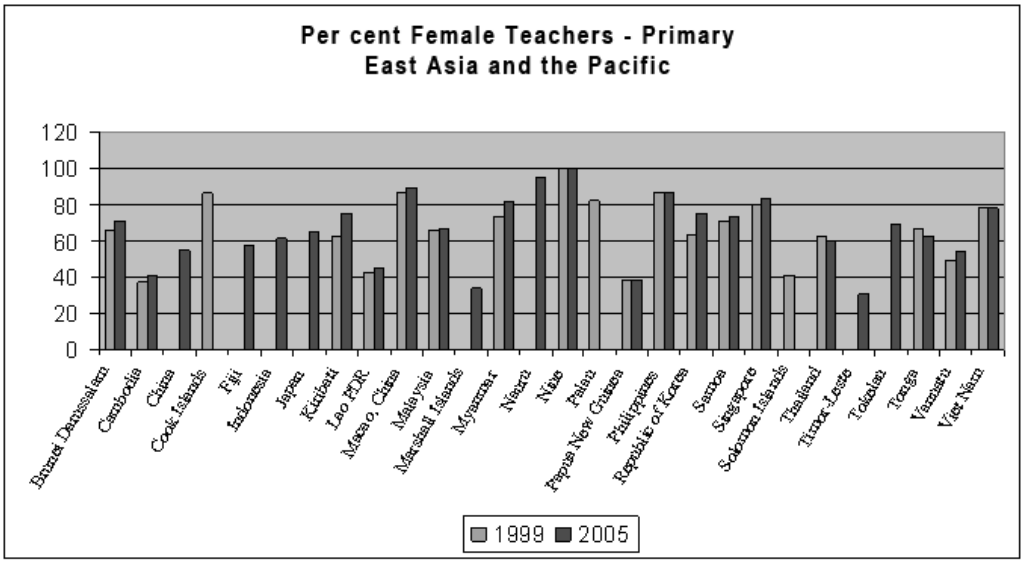
> Teachers' attitudes towards girls and boys as learners in Nepal often reveal rather stereotypical perceptions: Girls are perceived to be quiet calm and submissive and thus more easily controllable. Girls are reported to be nervous to ask questions. This belief on the part of teachers combined with a lack of action to correct such 'shyness' might contribute to poor learning on the part of girls.
> **Bista (2006)**

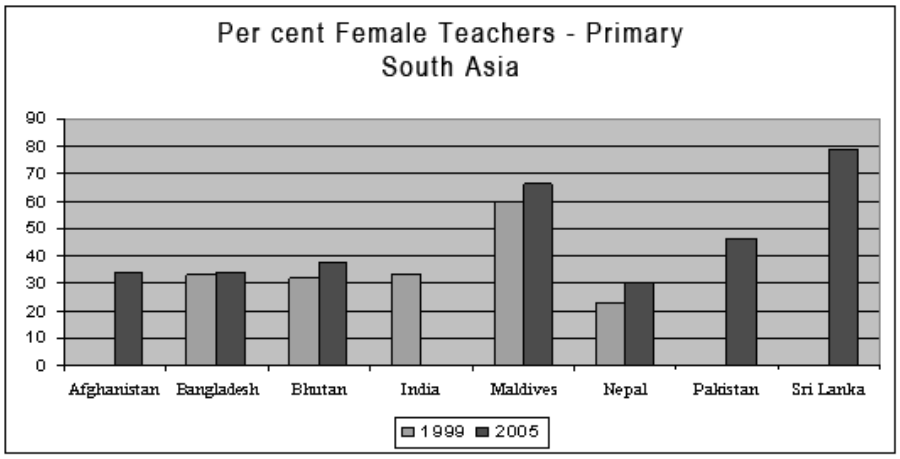
Third, are teachers sensitive to the different learning needs of boys and girls? It should be noted that gender concerns are gradually being built into the content and delivery of in-service programmes for teacher training. But current training needs to be more grounded in reality and

focus on how teachers can create gender-sensitive learning experiences where the participation and contribution of all students, in particular girls, are sought and valued, and where stereotypical views and discriminatory practices are challenged and children can learn to appreciate diversity. Teachers need to examine their own biases. Teachers may compound gender stereotyping by asking girls to make tea, wash cups or sweep floors, while boys clear brush, cut grass and carry heavy items. Studies have demonstrated that often boys are asked more questions, placed more often in priority areas of classrooms and given more leadership opportunities than girls.[15]

Are women teachers needed? It is generally assumed that women teachers provide good role models for girls in school. They allay parents' fears of security issues within the school, and their presence shows that the teaching profession is a suitable aspiration for girls currently in school. Viewed from this angle, the proportion of women teachers in the system is an important indicator of progress towards gender equality. Figures reveal that there are fewer women teachers in countries with high gender disparities. In India, almost all single-teacher schools (about 20 per cent of all schools) are staffed by men. In East Asia and the Pacific, however, many are female, reflecting a teaching profession that is highly feminized, particularly at the lower education levels.

Figure 8: Women teachers in primary schools
Source: *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008.*

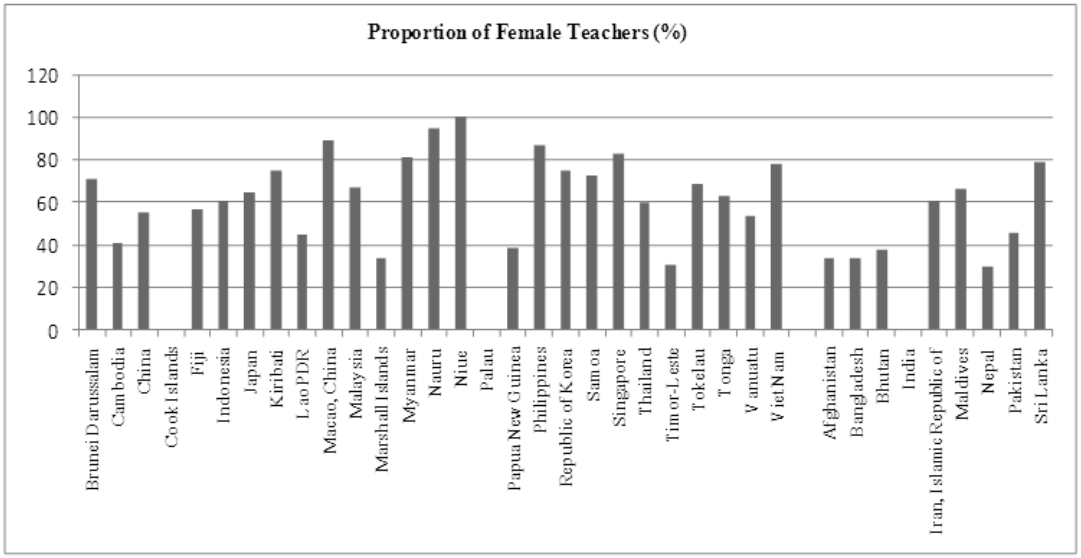




With the exception of Papua New Guinea, where teachers at all levels are mostly male, all countries for which data is available show a segregated teaching staff at different levels. All have a predominantly female teaching force at the pre-primary education level. The majority of teachers at the primary education level are also female, except in Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Marshall Islands, Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste. These countries also traditionally have more male teachers at the secondary education level, as do China and Indonesia.[16]

The proportion of women teachers at the primary stage has been steadily rising across all countries. Overall, the East Asia and Pacific group of countries presents a fairly positive picture. Of the 28 countries for which data are available, only six fail to meet the 50 per cent parity mark of male-female teachers. In contrast, prospects in South Asia are very disappointing; except for Maldives and Sri Lanka, none of the countries cross the 50 per cent mark. And the situation remained static between 1999 and 2005 in most of these countries. A possible reason for the shortage of women teachers is that female participation in secondary and tertiary schooling is

Figure 9: Proportion of Female Teachers
Source: *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008.*



quite low in most South Asian countries. It is with a view to breaking this cycle that several countries have special incentives for girls to continue studies beyond primary level and also give preference to women in teacher recruitment. The situation becomes even more complex with respect to the share of female teachers in secondary and tertiary levels, as educational institutions at higher levels require university degrees and research experience.

But what about educational governance?

Even more telling is the status of women in governance areas of education. In South and West Asia, except for the Maldives and Sri Lanka, women are seriously under-represented in the teaching profession, while there are also few female head teachers, principals, administrators and policymakers.

In East Asia, although the teaching profession is dominated by women, the limited available data seem to indicate that schools and education systems are being *managed* largely by men. In Mongolia, for example, where far higher proportions of women go on to tertiary education and women teachers outnumber their male counterparts, only 29.3 per cent of the directors and deans of general education schools, and 15.5 percent of college and university directors, are women. In Cambodia, at the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, 2005 data indicate that there are no female directors general at the central ministry level, and among deputy directors general, 6 per cent are females; women comprise a mere 7 per cent of school principals and 9 per cent of vice principals. The situation in Viet Nam's Ministry of Education and Training is similar. The percentage of female head teachers is 100 per cent for preschool education, but only 34 per cent for primary education and 21 per cent for secondary education. The numbers decrease even further at higher education levels, with women making up 7–8 per cent of college and university administrators and 4 per cent of professors. In a UNICEF study of 50 schools in Thailand, 97 per cent of the principals were men and 65 per cent of the teachers were women.[17]

In India and Bangladesh the introduction of School Sanitation and Hygiene Education (SSHE) projects has resulted in a high increase of girls' attendance over a period of some years, highlighting hygiene education as a critical aspect of a quality life skills education.
Heijnen-Maathuis (2008)

Making the school environment more girl-friendly will require greater numbers of women professionals moving up the administrative ladders.

2.3 Are school environments becoming girl-friendly?

A girl-friendly learning environment is being gradually acknowledged as critical to girls' performance in school. Examining the status of girls' education, the *State of the World's Mothers 2005* reiterates: "Girls are also deprived of education when the school environment is hostile to them (when they fear violence and intimidation in the classroom by male teachers and pupils, for example); when schools are located at a distance parents believe is too far for girls to travel safely; or when school facilities are designed in ways that girls find unacceptable (for instance, when they lack separate toilets for boys and girls)."[18] Some aspects are easier to address than others.

2.3.1 Infrastructure

All countries of the Asia-Pacific region are making serious efforts to provide proper physical facilities in schools. Yet the task is far from complete. Many schools function with less than minimal physical infrastructure. Several countries, such as Cambodia, India, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Nepal, are struggling to meet infrastructural standards that can be considered fully gender-sensitive and girl-friendly. Many are frequently ravaged by natural or civil disasters (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka), leading to displacement of large numbers of families. It is well known that quality education is the first casualty of such disasters and that women and children are the worst affected in such circumstances. Many schools in poor rural areas and urban slums, particularly in South and West Asia, lack even the basics needed to function. They frequently have far fewer resources, offer fewer hours of instruction and attain far worse results than schools in more affluent areas. Experience has shown that this matters more to the educational prospects of girls than of boys.

2.3.2 Gender-based violence

Small-scale surveys carried out in many countries show that abusive behaviour towards girls continues to be widespread in all parts of the Asia-Pacific region. Many countries have launched gender sensitization workshops for teachers and administrators to counter this problem. But

stronger sanctions against the sexual abuse and harassment of girl pupils must be enacted and enforced."[19]

Most schools in South Asia are not girl-friendly, and girls often suffer from harassment, bullying and other forms of intimidation.[20] Parents withdraw girls from school if they perceive that their daughters are not learning anything or, worse, that they are vulnerable to abuse, attack and humiliation on school grounds.[21]

The level of sanctioned violence in Asia and the Pacific is high. Teachers are considered figures of authority to be obeyed and children are expected not to question, but to adjust and comply. Students are often punished for minor 'offences', such as being tardy, wearing a torn or dirty uniform, or not being able to answer a question. Girls may be punished differently from boys, but for both, worse than the actual punishment are the feelings of failure and humiliation. The use of corporal punishment in dealing with children's behaviour reflects the lack of effective alternative techniques that professional teachers should have. Children's experiences and views regarding corporal punishment are only now slowly beginning to be heard across the region.

Gender-based violence in East Asia and the Pacific is a major issue whose magnitude is shrouded by fear and stigma. Across the Asia-Pacific region, national education and school-based initiatives offer an opportunity to confront gender-based violence and integrate measures to address it into educational curricula. Both boys and girls need opportunities to explore how traditional views of masculinity and femininity inform and shape their values. Strategies are required to empower girls and boys to embrace change and develop respectful gender relationships. But "there is little evidence of national strategies to tackle gender violence in schools. Neither have Ministries of Education incorporated topics about gender violence in the curriculum"[22]. This is a critical aspect missing in quality education.

> Schools are often sites of intolerance, discrimination and violence. Girls are proportionately the victims. Closing the gender gap means confronting sexual violence and harassment in schools.
> **EFA GMR (2003/04)**

2.3.3 Language of instruction

Some interesting data is emerging about the relationship of girls' education and the language of instruction. Research has found that girls who learn in their home language stay in school longer, are more likely to be identified as good students, do better on achievement tests and repeat grades less often than their peers who do not get home language instruction. When learners can express what they know in a language in which they are competent, and their backgrounds are valued and used in the learning process, they develop higher self-esteem and greater self-confidence, as well as higher aspirations in schooling and life (Benson, 2005). While introduction of bilingual or mother-tongue education programmes has underscored efforts in Cambodia, Indonesia and Viet Nam, *madrasa* education reform has been an important feature of efforts in Pakistan and the Philippines.

2.3.4 Pedagogical practices must change!

Are teaching-learning processes changing, becoming more effective and reflecting more sensitivity to gender differentials in their classrooms? Although there have been many improvements in school quality, gender inequality in teaching and learning processes remains a serious problem. This may be because strategies for adding gender awareness to the daily behaviour of teachers, learners and parents are not deep enough to change the real dynamic of gender perceptions and relationships in society. Changing behaviour in classrooms and transforming teacher attitudes and perspectives cannot be a short-term agenda, since change will come slowly. Difficulty in making teachers appreciate that "less vocal girls are as likely as boys to answer a question" is just one example of gender-sensitive thinking that must be inculcated at the classroom level. Changing often unintended, though culturally rooted, behaviour is challenging.[23]

> Most child victims, however, suffer violence at the hands of their parents and teachers. Often this is in the guise of 'discipline'. Even in countries where corporal punishment is banned, the practice continues. It is especially the everyday examples of verbal and sexual harassment and abuse that need to be addressed through quality education.
> **UN Study on Violence against Children (2005)**

But significant attempts are being made, although they are being applied neither systematically nor with the frequency required. Recognizing the importance of ensuring an environment that overcomes the constraints preventing girls and other disadvantaged learners from accessing and staying in schools, lessons from various experiences have led to the promotion of child-friendly schools (CFS), joyful education movements and inclusive learning-friendly environments (ILFE). These are rights-based and holistic concepts of education, translating the Convention on the Rights of the Child into educational practice. See Tables A1 and A2 in the Annex for a description of these key elements.

And countries of the region are responding. The Government of Pakistan has chosen 2,000 schools to transform into child-friendly schools and trained teachers accordingly. Sri Lanka is reforming primary education, and Nepal is using child-centred methods for out-of-school project classes. As Jha (2004) describes, the National Programme for Education of Girls in India introduced flexible learning packages, suitable for children in different circumstances, to provide quality education and boost self-esteem. In each cluster of villages, a model girl-friendly school was established and provided with innovative learning equipment, games, books and films. Skills such as riding bicycles and life skills were encouraged, as were supplementary teaching materials that included stories enhancing women as role models. Nutrition, gender and legal issues were added to the curriculum. As the model school in the cluster, the school and its girl-friendly infrastructure was used extensively in teacher training.

But child-centred education is relatively new, often fragmented in its application and too often perceived as difficult and time-consuming in practice, especially by teachers not sufficiently trained in its methodology. By and large, most countries of the Asia-Pacific region rely on traditional teacher-centred classrooms, with programmes forcing teachers to 'teach to the test' and learners to memorize facts in order to pass examinations. This, too, has consequences for girls' educational performance and outcomes as we shall see in Part Three.

> Education does not thrive in an atmosphere in which children live in fear of those who teach them. Teacher education needs to focus upon how teachers can use methods and facilitate processes that are transformational rather than reproducing gender prejudice and discrimination.
> **Heijnen-Maathuis (2008)**

Part three: Learning outcomes: Is there equality through education?

Equality of educational outcomes means that girls and boys enjoy equal opportunities to achieve and that their outcomes are based on their individual talents and efforts.

Results from classroom tests, national examinations, and international assessments can influence boys' and girls' confidence levels and their perceptions of their own abilities and the expectations placed upon them. Where tests or examinations are used to determine promotion to higher grades, the extent to which there may be gender bias in these mechanisms is an important consideration when trying to ensure equality of access and equality of outcomes. "Test scores alone do not indicate whether the playing field has been levelled and girls and boys have equitable opportunities to achieve, because even when girls and boys are performing at the same rates, test scores can still mask inequitable treatment. These findings reinforce the importance of understanding classroom dynamics and what knowledge, skills, and attitudes are being transferred to students and how these can limit their future career choices and future earnings."

And "poor marginalized children are more dependent on their teachers for learning than better-off children. As a result, poor instruction/assessment perpetuates inequalities because it is more often the most marginalized children who become school leavers.[24]"

What are the indicators for learning achievements?

Concrete indicators such as educational inputs (hours of instruction, budgets) and the incidence of early childhood education (ECE) can strongly influence overall educational outcomes. Some more subjective indicators, such as competencies gained by boys and girls and assessment/testing modes, can be more nuanced to reveal gender issues and tell us more about the 'equality of outcomes' for girls. Moreover, post-education indicators, such as women's labour-force participation rates and their differential wage earnings, as well as their representation in governance, can shed even more light on 'gendered outcomes' *through education.*

3.1 Educational inputs to outputs

The EFA indicative framework suggests an ideal of 850 hours of instruction annually and education budgets at 4.7 per cent of GNP for all developing countries. How do countries of Asia-Pacific fare here?

In South and West Asia, the share of public expenditure in education was 3.5 per cent in 2005, with a low of 2.45 per cent (Pakistan) and a high of 7.5 per cent (Maldives). Instructional hours were hampered by widespread absenteeism of teachers, poor infrastructure and conflict in many countries.

> Boys and girls have different thinking and learning styles. Teachers who recognize and address such differences can teach students more effectively. **Heijnen-Maathuis (2008)**

In East Asia, half the countries devoted less than 3 per cent of GNP to educational spending, with a low of 2 per cent (Indonesia and Cambodia) and a high of 6 per cent (Malaysia). Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia and Korea increased their shares, while Thailand decreased its share. Instructional hours ranged just below the global median, but inefficient use of classroom time had a detrimental effect on outcomes.

The Pacific showed all countries above the world median of 4.9 per cent of GNP, with differences such as Tonga and Australia at 4.9 per cent and Vanuatu at 10 per cent. Instructional hours varied.

3.2 Early childhood education: Is primary school too late for many girls?

Research has shown that socially and economically marginalized children stand to benefit most from early childhood education (GMR, 2008). There is increasing empirical evidence to suggest that by the time children reach school age, it might already be difficult to stop certain types of exclusion. A large body of literature in neuroscience, psychology and cognition makes the case for early childhood interventions. In particular, it is clearly established that nutrition and cognitive stimulation early in life are crucial for long-term skill development outcomes.[25]

For girls this is particularly important. Providing preschool or childcare programmes may promote girls enrolment and learning by reducing the need for girls to care for siblings.[26] Thus, the learning cycle starts well before the formal entry of the child to the primary school. Preschool education is further seen as facilitating the process of socialization and self-control necessary to make the most of classroom learning outcomes.[27]

The EFA GMR 2008 shows ECE rates varying across the Asia-Pacific region. East Asia and the Pacific reported a GER of 43 per cent (a decrease of 4 per cent since 1999) and a GPI of 0.95. In the Pacific, while ECE has been receiving more attention, much remains to be done, as pre-primary education remains low, particularly among the disadvantaged in Fiji, Timor-Leste and Tonga. In South and West Asia, there has been an increase of 15 per cent in GERs for pre-primary education, with most countries, such as Bangladesh (11 per cent), increasing participation, but in Afghanistan the rate is only 1 per cent. India, under the banner of its Integrated Child Development Scheme, has a massive programme to provide developmental support to children in the 0–6 years age group. In East Asia, school readiness programmes and attaching preschool classes to primary schools have been used to increase girls' opportunities for education by freeing them from the necessity of looking after younger siblings; this has been done in Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and many other countries.[28] But overall progress remains quite slow, commitment of resources is inadequate and high pupil/teacher ratios often compromise quality.

3. 3 Are boys and girls learning in schools?

Learning should be the central objective of education. Yet there is no systematic evidence about the performance of school systems on this indicator. Neither the East Asia and Pacific subregion nor the South and West Asia subregion has conducted multicountry comparative surveys to throw light on this issue. However, several countries have begun conducting national surveys to assess the status of learning achievement among schoolchildren. (*See Table A3 in the Annex.*) Again, there are no means of ascertaining whether and how the authorities have been using the results of such surveys to improve teaching effectiveness and learning outcomes in schools or to differentiate learning outcomes by gender.

Sample studies conducted in some countries indicate that the situation is far from satisfactory. For example, in a survey conducted in 2006 in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, only 1 per cent of children completing fifth grade were found to have reached a level of competency in mathematics that would allow them to continue their studies; the corresponding figure for language was 17 per cent.[29] In a study in Pakistan, a bare majority of children tested at the end of third grade had mastered the first grade mathematics curriculum, and only 31 per cent could correctly form a sentence with the word 'school' in the vernacular (Urdu).[30] One of the key

findings of a survey[31] conducted in 28 states in India was that 47 per cent of children in class five could not even read a class two text fluently.[32]

3.3.1 Are there gender differences in testing and assessments methodologies?

Just as girls and boys have different learning styles, emerging evidence shows that they react to different assessment styles, too. Assessments can help us understand which students learn best, and under which conditions, and with such knowledge their learning can be enhanced, if attention is paid to outcomes as well as to the experiences that lead to those outcomes. Achievement is important, but to improve achievements we need to know about the *student experience along the way* – about the curricula, teaching and kind of student effort that lead to a particular outcome. Girls, for example, tend to respond better to more collaborative and participatory pedagogies. Assessment can be a powerful tool for quality improvement in education provided it is used as a means of *enhancing learning*, rather than for selecting out 'poor achievers'.[33]

The kind of assessment that dominates in most schools in Asia-Pacific is summative, which waits until the end of a teaching unit to find out how well students have learned. Alternate methods are 'authentic' and formative assessment, but these need to have schools to support the learning process and then to observe the *progress* of students. For girls and socially marginalized learners, studies show it may help if teachers focus on performance indicators rather than just attainment measures. In Bhutan, for example, teachers are trained to use continuous formative assessment (CFA) to monitor and support student learning by means of observation techniques, learning logs, portfolio reviews and feedback. [34]

Teachers must be trained to understand how their perceptions or expectations of male and female students may influence how they assess students' progress, mark examinations and provide feedback. The box below suggests a few.

A number of interventions have been recently suggested to improve the equality of gender outcomes in testing and assessments:

- Include an assortment of question types (prose, diagrams, charts, pictures, tables) when developing test, examination or assessment questions to respond to the diversity in students' learning styles.
- Use various question types (multiple choice, essay, short answer) and weigh the test items to ensure that students with different learning styles have equal opportunities to succeed.
- Balance classroom assessment methods to evaluate group and individual work using verbal and written evaluation tools.
- Review existing tests, examinations and assessments to determine whether the examples and language used are free of gender bias and stereotypes. Remove any gender-specific content and ensure that examples reflect a balance in girls' and boys' experiences.[35] USAID (2008)

3.3.2 Are there gender differences in learning outcomes? Attitude can matter!

The 2006 PISA results shed light on the difficulties encountered in examining boys' and girls' attitudes to learning content and subject areas, which ultimately impact on achieving gender equality in outcomes. Mathematics scores, where boys only fared slightly better than girls, were a case in point. While girls reported less interest, confidence and motivation for the future use of mathematics, as well as increased apprehension in its learning, boys exhibited greater confidence and less anxiety associated with learning mathematics. (USAID, 2008)

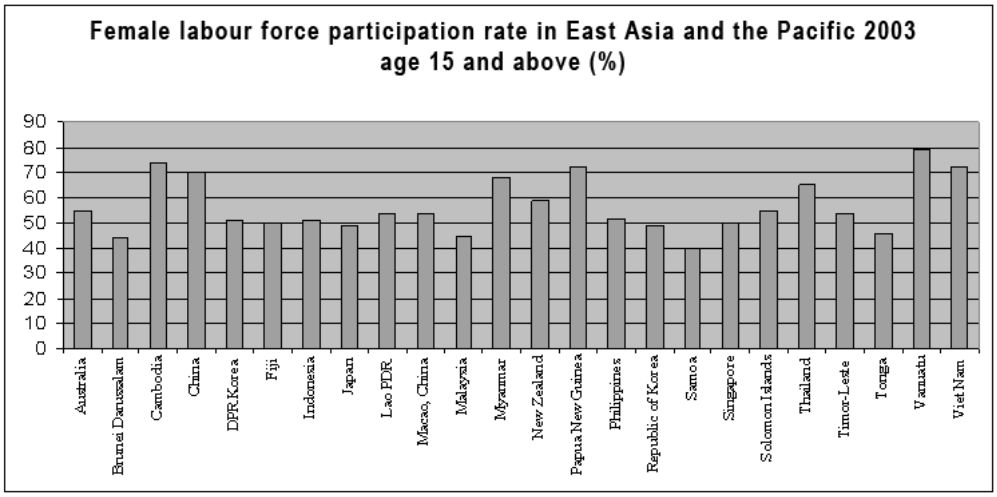
While it is difficult to conclude from these assessments if there is any significant gender difference in learning outcomes, international assessments indicate that girls consistently perform better than boys in language test scores, even in countries with significant gender disparities in enrolment. Although boys have long appeared to outperform girls in mathematics, in most surveys at all grades, differences in favour of girls are appearing.[36] One interesting study, Trends in International Mathematics and Science (TIMMS) 2003, showed "essentially no gender difference in mathematics and girls outperformed boys in Singapore and the Philippines."[37]

But overall across Asia-Pacific, one factor emerges that is gender-related. Poor learning *achievement in primary school affects the education prospects of girls more than boys.* While most families view sending boys to schools as an inevitable and normal practice, regardless of what and how much they learn, the same families question the value of sending girls to school, without a direct pay-off. Does increased education pay off for girls? Is there equality through education?

3.4 Transition from school to work. Is there a pay-off?

It is well known that around the world women continue to bear the burden of caring for children, staying at home or alongside agricultural activities, and participating in unaccounted and unpaid labour. It is also well established that women's participation in labour is critical for poverty alleviation and social empowerment in general. Although much has been written about the opportunity cost of children attending school, very little empirical work looks closely at the social

Figure 10: Female labour force participation
Source: *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008.*



and economic costs of denying half the population employment opportunities – or, for that matter, the benefits that accrue to girls and women upon completion of schooling.

Overall, the participation level of women in wage labour for different countries of the two subregions reveals a similar story (*see Figure 10).* Surprisingly, female labour participation in India is among the lowest, despite the country's high economic growth during recent years. Sri Lanka scores much lower in comparison to Bangladesh and Nepal in spite of higher educational levels among women. Similarly, Cambodia and Papua New Guinea remain far behind in both economic and educational progress but are far above most other countries in terms of female labour participation. Recent figures for China show 70 per cent labour force participation, reflecting the high growth in manufacturing and the use of women's labour in factories and assembling export goods.

While progress in one domain (such as education) should improve women's chances of success in other domains (such as employment), gender biases or other factors can weaken or break these links. For example, patterns of gender segregation in labour markets can limit women's employment prospects even if they have comparable educational backgrounds to men. Because gender inequities exist on many levels, different policy initiatives may be needed to promote gender equality in different sectors and institutions.[38]

Figure 11: Employees in non-agricultural wage employment who are women, 1990 and 2005 (%)
Source: United Nations, *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2007*, UN, New York, 2007.

Comparing the participation of women in non-agricultural wage employment across regions of the world, one finds that the performance of East and South-East Asia is high on the scale, recording an average of about 40 per cent in 2005, thus, surpassing the world average of 39 per cent participation. In contrast, South Asia stands at the bottom of the league, with women accounting for only 18 per cent of the non-agricultural labour force in 2005.

3.5 Political participation

Participation of women in political processes and decision-making is seen as one of the most critical factors that can significantly boost progress towards gender equality.

Two points in this regard need to be noted. First, participation in parliament and other political forums of governance acts in tandem with other factors in a virtuous circle: Achieving high levels of education for girls and women leads to an increase in their participation in government, which in turn leads to greater efforts to promote girls' education. When more girls go to school and more women participate in government, countries tend to embrace policies that benefit children without bias.[39] "Expanded educational

opportunities for females goes along with a social structure that is generally more participatory and hence, more receptive to democracy."[40]

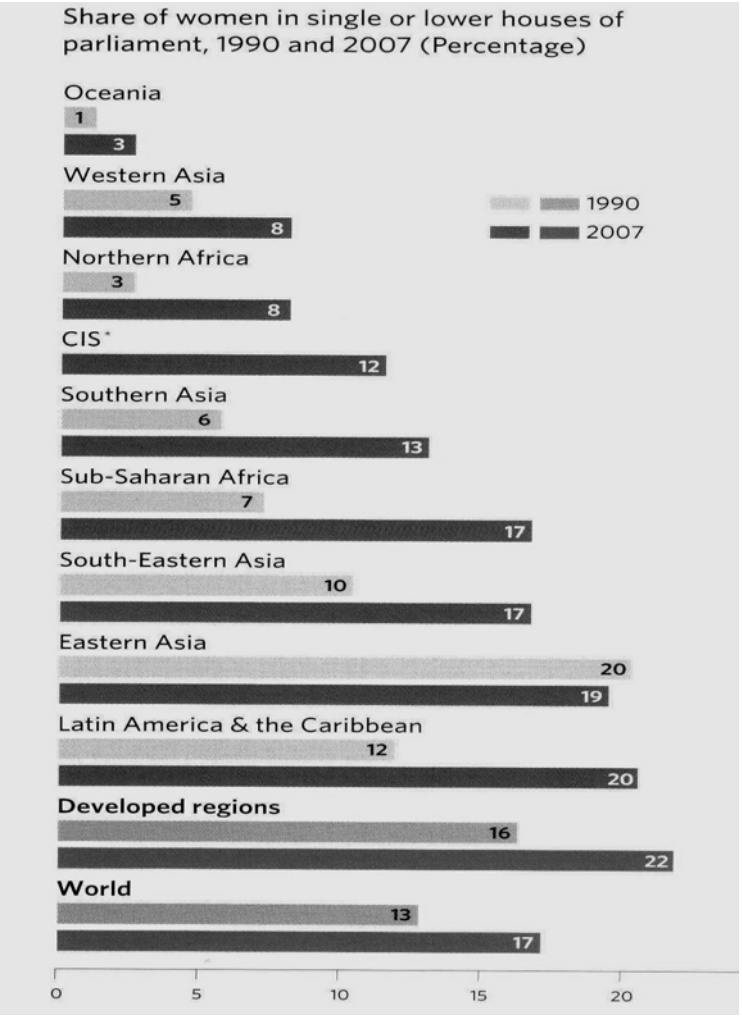
So, how has this translated into pay-offs for girls?

In the Pacific, the EFA GMR 2008 states that despite higher rates of girls' attendance at tertiary levels of education, with a regional GPI of 1.24 in 1999 moving to 1.31 in 2005,[41] minimal access of women to certain fields of study and jobs, salary gaps and lack of political representation demonstrate persistent gender inequality in outcomes.

In South and West Asia, the same report suggests that despite the fact that women now represent the majority of students enrolled in tertiary education, they tend to be concentrated in traditionally 'feminine' fields. In most countries with data, they account for less than one third of students in scientific subjects at tertiary level but over two thirds in the humanities, social sciences and health-related disciplines. Women's narrowing the gender gap in education does not automatically translate into equality between women and men. Salary gaps and differential access to particular occupations and political representation are evidence of enduring gender inequality. Overall, gender equality outcomes remain elusive.

In East Asian countries, gender disparities remain at the tertiary level, with a GPI of 0.92 in 2005, though there are country-level differences. But reducing gender disparities in education does not appear to automatically translate into equality between women and men, especially in certain fields of study. Sex-stereotypical jobs and lack of political representation are evidence of enduring gender inequality in East Asia as well. There, too, overall gender equality remains elusive.

Figure 12: Women in parliament
Source: United Nations, *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2007*, UN, New York, 2007.



In 2008, an East Asia and Pacific Regional UNGEI study, 'The Gender Dimensions of the School to Work Transition', examined three countries to determine if educational achievement resulted in women finding more and better work in relation to their education. In all three countries (Indonesia, Philippines and Viet Nam), findings were similar; that is, few opportunities existed for women to gain wage parity with men, jobs were fairly segregated by gender and unemployment fell disproportionately on women despite their often higher levels of education.

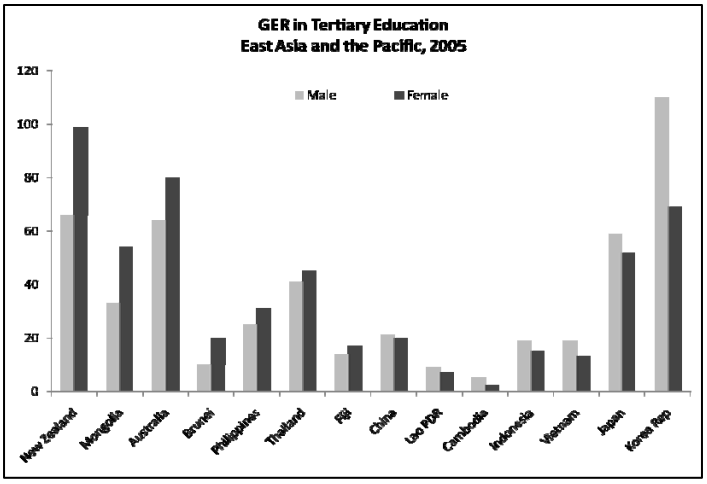
There were interesting similarities. In Indonesia, despite considerable success in closing the gender gap at primary and secondary levels and enhancing it at tertiary level, women found it very difficult to enter the formal labour market, and when they did, it was at low-paying and low-skilled jobs. In 2005, the estimated earned income for females was US$2,410, versus US$5,280 for males. And only a low percentage of women made it into high managerial or political positions. The conclusion? "While Indonesia is making gains in gender parity in education, these gains are not yet translating into better labour market outcomes for young women."[42]

In the Philippines, the GPI at 0.99 in primary school increases to 1.1 in favour of girls in secondary education and to 1.2 in tertiary education, but the ratio of males to females in employment is 1.6, indicating a significantly higher propensity for males to be employed. Of the unemployed females, 44 per cent had tertiary level education. In services, women predominate over men by 25 percentage points; in industry, the percentage of men and women tends to be equal, but jobs predominate in the electronic and garment industries, where women are over-represented in the low-paying positions compared to men, despite their higher education. Their estimated income is US$3,883 compared to men's US$6,375.

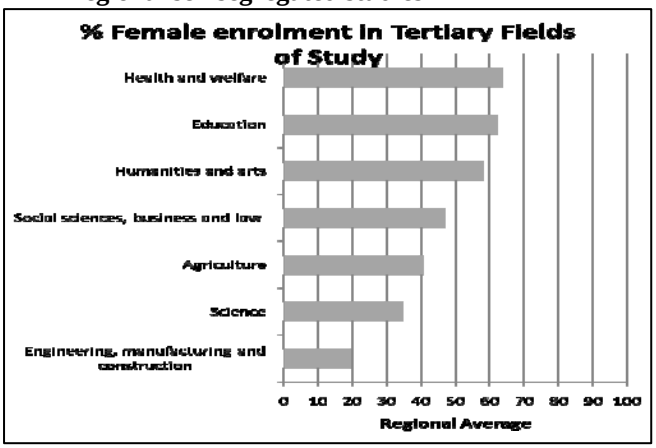
Viet Nam scored .94 on the GPI for primary education and is close to achieving gender parity in secondary education. But while Viet Nam has one of the highest labour force participation rates for women, women find themselves over-represented in low-skilled occupations with poor pay and in the informal sector or in agriculture.[43] The wage scale for women was US$2,540 to men's US$3,604, reflecting government policies to close the wage gap. Private sector employment for women is limited by open discrimination in the recruitment processes.

All in all, the study showed that "young women already face serious disadvantages at the onset of their transition to the workforce," despite their education.[44]

Figure 13:
East Asian GER in Tertiary Education
Source UNGEI EAPRO



EAP Regional sex-segregated studies



Part four: Persistent challenges and emerging good practice

Every country in Asia, with very few exceptions, has improved enormously in recent years in bringing more girls into school and reducing gender disparities at primary and secondary levels. Yet there is no scope for complacency. Many countries have inefficient, poor-quality schools that hamper progress, even in improving participation rates, let alone retaining students, especially the hard-to-reach and disadvantaged. This section describes persistent challenges that form critical priorities for action, and is organized around the same three (to, in and through education) areas, namely: access and retention, equality of learning and learning outcomes. It targets the hard-to-reach and excluded, largely girls, and illustrates some good-practice strategies that have worked effectively with this target group in many countries of the Asia-Pacific region.

Getting the policy right

Many countries have established laws and mechanisms to provide free education for all, reinforcing equality among gender, class, caste, ethnic, linguistic and regional affiliations. Yet, as the Dakar Declaration and several other international conventions emphasize, it is necessary to create a comprehensive rights framework for providing education on a non-discriminatory basis, with gender equality as an integral requirement in all policies and programmes. To be effective, this framework has to be supported adequately by legislative measures. This has been seen in attempts at 'gender mainstreaming' within education systems. These attempts have included gender audits, gender budgeting and other such instruments that have come into vogue. But such policy formulations are not sufficient if suitable institutional mechanisms are not created to oversee and monitor the policies. The Lao People's Democratic Republic has set up specific bodies tasked with monitoring gender parity in education. Indonesia has created a dedicated unit within the education ministry responsible for ensuring that gender equity is planned for and monitored, in consultation with the Coordinating Ministry of Women's Empowerment.[45] One example of good practice that stands out was undertaken in Cambodia (*see below*).

Good practice: The Cambodian Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport developed a model of gender mainstreaming to enhance the country's gender equality educational outcomes. A Quality Assurance Scheme was initiated to apply standards to a range of areas. An Inter-ministerial Gender Working Group and a Steering Committee on Gender and Girls' Education report regularly on progress in achieving Goal 5 of the EFA. A Gender Mainstreaming Strategic Plan with both qualitative and quantitative indicators was disseminated to central, provincial and district education staff. A range of affirmative action strategies were undertaken to encourage a supply of future female teachers and administrators. Gender responsiveness was one of six core dimensions implemented in child-friendly schools. Gender assessments were carried out in 24 provinces with impressive results. These included a female trainee intake of more than half. (Presentation by Cambodia at UNGEI meeting, Nepal, 2008)

Improving sex-disaggregated indicators and databases

Disaggregation of data by sex is critical, not only to assess progress, but to devise strategies for reaching the invisible and neglected out-of-school children within a specific context. Merely gathering information at the national level, even with sex disaggregation, is not adequate, because internal variations constitute a major challenge in most countries. Sex disaggregation must be carried out with respect to social groups, ethnic and linguistic minorities, and remote and historically underdeveloped geographical areas. This is important because gender disadvantage appears to become more entrenched as the marginalized status of the social group to which girls

belong increases.[46] And it is a critical requirement, as analysis of field data shows a close nexus between gender inequality and poverty, social discrimination and geographical disadvantage.[47]

Good practice: A community-based monitoring system was enacted in the Philippines as a part of a Poverty and Economic Policy (PEP) Research Network initiative. The system collects data at the local level for use by local and national governments and civil society organizations in measuring and tracking poverty levels, determining their causes and formulating and assessing impact-appropriate remedial policies. Data collecting and monitoring are done with the participation the community. A core set of indicators track basic needs, and these can be adapted to suit very specific needs, such as for education. The system can track the proportion and location of households with children in specific age ranges not attending school, their poverty and nutrition levels, type of housing. It uses the community to validate the data findings, which are then collectively used for analysis, planning and implementation purposes.
Source: <www.pep-net.org>

Area one: Enhancing access and participation of marginalized groups

Intensive efforts have been made in the last decade and a half to bring more girls to school. There is now an urgent need to focus more on pockets of hard-to-reach and marginalized children, especially girl children. Proactive policies and actions are needed to level the playing field, so that girls – especially poor girls, street children or those living at the lower rungs of class and caste hierarchies – can benefit from educational expansion as much as or in greater measure than boys. As enrolments continue to expand, special efforts will be needed to meet the schooling needs of these hard-to-reach girls, at the entry level but even more at higher levels, to ensure that they continue and complete schooling. A number of actions offer opportunities for scaling-up. These include:

Building schools at a safe walking distance: Building more schools and hiring additional teachers has been the core agenda pursued in recent years. A new concern has been added: Is the location safe enough for the girl to walk? This concern has meant bringing schools closer to habitations and has been a critical element in increasing enrolment and eliminating the non-participation in particular of girls in rural and remote areas at the first stage of schooling. A closer location has also helped to counter cultural resistance in several countries where parents hesitate to allow their daughters to go outside the home alone and often legitimately fear for their safety. Some countries, such as India and the Lao People's Democratic Republic, have established residential schools to augment these efforts, particularly to meet the educational needs of ethnic minority groups, many of whom live in remote and small habitations.

Good practice: The Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) in Madhya Pradesh in India was launched in 1997 to increase access to school for children from scheduled caste and tribal communities. The 'guarantee' was that if parents put in a request with the local authorities for a school in their community, the state government would provide it. The government in Madhya Pradesh set up 28,000 new schools with a low pupil/teacher ratio (25:1) to draw in marginalized community children. The community provided locations for the schools within the community itself. Since these schools are so close by, many parents have taken their children out of the formal school system and put them in EGS schools. Notwithstanding difficulties in providing quality education, the EGS has been hailed as "one of the most innovative national models for community based schooling in India"[48]

Designing bridge programmes to mainstream out-of-school children: In spite of all efforts, many girls continue to drop out of school before completing even primary schooling. Should they be abandoned? In order to ensure that they do not miss out on education altogether, 'bridge' programmes have been designed to re-channel relatively older out-of-school girls into the mainstream of schooling. Bridge schemes, which require attending intensive residential and non-residential camps for a few months to a year, have been quite successful, particularly in South Asia. Through these programmes, children are not only equipped with cognitive competencies to re-enter mainstream schools at appropriate grades, but they also receive training in life skills.

Good practice: The BRAC Adolescent Primary School (BAPS) model in Bangladesh offers a 'second chance' primary education for older children (11–14 years) who are not likely to make the transition into secondary schools. For some years this 'bridge' course provided a three-year condensed primary education. But it has now been expanded to a four-year full primary education course. BRAC bridge schools teach the same 53 competencies as government schools but use more interactive teaching. BRAC focuses on poor children in conservative rural areas, particularly girls who have not gone to school or who have been withdrawn. The model recognizes the practical and cultural needs these children face and has established approaches that demonstrably work to bridge the transition to the formal system.

Placing the community at the centre of action: Recognizing that merely creating school facilities based on externally determined criteria has not ensured the full participation of girls, the process has been reversed in several settings to guarantee the opening of schools or additional facilities in response to community demand. Approaches adopted under BRAC in Bangladesh and Lok Jumbish and Janasala in India, as well as the participatory planning exercises done in the Lao People's Democratic Republic and other countries, demonstrate this principle. In many countries, village education committees and school management committees mobilize parents to send children to school and ensure their involvement in the governance aspects. By placing the community at the centre of planning and action, a sense of ownership and accountability is created among parents, who utilize the facilities fully and effectively. It also assures parents that their girl children are in safe hands.

Good practice: In Bhutan, community schools have been critical to reaching students, especially girls, in remote areas. These schools, which began as an extension of primary schools in nearby villages, provide girls with primary education opportunities relatively close to their homes. The government provides the teachers and learning materials, but management and supervision remain in the hands of parents and the community. The onus then is on the community to ensure that the children enrol. There are 188 community schools, of which 89 per cent are in rural and remote areas and 11 per cent in urban and semi-urban areas. Such community primary schools are one of the most important ways of increasing access to primary schools in remote locations. Girls make up 47 per cent of the total student body in these schools. (UNICEF, *The State of South Asia's Children,* 2005)

Expanding outreach through alternate modes of schooling: Yet another strategy that has helped improve participation of hard-to-reach children, particularly working children, is the adoption of a flexible policy on modes and mechanisms of delivery. A variety of structures, such as alternate schools, informal centres, community schools, satellite schools and so on, have emerged in recent years, significantly enhancing the participation of previously non-attending girls in many countries. In fact, some governments are also viewing this as a viable option for expanding schooling to hitherto unreached groups. Appointing teachers from the local community,

invariably women, to such schools has helped overcome the resistance of traditional parents for whom girls' participation in schooling is culturally alien.

But caution is necessary. Over-reliance on this process may lead to an informal but implicit legitimization of limited, non-formal education for girls, and subsequently to the recruitment of female teachers who are rewarded with low pay and few career prospects. Formal and full primary school opportunities are then given to boys. Non-traditional schools need to develop clear linkages with the formal system so that they do not become 'ghettos' for girls and poor students.

Good practice: CINI ASHA, a unit of India's Child in Need Institute, was launched in 1989 in Kolkata in West Bengal, to improve the quality of education for child labourers, street children and the children of sex workers. Its goal was to ultimately "mainstream" these children by addressing their needs through community-based preparatory centres at local youth clubs that prepared children for the formal education system. Coaching centres to assist students who had made the transition to government schools proved very successful in decreasing drop-out rates and improving student performance. Residential camps for harder-to-reach child labourers provided an improved learning environment. Success was attributed to the close relationships forged between the centres' teachers and teachers in formal schools, who regularly consulted and exchanged curriculum and kept standards intact. (UNICEF, *The State of South Asia's Children*, 2005)

Reducing the cost burden: International reviews show that school fees contribute to the continuing exclusion of poor, rural girls. When parents can afford to keep only one child in school, daughters usually lose out.[49] Most countries in Asia have, indeed, abolished tuition fees, or they provide fee exemptions for poor students; some countries provide this exemption specifically for girls throughout their school career. But tuition fees are not the only financial burden that poor families have to bear. They have to pay for textbooks, notebooks, transportation and school uniforms, all of which are apart from the 'opportunity costs' involved, which is more than simply the income lost from paid child labour. In particular, the issue of girls as sibling caregivers – its impact on family income and its negative impact on the girl's school participation – requires serious consideration. Cash transfers, scholarship programmes and free food/textbooks have all been tried, though the management of many of these programmes has proved questionable. On the whole, rather than hurriedly seeing the impact of incentives on school attendance as the criterion of their success or failure, they should be seen as part of a larger package of social protection specifically targeting girls and poor households.

Good practice: Several countries have adopted programmes of 'direct cash transfer' to families (India, Bangladesh) or scholarships (Nepal). In most cases, these are conditional transfers depending on the regularity of the girl's participation in school, and studies show that these measures have a positive impact on girls' school attendance. Other countries have introduced non-monetary support to girls in the form of free uniforms and textbooks. Some countries also offer nutritional food supplements in school to offset the disadvantages of dietary imbalances and malnutrition, which are serious handicaps for girls' development and learning abilities.

Expanding opportunities for secondary schooling: As they have with primary school, several governments have initiated incentive schemes to get more girls enrolled in secondary school. Offering girls stipends to enrol has been particularly effective – they not only increase enrolment but also offer an incentive to complete primary school. They have several concomitant advantages. For instance, in Bangladesh, districts where secondary school bursaries were offered

experienced a sharp decrease in child marriages.[50] A similar scheme in India indirectly encourages families to redress the alarming population imbalance caused by a preference for sons by giving stipends only to families with a single girl child. As the UN Millennium Project has persuasively argued, secondary and higher levels of education provide the highest returns for women's empowerment in terms of employment opportunities and impact on age of marriage, fertility and health, as well as on the health and education of children (especially girls). Irrespective of the underlying motivation, secondary school stipends will probably have a positive indirect effect on primary enrolment for girls, which would increase the pressure to expand secondary schools.[51] One innovative example of good practice combined getting girls back to secondary school with relevant life skills education.

Good practice: In Bangladesh the Female Secondary School Stipend programme asked girls to attend 75 per cent of the school year, achieve at least 45 per cent grades and remain unmarried. By 1998, more than 800,000 girls were receiving stipends. Recent research, controlling for other influences, shows that providing the stipend programme for an additional year boosts girls' enrolments by 12 per cent. More girls are going on to college and marrying later. Girls were further empowered by managing their own stipends and thus learning banking skills. (Herz, 2006)

Area two: Improving school equality with a gender perspective

This area explores inequitable practices within schools. These are more challenging, as they include levels of teacher attention, expectations and valuing; differential treatment within the classroom (e.g., seating arrangements, delegation of chores); and often unequal access to school spaces, resources and facilities. Are programmes and strategies in place to counter the negative effect of such factors that cause inequity in quality? Are they addressing hard-to-reach children and minority and indigenous children, especially girls? Many countries realize that the quality factor is missing, and in parts of Asia-Pacific there have been innovative practices to overcome the rote learning aspects of traditional teacher-oriented education. These involve:

Creating child-friendly/girl-friendly school environments: Studies show that a large number of boys and girls leave school midway through their education because of the uncongenial conditions in many schools. So, more attention must be paid to making the school environment child- and girl-friendly. Using the agency of the teacher to transform classroom processes with a gendered perspective requires a fundamental shift in school governance. The real test of a safe environment lies in the attitude of the teachers, the way they deal with children and steer their classrooms. Though workshops for teachers are periodically organized in most countries, they have yet to become vehicles that effectively implement a transformative agenda with the long-term goal of influencing the attitudes and values of teachers and administrators, both male and female. This becomes a major challenge because it requires new skill sets and attitudes among all the stakeholders.

Good practice: In the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the LABEP project focussed on creating an integrated quality education improvement system. The primary goal of the project was to improve access of girls from ethnic minority groups to five years of primary school. Several strategies were applied to ensure a girl-friendly environment. Community mobilization took place to raise awareness of the importance of education. This was followed materials development that included age-appropriate learning materials, especially for children who did not speak the national language, a common barrier for minority children, in particular girls. Further steps were taken to improve the quality of pre-service training for teachers and local trainees drawn from the same ethnic minority groups to better understand and apply child-friendly practices. Results showed LABEP increased access and retention rates significantly and that more minority girl children were attending and remaining at school, even at double the national survival rates. (UNGEI EAPR, 2008)

Overcoming systemic biases in the teaching-learning process: It is well recognized that many social perceptions and biases that cause gender inequality are systemic and perpetuated inter-generationally through the school system. How can teaching-learning processes and interactions, both within the school and outside, be transformed so the school becomes the springboard for eliminating systematic gender biases and prejudices? This, indeed, is a challenge. As children move to secondary and tertiary levels, for example, biases begin to operate in different ways, taking the form of differential provision of optional courses of study and special classes for boys and girls. More attention is needed to provide girls with the facilities and conditions they need to learn what will be meaningful and empowering, to prepare them for employment on an equal footing with their male counterparts and to enable them to stay in school.

Good practice: In Bangladesh, in-service training is enhanced through a 12-month Certificate in Education course that includes a unit on gender issues, providing teachers with a method of exploring their own practice and developing more inclusive teaching approaches. In Bhutan, UNESCO's *Embracing Diversity: Toolkit for Creating Inclusive, Learning-Friendly Environments* is integrated into the existing pre-service education in modules that help teachers understand the learner and improve aspects of gender stereotyping; encourage girls to take more non-traditional subject matter; understand violence abuse and harassment; make the school organization more girl- and child-friendly; as well as promote extracurricular activities that attract girls. (Heijnen-Maathuis, 2008)

Area three: Improving learning outcomes

Consider boys' learning needs, too!

Some countries of East Asia, such as Malaysia, Mongolia, the Philippines and Thailand, have begun to face the problem of 'reverse disparity', with more girls than boys in school. Boys are often co-opted to work full-time to earn money, as occurs in Mongolia, where they contribute to household incomes by working with livestock. In Thailand, even boys from middle-income families are dropping out of high school.[52] In the more developed countries of East Asia and the Pacific, such as Australia and New Zealand, there has been a problem of boys' under-achievement and subsequent drop-out from school. Are boys growing disillusioned with education or seeing it as irrelevant to their future endeavors? There are indications of this trend emerging in South Asia (Bangladesh and Maldives). According to a longitudinal study by the Swedish Agency for International Development Cooperation, boys in Bangladesh are opting for more rewarding work rather than staying in poor schooling. More studies are required to investigate this and boys' specific learning and assessment needs.

Good practice: The Decentralized Basic Education project in Indonesia incorporates gender-sensitive teaching techniques in order to improve the quality of education for both boys and girls. One component of the project focuses on enhancing the quality of teaching and learning through strengthened teacher training and improvements in the school learning environment. Teachers are trained in active-learning, gender-differentiated methodologies that help transform the classroom into a dynamic learning environment that *engages both boys* and girls. Classroom activities include small group sessions that give both boys and girls opportunities to share ideas and work together to solve challenges. As a result of the trainings, teachers are connecting education to students' realities and encouraging inquiry and reflection among them. (USAID, 2008)

Confronting child labour

Child labour severely curtails girls' educational opportunities among people living beyond the margins of economic development. Even the poorest families, perhaps with the exception of very abusive or callous parents, would prefer to withdraw their children from work if they could afford it. Many efforts, launched particularly through non-governmental organizations, have been successful in creating conditions that enable parents to send their children to school. Back-to-school campaigns are one such initiative. The programme is based on the strong conviction that full-time schooling is the only means of eliminating child labour. An important lesson to note is that mere advocacy of banning child labour is not enough. It is essential to design and implement concrete programmes of alternative education that effectively relieve children from inappropriate and harmful work.

Good practice: The MV Foundation in India developed a unique approach to getting girls out of work and into school. The Girl Child Programme mobilizes communities and government around the principle that child labour is immoral, making it a public issue. The programme uses girl-child activists and house-to-house campaigns to persuade parents to get girls to re-enter school and enrol older girls in residential camps. Girl activists were trained to use every public occasion to increase awareness, including street plays, and community child rights, mothers' and youth committees were developed to enlist support. The result has been an end to bonded labour and a decrease in child marriages, and the model has been scaled up to national and international level**.** **(**UNESCO, *Getting Girls Out of Work and into School*, 2005)

Ensuring that school-to-work transitions work for girls

Women's potential to develop sustainable livelihoods could be directly undermined by trade liberalization policies and practices that confine them to lower levels of the market chain, where jobs that add little value to products translate into low pay.[53] Cultural and social traditions reinforce this trend, especially in poor rural settings."[54] Some countries have begun to reform aspects of employment, including labour laws. Legislation has also been established to ensure enhanced representation of women in key political institutions and processes. In 2004, India adopted a national policy to improve conditions for street vendors, who are mainly women. In Viet Nam, a gender equality law is being drafted that is expected to address employment issues related to women. The Mongolian Government plans to introduce new legislation on workplace discrimination.[55] Several countries, including India and Pakistan, have mandated a quota for women in elected, local self-government bodies.[56]

Good practice: In 2004, several counties in Yunnan Province, China, began a project to address the issues that prompted girls, particularly minority girls, to drop out of school, leaving them vulnerable to being trafficked into labour and commercial sexual exploitation. The project covered the costs of returning girl drop-outs to lower secondary school. But it also took innovative steps to ensure that their education was going to be useful to them. It integrated life skills, including information about trafficking, gender equality, AIDS and public health, within the curriculum, thus not only educating vulnerable girls concerning potential hazards, but also offering them more diverse skills-training, including livelihood training. Several counties have enacted a new regulation that makes trafficking prevention a compulsory subject in all primary and secondary schools, with participatory approaches that have been so popularly received that they are being considered for integration into the curriculum province-wide. The project is now working on scaling up this model countrywide and is making links with the country's efforts to achieve nine years of compulsory education. (UNESCO, *Getting Girls Out of Work and Into School*, 2005)

Conclusions

Analyses made in the *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008* and MDG evaluations present a mixed picture of progress towards achieving gender-related goals by 2015 in the East Asia and Pacific and South Asia subregions. But one cannot ignore that *enrolment rates for girls are rising in all countries, and gender disparity is falling in almost every country of the region.* These gains are evident in some of the poorest countries. A few decades ago, girls constituted only one third of the total enrolment in primary schools. Today the gender gap has considerably narrowed, with nearly equal numbers of boys and girls in school, and some countries of East Asia show a reverse gender gap, with more girls than boys enrolled.

These achievements deserve celebration. But the task of achieving gender equality is far from complete, and the above-described remaining persistent challenges may be more difficult to overcome. The most significant challenge is that a large number of hard-to-reach girls remain excluded from schooling. Most of these belong to highly marginalized groups and generally live in remote locations. Ensuring that these girls complete primary schooling and move up the education ladder through secondary and tertiary levels as much as boys do is not going to be easy. It demands a better understanding of the complex situation and a better grasp of the design and implementation of more innovative strategies.

When a girl drops out of school, many events have preceded and contoured her course of action – some located in the family, some located in the community and the peer group, and many located in the school. Understanding exclusion demands exploring these turns and twists in the personal life history of the child. Such an exploration cannot be done simply by asking questions of parents and teachers, or even of the children themselves. It requires following children individually and in groups as they enter school, move up through the grades or leave school altogether – the only way to gather the information needed to build a description of the complex processes involved in exclusion and delineate the underlying causes. Programmes to address this process will have to be linked to local dynamics that surround children at home, in the community and in the school. Support to the girl child, in particular, will have to follow the flow of her life, over a sustained period of time and through the transforming events that surround her.

It should be recognized that bringing all girl children to school is not merely an educational action. It transforms attitudes and behavioural dynamics of society, so that gender equality is seen as a value in itself worth pursuing. This cannot be achieved by traditional short-term projects. Rather, it demands sustained and long-term engagement by the state, as well as civil society.

Figure A1: Progress towards gender parity in access to primary schooling

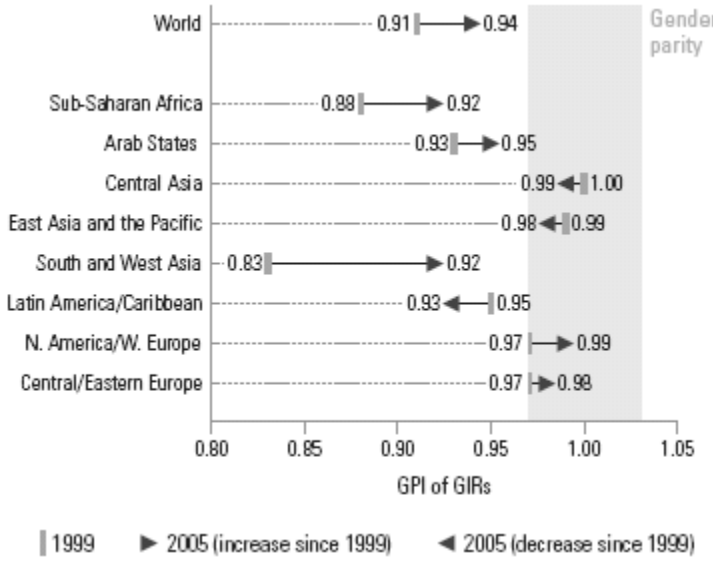


Figure A2: Change in GPI for secondary and tertiary enrolment ratios
Source: UIS data; illustration from *Global Monitoring Report 2008*, UNESCO.

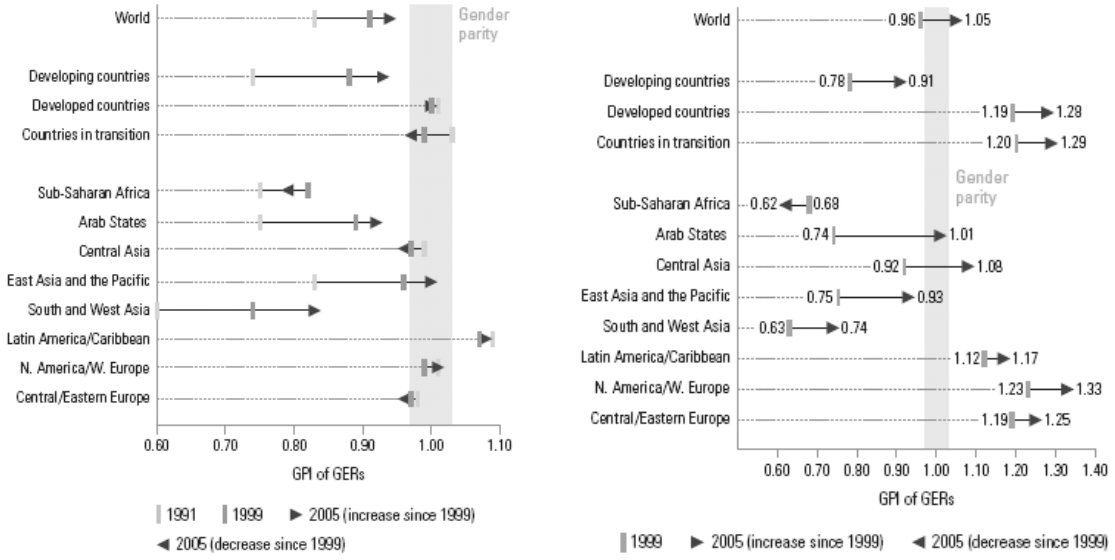
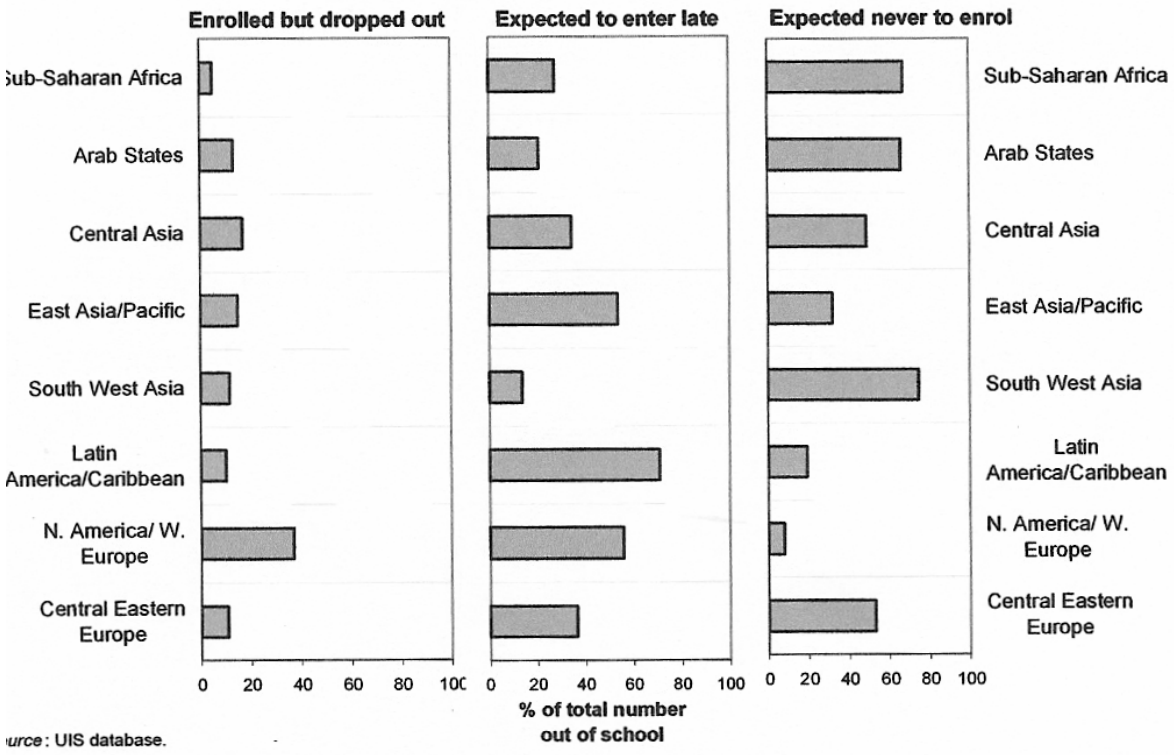


Figure A3: Out-of-school children in various regions



urce: UIS database.

Annex

Table A1:

Strategies towards rights-based education

1. Equality of opportunities /Right <u>to</u> education: Girls and boys are offered the same chances to access school

- Make education free of costs.
- Provide incentives for poor and marginalized families (stipend; scholarship; school-feeding).
- Make schools (distance; infrastructure; curriculum) accessible to all learners.
- Provide non-formal education for older, out-of-school and hard-to-reach children.
- Support Early Childhood Care and Development programmes for the most disadvantaged.
- Involve parents and communities in school–community partnerships.
- Ensure that teachers share the culture and language of the learners.
- Develop adequate water and sanitation infrastructure.
- Pay attention to protection of learners in school and on the way to and from school.
- Ensure that there are sufficient female teachers to support and act as role models for girls.

2. Equality of pedagogy / Right <u>in</u> education: Girls and boys receive the same respectful treatment and attention, follow the same curricula, enjoy teaching methods and tools free of stereotypes and gender bias

- Develop inclusive education policies that acknowledge and address diversity equally and respectfully.
- Train and support teachers to understand (and act on) issues of social and gender discrimination.
- Provide enough and well-trained (male and female) teachers.
- Develop policies that protect children from harassment, abuse and other forms of violence, including gender-based violence, bullying, physical and mental punishment.
- Ensure that curriculum and textbooks are academically and pedagogically of good quality, with positive images of boys and girls and other aspects of diversity and also challenging prevailing stereotypes.
- Acknowledge curriculum and assessment flexibility and adequately respond to different learning needs and learning styles.
- Sustain mutually beneficial school–community partnerships.
- Train and support teachers in using a diversity of teaching methods, especially (inter)active methods.

3. Equality of outcomes / Right <u>through</u> education: As a result of education and beyond, in society more generally

- Make sure that learning achievement, length of school careers, academic qualifications and diplomas do not differ by gender.
- Create continuing and equal opportunities for lifelong learning, professional training, empowerment and positive participation in society (decision-making power, control of resources, etc.).
- Increase tertiary education options, especially for girls and other disadvantaged groups.
- Increase employment and equal income opportunities for men and women, especially from socially disadvantaged groups.
- Abolish discriminatory laws, customs, practices and institutional processes.

Adapted from Seel (2006) & UNESCO (2003)

Table A2:

Equality in the learning process

Equality in the learning process means that girls and boys receive equitable treatment and attention and have equal opportunities to learn. This means that girls and boys are exposed to the same curricula, although the coursework may be taught differently to accommodate the different learning styles of girls and boys. Equality in the learning process also means that all learners should be exposed to teaching methods and materials that are free of stereotypes and gender bias. In addition, it means that boys and girls should have the freedom to learn, explore and develop skills in all academic and extracurricular offerings.

Interventions

• Train curriculum developers, textbook writers, administrators, managers and teachers in gender awareness prior to developing new curricula.
• Train teachers in inclusive teaching practices to help them integrate students who have been marginalized due to poverty, ethnicity, language or gender discrimination.
• Increase school safety and decrease violence by maintaining safe and secure latrines, protecting girls on their way to and from school, abandoning corporal punishment, training teaching staff and students to prevent violence and enforcing teacher codes of conduct.
• Undertake annual classroom studies to monitor teachers' interactions with boys and girls to ensure equitable student treatment.
• Institute policies that encourage girls' participation in technical training.
• End academic streaming based on gender stereotypes (e.g., girls streamed into the humanities and boys into science and technology).
• Ensure that teachers working in emergency or conflict situations are equipped to help children understand their rights and to provide context-specific knowledge such as landmine safety, first aid or peace education.
• Provide accelerated learning programmes to help students whose education was interrupted by war or other hardships to achieve grade level equivalencies and potentially re-enter the formal school system.

Equality of educational outcomes

Equality of educational outcomes means that girls and boys enjoy equal opportunities to achieve and that outcomes are based on their individual talents and efforts. To ensure fair chances for achievement, the length of school careers, academic qualifications and diplomas should not differ based on a person's sex. Mechanisms for evaluating individual achievement should also be free of any gender bias. What tests, examinations, and assessments measure tells students what matters and to the extent that these mechanisms reflect a gender bias, they transmit messages to students that can discourage their interest in school or in particular subjects.

Results from classroom tests, national examinations and international assessments can influence boys' and girls' confidence levels and their perceptions of their abilities and what is expected of them. They can also impact what is taught in the classroom and how content is delivered. Where tests or examinations are used to determine promotion to future grades or other types of educational opportunities, the extent to which there may be bias in these mechanisms is an important consideration when trying to ensure equality of access and equality of outcomes.

Attitudinal patterns of school children are closely matched with current study and career choices. Test scores alone do not indicate whether the playing field has been levelled and whether girls and boys have equitable opportunities to achieve: Girls and boys can perform at the same rates despite inequitable treatment. These findings reinforce the importance of understanding the dynamics of the classroom and what knowledge, skills and attitudes are being transferred to students and how this can limit children's future possibilities in career choice and future earnings.

Interventions

• Train teachers to understand how their perceptions or expectations of male and female students may influence how they assess students' progress, mark examinations and provide feedback.
• Include an assortment of question types (prose, diagrams, charts, pictures, tables, etc.) when developing test, examination or assessment questions to respond to the diversity in students' learning styles.
• Use various question types (multiple choice, essay, short answer, etc.) and weigh the test items to ensure that students with different learning styles have equal opportunities to succeed.
• Balance classroom assessment methods to evaluate group and individual work using verbal and written evaluation tools.

• Review existing tests, examinations and assessments to determine whether the examples and language used are free of gender bias and stereotypes. Remove any gender-specific content and ensure that examples reflect a balance in girls' and boys' experiences.

Equality of external results

Equality of external results occurs when the status of men and women, their access to goods and resources, and their ability to contribute to, participate in and benefit from economic, social, cultural and political activities are equal. This implies that career opportunities, the time needed to secure employment after leaving full-time education, and the earnings of men and women with similar qualifications and experience are equal.

The dimensions of gender equality are related, but that relationship is complex and not necessarily linear. Parity in enrollment and greater gender equality in schooling can, and often do, coexist with inequalities outside of education. In fact, several studies have demonstrated that educational success for girls does not automatically translate into higher economic status or greater political participation as adults.

At the same time, improving opportunities for women in the labour market can give them the economic means to send their children to school. Achieving equality after learners finish their studies and enter the labor market requires interventions that go beyond the education sector.

Interventions

• Enact and enforce labor laws that ensure equal opportunity and pay equity.

• Conduct social mobilization campaigns aimed at increasing women's and girls' status and value in society.

• Promote legal reforms that ensure women and girls have equal protections and rights with regard to family law, citizenship, property ownership, political participation, inheritance and the financial sector.

• Provide leadership training for women.

• Promote infrastructure enhancements that encourage economic growth, reduce poverty, improve families' health and well being, and ease the burden on women and girls.

• Develop programmes to remove implicit or explicit barriers to women's participation in non-traditional sectors, including targeted recruitment, training, and support initiatives for women.

Source: Derived from Education from a Gender Equality Perspective, USAID, May 2008. Developed for USAID's Office for Women in Development by the EQUATE project.

Table A3: National learning assessments – East Asia and the Pacific and South Asia
(reproduced from *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008*)

Country	Name or description of assessment study	Organization/institution(s) responsible for assessment	Target population	Curricular subject(s) assessed	Year(s)
Australia	National Basic Skills Test (New South Wales only)	New South Wales Department of Education and Training	Grades 3, 5	Literacy, numeracy	Pre- and post-Dakar period
	Adaptation of National Basic Skills Test (South Australia only)	Department of Education and Children's Services	Grades 3, 5	Literacy, numeracy	
	State learning assessments	State MoEs	Grades 3, 5, 7	State-specific subjects	
Bangladesh	Assessment of the Achievement of Pupils Completing Grade 4	MoE, National Curriculum and Textbook Board	Grade 4	Bangla, English, math, sci, soc sci	2000
	National Assessment	MoE	Grades 3, 5	Bangla, math, sci, soc sci, env sci	2001
	Intensive District Approach to Education for All (IDEAL)		Grades 1, 5	Bangla, English, math, sci, soc sci	2004
Cambodia	Learning Assessment System	MoE; World Bank	Grade 3	Khmer, math	2006
			Grade 6	Khmer, math	Planned for 2007
			Grade 9	Khmer, math	Planned for 2008
Cook Islands	Standardized National Diagnostic Testing	MoE	Grades 4, 6	English, Cl Maori and math	Yearly from 2000 to 2006
Fiji	National Assessment	MoE; SPBEA	Grades 4, 6	Literacy, numeracy	Post-Dakar period[1]
India	Baseline Assessment Survey	NCERT	Grades 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8 (variable)	Lan, math, env sci (variable)	1994, 2002, 2003, 2004
	Mid-term Assessment Survey		Grades 1, 3, 4	Lan, math	1997
	Terminal Assessment Survey		Grades 1, 3, 4	Lan, math	2001
Indonesia	Assessment of Students Learning Achievement	Educational National Standard Board	Grade 3 (primary) and senior (secondary)	Indonesian, English, math	Yearly since 2005
Japan	National Assessment of Learning Outcomes	NIER	Grades 5, 9, 12 (variable)	Japanese, English, math, sci, soc sci, geography, history, civics	2002, 2003, 2004
	National Assessment of Student Performance	MoE; NIER	Grades 6, 9	Japanese, math	2007
Kiribati*	National Assessment	MoE; SPBEA	Grades 4, 6	Literacy, numeracy	Post-Dakar period[1]
Lao PDR	National Literacy Survey	MoE; UNESCO; UNICEF	Age 6 and above	Reading, writing, numeracy, visual literacy	2000
	Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes	MoE, National Research Institute for Educational Science	Grade 5		2006
Malaysia	Primary School Achievement Test	MoE, Malaysian Examination Syndicate	Grade 6	Malay, English, math, sci, Chinese, Tamil	Yearly since 1987
Maldives	Sample testing	MoE, Supervision and Quality Improvement Section; World Bank	...	Math, Dhivehi, English	2002–2003
Myanmar	Learning Achievement Study	MoE; UNICEF	Grades 3, 5	Lan, math, sci	2005, 2006
New Zealand	National Education Monitoring Project	New Zealand Council for Educational Research; University of Otago Educational Assessment Research Unit	Grades 4, 8 (not including Maori medium schools)	Art, sci, graphs, tables, maps	1995, 1999, 2003 (4 year cycles)
				Reading and speaking, technology, music	1996, 2000, 2004 (4 year cycles)
				Math, information skills, social studies	1997, 2001, 2005 (4 year cycles)
				Listening and viewing, health, physical education	1998, 2002, 2006 (4 year cycles)

Country	Name or description of assessment study	Organization/institution(s) responsible for assessment	Target population	Curricular subject(s) assessed	Year(s)
			Grade 8 (Maori medium schools)	Sci, art, graphs, tables, maps	1999, 2003 (4 year cycles)
				Music, technology, reading and speaking,	2000, 2004 (4 year cycles)
				Writing, listening, viewing, health, physical education	2002, 2006 (4 year cycles)
Pakistan	National Achievement Test	MoE, National Education Assessment System	Grades 4, 8 and teachers (variable)	Lan, math, sci, social studies	2005, 2006
	Quality of Education	Academy of Educational Planning and Management	Grade 4	Sindhi, Urdu, math	2000
	Learning Levels and Gaps in Pakistan (Punjab Province)	LEAPS	Grade 3	Urdu, math, English	2004
Philippines	National Achievement Test	MoE, National Education Testing and Research Centre	Grades 4, 6 and year 2 secondary	English, Filipino, sci, social studies, math	2005, 2006
	Reading Test in English and Filipino for Elementary Level		Grade 3	Reading comprehension	2005, 2006
	Philippine Informal Reading Inventory	MoE	Grades 1–6	Reading	2004, 2005
Republic of Korea	National Assessment of Educational Assessment	Korean Institute of Curriculum and Evaluation	Grades 6, 9, 10	Math, social studies	1998–2000
			Grades 6, 9, 10	Korean, math, sci, social studies and English	2001–2002
			Grades 6, 9, 10	Korean, math, sci, social studies and English	2003, 2006
Samoa	National Assessment	MoE; SPBEA	Grades 4, 6	Literacy and numeracy	Post-Dakar period [1]
Singapore	Core Research Program	Centre for Research in Pedagogy and Practice	Pre-school to secondary	Lan, math, sci, ICT	2003
Solomon Islands	National Assessment	MoE; SPBEA	Grades 4, 6	Literacy, numeracy	Post-Dakar period [1]
Thailand	Effectiveness study (pilot schools)	IPST	Grades 3, 6, 9	Sci, math	2003–2004, 2006
	Nationwide Assessment		Grades 3, 6, 9	Sci, math	2005
	National Achievement Study	National Institute of Education Testing Service	Grades 6, 9, 12	Thai, math, English, sci (only 2003)	Yearly since 2001
Tonga	National Assessment	MoE; SPBEA	Grade 4	Literacy, numeracy	Post-Dakar period [1]
Tuvalu	National Assessment	MoE; SPBEA	Grades 4, 6	Literacy, numeracy	Post-Dakar period [1]
Vanuatu	National Assessment	MoE; SPBEA	Grades 4, 6	Literacy, numeracy	Post-Dakar period [1]
Viet Nam	Reading and Mathematics Assessment Study	MoE; World Bank	Grade 5	Reading, math	2001

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