



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Organisation
des Nations Unies
pour l'éducation,
la science et la culture

**ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review (AMR)
Regional Preparatory Meeting for Asia and
the Pacific**

Jomtien, Thailand, 24 March 2011

*“Education as key to achieving all Millennium Development Goals:
Prospects and challenges in the Asia-Pacific region”*

Background Note

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List of acronyms

AMR	Annual Ministerial Review
ASPnet	Associated Schools Project Network
APEID	Asia Pacific Programme of Educational Innovation for Development
CA	Central Asia
CO ₂	Carbon Dioxide
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
EFA	Education For All
ESD	Education for Sustainable Development
GER	Gross Enrolment Rate
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GMR	EFA Global Monitoring Report
GPI	Gender Parity Index
HDR	Human Development Report
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NER	Net enrolment ratio
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
UPE	Universal primary education
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNAIDS	The joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS

Part I: Introduction

I.1 Introduction

The ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) will be held in July 2011 in Geneva with a focus on “implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to education.”

The AMR process consists of three main elements: i) a global review of the United Nations development agenda based on a comprehensive report by the Secretary General; ii) country-led thematic reviews at the regional level; and iii) a series of national presentations by both developing and developed countries on their progress in implementing internationally agreed development goals.

The Asia-Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting for the AMR, hosted by the Government of Thailand together with the Tenth Meeting of the High-Level Group on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand (22-24 March 2011), will examine the issue of “*education as the key to achieving all Millennium Development Goals*”. The key policy recommendations put forward during the discussions will be reflected in a summary report to be presented at the AMR ECOSOC session next July.

This background note, with data from the most recent UNESCO Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Reports (GMR), largely builds on documents prepared by UNESCO in cooperation with key partners, such as UNICEF, Save the Children and the State of Qatar, in preparation for the United Nations High-level Plenary Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals (MDG Summit, September 2010, New York).

The outcome document adopted by the General Assembly at the MDG Summit recognizes that progress is being made despite setbacks, including those caused by the financial and economic crisis. It further recognizes that all the MDGs are interconnected and must be pursued through a holistic and comprehensive approach. To this extent, it demonstrates that progress towards the education-related MDGs, as well as towards the EFA goals, will accelerate progress towards all the other MDGs – especially those on poverty reduction and improvements in health. In making this case, however, the intrinsic value of education should not be forgotten. Basic education of good quality is an essential human right and should be among the first set of priorities for governments. Six months after the MDG summit in New York, the Asia-Pacific regional preparatory meeting for the AMR provides an opportunity for the region to discuss national, sub-regional and regional initiatives to strengthen the implementation of the recommendations of this summit, particularly as regards the linkages between education and the other MDGs.

The first section of the note presents progress and challenges for the Asia-Pacific region on the two MDGs directly related to education, as well as progress on other EFA goals. The second section demonstrates the central role education plays in contributing to the rest of the MDGs and highlights progress made and challenges for the region on poverty, health and environmental sustainability-related goals.¹

¹ MDG 8, relating to the development of a global partnership for development, is not included in this analysis as the correlation between education and this goal at the regional level is less evident.

I.2 Context & overview of progress towards MDGs in the Asia-Pacific region

The MDGs, formulated in 2000, established concrete goals for 2015 and have provided a broad framework for much policy-making in developing countries over the past decade. The MDGs crystallized the growing consensus (that emerged during the 1990s) that poverty reduction and the provision of basic social services must take centre-stage in development policy.

Of the eight MDGs², two are directly related to education provision :

- MDG 2 calls for the achievement of universal primary education (UPE) by 2015 - whereby every child will complete a full course of primary education;
- MDG 3 calls for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women - with specific targets for the elimination of gender disparities at primary and secondary school levels by 2005 and across all education levels by 2015 .

The remaining MDGs focus on poverty reduction, health (including child mortality, maternal health, HIV/AIDS, malaria and other major diseases), environmental sustainability (including drinking water and basic sanitation) and the establishment of global partnerships for development

Table 1 provides an overview of progress made in meeting the MDGs in the Asia-Pacific region, as well as at the sub-regional level.³ It shows that the region as a whole is an early achiever for a number of indicators such as:

- reducing gender disparities in primary and tertiary education;
- stopping the spread of HIV and AIDS and tuberculosis;
- ensuring a proportion of protected area to maintain bio-diversity;
- limiting ozone-depleting substances; and
- halving the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water.

The region is also on track to achieve three other important targets:

- gender parity in secondary education;
- ensuring universal access of children to primary school; and
- and halving the proportion of people living below the poverty line.⁴

However, the region has made slow progress in:

- preventing hunger;
- ensuring that girls and boys reach the last grade of primary education;
- reducing child mortality; and
- improving maternal health and providing basic sanitation.⁵

Given the scale, geography, and heterogeneity of the region, when reading the regional data, considerable differences in progress at the sub-regional level should be kept in mind. The Asia-Pacific region includes the world's two most populous countries – China and India – so the region's overall achievement on poverty, as on other indicators, will be influenced by their performance. Thus 'Asia and the Pacific excluding China and India' on some indicators has performed worse than the region as a whole: it has progressed only slowly in ensuring primary

² Annex 1 presents the list of MDGs and the corresponding targets and indicators

³ The sub-regional classification of countries used by the MDG report is listed in Annex 2. The rest of the paper refers to the sub-regional classifications used by the UNESCO EFA Global Monitoring Report as listed in Annex 3.

⁴ United Nations (2010). *Achieving the Millennium Development Goals in an era of global uncertainty: Asia Pacific Regional Report 2009/10*, p.9

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.11

enrolment, and regressed on HIV prevalence. On the other hand, the group of smaller countries has done better on gender parity in secondary educational attainment, on which it is an early achiever, while India is lagging behind on the same. In addition, the parity indicator at the secondary and tertiary level must be understood within the context of pockets of low enrolment in some countries. Similarly, as a group, the Pacific Island countries have been less successful – regressing or making no progress apart from advancing only slowly in another two, those for infant and under-five mortality. Papua New Guinea is home to almost 70 per cent of the Pacific Island countries' population, so estimates for the sub-region are inevitably affected by this country's performance.⁶

⁶ United Nations (2010). Achieving the Millennium Development Goals in an era of global uncertainty: Asia Pacific Regional Report 2009/10, p.12

Table 1: Progress in meeting International development goals in Asia

MDGs	1		2		3			4		5		6			7						
Indicators	\$1.25 /day poverty	Underweight children	Primary enrolment	Reaching last grade	Primary completion	Gender Primary	Gender Secondary	Gender Tertiary	Under 5 -mortality	Infant mortality	Antenatal care, at least once	Births by skilled professionals	HIV prevalence	TB incidence	TB prevalence	Forest cover	Protected area	CO2 emissions	ODP substance consumption	Water, total	Sanitation, total
Asia-Pacific	Ñ		Ñ	Ñ	Ñ	Ý		Ý	Ñ	Ñ	Ñ	Ñ	Ý	Ý	Ý	-	Ý	-	Ý	Ý	Ñ
Excluding China and India	Ñ		Ñ	Ñ	Ñ	Ý	Ý	Ý	Ñ	Ñ	Ñ	Ñ	-	Ý	Ý	-	Ý	-	Ý		Ñ
South-East Asia	Ý			Ñ	Ý	Ý	Ý	Ý		Ñ	Ñ	Ñ	Ý	Ý	Ý	-	Ý	-	Ý	Ý	
South Asia	Ñ	Ñ		Ñ	Ñ	Ý		Ñ	Ñ	Ñ	Ñ	Ñ	Ý	Ý	Ý	-	Ý	-	Ý	Ý	Ñ
Excluding India			Ñ	Ñ	Ñ	Ý			Ñ	Ñ	Ñ	Ñ	-	Ý	Ý	-	Ý	-	Ý	Ñ	Ñ
Pacific Islands					-	-	-	-	Ñ	Ñ	-	-	-	Ý	Ý	-	Ý	-	Ý	-	-
Excluding Papua New Guinea			-	-	-	Ý	Ý	Ý	Ñ	Ñ		Ñ		Ý	Ý	-	Ý	-	Ý	-	-
North and Central Asia	-		Ý	Ý	Ý	Ý	Ý	Ý	Ñ	Ñ			-	Ý	Ý	-	Ý	-	-		Ñ
Excluding Russia	-	Ý	Ý	Ý	Ý	Ý	Ý	Ý	Ñ	Ñ			-	-	-	-	Ý	-	Ý	Ñ	Ñ
LDCs Asia Pacific	Ñ	Ñ	Ñ	Ñ	Ñ	Ý	Ý	Ñ	Ñ	Ñ	Ñ	Ñ	Ý	Ý	Ý	-	Ý	-	Ý	Ñ	Ñ

↑ Early Achiever € On track ∇ Slow ↓ Regressing/No Progress

Source: United Nations (2010). Achieving the Millennium Development Goals in an era of global uncertainty: Asia Pacific Regional Report 2009/10

Part II. The education-related goals

II.1 MDG 2: Universal Primary Education

Ensure that by 2015 any child in any country will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.

There has been tremendous progress towards UPE, especially in developing countries, over the past decade. The EFA GMR 2011 reports that since 1999, South and West Asia⁷ has demonstrated significant progress, Central Asia steady progress and East Asia and the Pacific mixed progress. In many countries of the region, late entry, drop-out rates and grade repetition remain concerns.

In **South and West Asia**, progress towards UPE has been impressive. Between 1999 and 2008, the average **net enrolment ratio** (NER) increased from 74% to 90% (see table 2).⁸ Since 1999, the **out-of-school** population has been reduced by more than half (from 39 to 18 million). Much of the reduction took place in India, which reported a fall of almost 15 million in out-of-school children in the two years following the 2001 launch of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (UPE) programme.⁹ However, as can be seen in Table 2, South and West Asia still carries a disproportionately high burden of out-of-school children within the Asia-Pacific region and a quarter of the global out-of-school population. Reaching children in **conflict-affected** areas, especially in Afghanistan, is one of the most urgent EFA challenges.

In South and West Asia, a major challenge is **keeping children in school** once they enrol. Less than two-thirds of children starting primary school survive to last grade.¹⁰

In **East Asia and the Pacific**, progress has been mixed, with a decline in the average NER (see table 2). Furthermore, progress has been uneven. The NER in the Pacific was 11% lower than that of East Asia, with the country NERs ranging from 67% in the Solomon Islands to 100% in Japan. The Cook Islands, Fiji and Vanuatu have even fallen behind 1999 country participation levels, while the Philippines has had a stagnating NER since 1999.

Unlike other developing regions, the number of **out-of-school children has increased** in the Pacific region since 1999, almost doubling during this period from 322,000 to 562,000 children. This deserves particular attention, even though in absolute numbers the out-of-school children problem is bigger in South and West Asia. In 2008, some 7.9 million primary school age children were out of school in East Asia and the Pacific, a significant decrease by almost 3 million since 1999 – concentrated mostly in four countries with published data: Philippines (0.96 million), Thailand (0.58 million), Indonesia (0.3 million), and Cambodia (0.23 million). However, some countries had made significant reductions by 2008 (such as Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic).

The main problem in East Asia and the Pacific is overwhelming **late entry**, with more than two-thirds of out-of-school children expected to enrol late. In eight of the ten countries in the region with data, less than 70% of children starting school were of official primary school age

⁷ Here and for the rest of the paper, the sub-regional classifications refer to those used by the UNESCO EFA Global Monitoring Report as listed in Annex 3.

⁸ Country NERs do however range from 66% in Pakistan to 96% in the Maldives.

⁹ The EFA GMR team recently estimated that India, with about 5.6 million children out-of-school in 2008 is projected to reduce this number to about 750,000 by 2015.

¹⁰ UNESCO (2011). *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2011 The hidden crisis: Armed conflict and education Regional Overview: South and West Asia*, UNESCO Oxford University Press.

in 2008. However, rapid progress is possible, such as in Cambodia where the share of children starting school at official age increased from 61% in 1999 to 79% in 2008.¹¹

In **Central Asia** (CA), progress towards UPE has been steady since the World Education Forum in Dakar (2000). There was an increase in the average **NER** from 88% in 1999 to 94% in 2008. Most countries with data (7 countries in GMR) have either achieved, or are on track to achieve, UPE by 2015.¹²

Table 2: Status of primary education

Sub-region	Net Enrolment Rate (1999)	Adjusted Net Enrolment Rate (2008)	Out-of-school children (2008)
Central Asia	88%	94%	322,000
East Asia & Pacific	96%	95%	7,869,000
South and West Asia	74%	90%	17,919,000
World	82%	90%	67,483,000

Source: UIS Database, Dec. 2010

In order to achieve UPE, the MDG Summit calls on **policy solutions to reduce late entry or drop-out based on solid analysis of the root causes of the inequalities, disparities and diverse forms of exclusion and discrimination** affecting children, particularly out-of-school children. The marginalized population groups are more likely to enrol late, or drop out as “poverty, gender, ethnicity and other factors interact to create overlapping and self-reinforcing layers of disadvantage that limit opportunity and hamper social mobility”.¹³ The 2010 GMR concludes that many governments are neglecting the “education poor” – that is, people who are not only income-poor but also on the fringes of society (indigenous populations, street children, the disabled and linguistic and cultural minorities). Large sections of societies in both rich and poor countries are being left behind. In many countries, girls who belong to marginalized groups, such as the Hill Tribes in South and West Asia and the lowest castes in India and Nepal, suffer disproportionately in education relative to the mainstream population and to boys in their own linguistic or ethnic group. There is growing evidence regarding the impact of ethnicity on participation in education. In India, tribal girls had a 9.4% lower probability of attending school than non-tribal boys. Indigenous communities tend to be isolated geographically, which affects not only whether a school is available in the community but also the quality of that school. Similarly, in Viet Nam, restrictions on mobility and inequities in school provision lead to significantly less education among rural minorities. Moreover, the effect of isolation appears to be greater for girls than for boys: in Lao PDR, girls who reside in the highlands and in disadvantaged ‘priority districts’ are less likely to enrol in school than boys in the same communities signifying that location and schooling characteristics are key for minority girls.¹⁴ New approaches must be tailored to such groups; simply increasing access to standard schooling is not enough.

UPE and its relationship with other EFA goals

¹¹ UNESCO (2011). EFA Global Monitoring Report 2011 The hidden crisis: Armed conflict and education Regional Overview: East Asia and the Pacific, UNESCO Oxford University Press.

¹² Cohort tracking in Mongolia has shown that for every 100 children of the appropriate primary school entry age, 79 will enter on time and only 64 will complete the last grade

¹³ UNESCO (2010). EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010 Reaching the Marginalized, p.136

¹⁴ Lewis, M. A. and M. E. Lockheed, Eds. (2007). Gender, Education, and Exclusion: Case Studies from the Developing World

Free and compulsory primary education is a fundamental human right enshrined in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This right was reaffirmed by the international community in 1990 in Jomtien and a decade later in Dakar, when the six EFA goals were adopted. These goals express a comprehensive view of education, recognizing that UPE will not expand and improve solely on its own, dependent, as it is on policies and progress at all levels and delivery modalities. An overall education sector plan incorporating a holistic approach to sustainable development is thus necessary.

ECCE (EFA goal 1): Education starts long before primary education. Early childhood care and education (ECCE) can enhance the physical well-being, basic cognitive and motor skills and social and emotional development¹⁵ By increasing attendance and reducing repetition rates, ECCE helps improve the efficiency of primary education, particularly in the crucial first years of primary schooling. The positive impact of ECCE is greater for poor and disadvantaged children, who often lack supportive parenting and stimulating home environments.

In a disadvantaged district of Nepal, more than 95% of children attending an ECCE programme progressed to primary school, compared with 75% of non-participants.¹⁶ At the same time, the grade 1 repetition rate of participants was one-seventh that of non-participants, while participants had significantly higher marks on grade 1 examinations. ECCE programmes even compensate for children's negative experiences such as conflict (within the family or society) and nutritional and emotional deprivation.¹⁷ For instance, participants in an ECCE programme in Myanmar were more likely to enter primary school and achieved better test and exam results during the first three years.¹⁸

Enrolment in pre-primary education has increased by 21 million in South and West Asia between 1999 and 2008, and yet on average only 42% of the children in the sub-region were enrolled in pre-primary education in 2008. Country GER ranged from 1% in Bhutan to 101% in the Maldives. In East Asia and the Pacific, enrolment in pre-primary education rose by 2.6 million between 1999 and 2008. On average, the GER in pre-primary enrolment was 19 percentage points higher in the Pacific (67%) than in East Asia (48%). Barriers to ECCE include household poverty and low parental education. For example, in the Lao People's Democratic Republic attendance rates in pre-school programmes vary from 1% for children in the poorest quintile to almost 48% for children from the wealthiest households.¹⁹

LIFE skills (EFA goal 3): Education systems should ensure that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes. Broadly defined, life skills programmes provide learners with the opportunity to gain the knowledge and develop the values, attitudes and skills to work, participate fully in their society, take control of their own lives and continue learning. Non-formal education is recognized as a major channel through which to develop such life skills. Life skills play a particularly important role in facilitating the transition from school to the world of work, securing employment, ensuring second chances and contributing to reducing marginalization. Measuring progress towards this goal, though, remains difficult as the routes to the acquisition of life skills are many. Enrolment in technical and vocation education and training (TVET) does provide one measurable indication (when complemented with information on quality and relevance of the education provided). Enrolment in TVET is particularly low in South and West Asia, where it represents 1% of total enrolment in secondary education, with girls comprising only 31% of students (in 2008). In East Asia and

¹⁵ UNESCO (2007). [EFA Global Monitoring Report 2007 Strong Foundations](#)

¹⁶ UNESCO (2007). [EFA Global Monitoring Report 2007 Strong Foundations](#), p. 111

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 111

¹⁹ UNESCO (2011). [EFA Global Monitoring Report 2011 The hidden crisis: Armed conflict and education Regional Overview: East Asia and the Pacific](#), UNESCO Oxford University Press.

the Pacific, the share of TVET in secondary enrolment was 16% in 2008 (six percentage points above the average of developed countries). Nearly half the students are women in this sub-region. In Central Asia, the share of TVET was 15%.²⁰ Traditional apprenticeships and on-the-job training thus appear to be more important routes to workforce skills development for the majority of Asian youth. The MDG Summit emphasized the importance of giving greater focus to the transition from primary education and access to secondary education, TVET and non-formal education and entry into the labour market.

Literacy (EFA goal 4): Non-formal education settings are arguably just as important as those in the formal sector. Learners of all ages often rely on access to non-formal education programmes for the acquisition of basic literacy skills when they have had little or no access to formal schooling. Inter-generational effects are clearly visible in the realm of literacy. Evidence suggests that mothers with even modest literacy skills are more likely to send their daughter to school than those who are illiterate. Clearly, adult literacy and educational attainment can impact not only on UPE, but also on the other MDGs. Moreover, effective literacy programmes need to be delivered in a language understood by learners.

In South and West Asia, the regional **adult** literacy rate increased by 15 percentage points between 1985-1994 and 2000-2008 to reach 62% in 2008. However, the region still accounts for more than half of the 796 million illiterate adults worldwide. An estimated 412 million adults lack basic literacy and numeracy skills in the region (38% of the region's adult population). India has the largest number of adult illiterates in the world (283 million). Gender disparities contribute to high illiteracy rates, with women accounting for 63% of South and West Asia's adult illiterate population. It is projected that this sub-region will not reach the literacy targets set for 2015. East Asia and the Pacific are however closer to reaching them, with an adult literacy rate of 94% in 2008. Adult literacy rates increased by 12% between 1985-1994 and 2000-2008, driven in part by a 16% increase in China. Most countries in Central Asia have high literacy rates.²¹

The literacy rate among those aged 15 to 24 is another indicator of progress. **Youth** literacy reflects the education system's ability to deliver basic literacy skills. Given recent expansion of access to basic education, youth literacy rates tend to be higher than adult literacy rates. In Asia, youth illiteracy rates range from 2% in East Asia and the Pacific to 21% in South and West Asia in 2008. Literacy and numeracy skills are increasingly important for income generation and effective functioning in society.

Quality (EFA goal 6): Even among students enrolled in school, millions drop out or leave school without having gained the most basic literacy and numeracy skills. Poor-quality education can jeopardize the future of young children, increasing the risk of lifelong illiteracy. Increased access to primary education, though positive, has also put strain on the quality of education and needs to be given increased attention. It is not enough to enrol more children in school: the education they receive must be relevant and of good quality. Multilingual education and mother tongue-based learning contribute to the integration and empowerment of marginalized groups. Teachers are the single most important resource in delivering quality education, yet in many of the countries in the region there is a shortage of trained teachers. Students from marginalized groups are particularly disadvantaged. It is estimated that an additional 1.9 million teachers will have to be recruited globally to reach UPE by 2015.²² In Asia, the pupil/teacher ratio is highest in South and West Asia (39 in 2008). Tertiary education plays a central role in training teachers, determining the relevance of the curricula and learning materials used by primary schools; conducting research on pedagogy and innovation, designing quality improvements and policy change, and monitoring and evaluation.

²⁰ UNESCO (2011). [EFA Global Monitoring Report 2011 The hidden crisis](#)

²¹ UNESCO (2011). [EFA Global Monitoring Report 2011 The hidden crisis](#)

²² UNESCO (2011). [EFA Global Monitoring Report 2011 The hidden crisis](#)

The MDG Summit called for the need to ensure quality education and progression through the school system. This requires establishing learning-friendly schools and institutions, and increasing the number of teachers and enhancing their quality through comprehensive policies that address issues of recruitment, training, retention, professional development, evaluation, employment and teaching conditions as well as the status of teachers. It also requires increased national capacity, more classrooms, improving the material conditions of school buildings and infrastructure and the quality and content of the curriculum, pedagogy and learning and teaching materials, harnessing information and communications technology (ICT) and assessing learning outcomes.

International learning assessments are not absolute indicators of quality education, but do give a general indication. South and West Asia are poorly covered by international learning assessments. In rural Pakistan, a recent survey found that only two-thirds of students in grade 3 could subtract single digit numbers. In rural India, only 28% of grade 3 students could subtract two-digit numbers. In Kyrgyzstan (Central Asia), 88% of students with eight years of schooling tested in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) were found to be at level 1 or below, meaning they were at risk during their transition to work.²³

Although **secondary and tertiary education** are not explicitly part of the EFA goals, it is important to note that primary education cannot expand without the complementary development of higher levels of education. Notably, access to secondary and tertiary education is necessary to stimulate and reinforcedemand for primary education. In order to be motivated to complete the primary cycle, students and their parents need to know that post-primary educational opportunities (e.g. science education, technical and vocational education and training) exist and correspond to their future skill sets and personal ambitions. In addition, higher-secondary and tertiary education levels are also critical for UPE where primary school teachers, headmasters, administrators and other educational personnel are trained.

South and West Asia is the sub-region that lags most behind in secondary and tertiary education, with 54% GER (2008) in secondary education, while Central Asia fares best (97% GER in 2008). One of the key challenges is the transition between lower and upper secondary education. Enrollment in tertiary education remains less than 30%, ranging from 26% in East Asia and the Pacific followed by Central Asia (25%) and South and West Asia (13%).

II.2 MDG 3: Gender parity

Eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015.

The expansion in UPE has been matched by progress towards gender parity. The Asia Pacific region as a whole has already achieved or is on track to achieve the gender parity goals in both primary and secondary education.²⁴ Girls' access to education has markedly improved in some countries, such as Bangladesh and Nepal. India is approaching gender parity in terms of enrolment. In some countries such as Bangladesh and the Islamic Republic of Iran, there are more girls than boys in primary school. The gender parity index (GPI) of NER is at 1.02 in 2008 for East Asia and the Pacific. In South and West Asia, the GPI in primary education was at 0.95 in 2008, up from 0.84 in 1999. Afghanistan and Pakistan are the only two countries in the sub-region to have major gender disparities. In Afghanistan, just 66 girls are enrolled in primary school for every 100 boys and only 26% of all secondary school students are girls. In Pakistan, the primary NER in 2008 was 72% for boys, and only 60% for girls. In secondary

²³ UNESCO (2010). *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010 Reaching the Marginalized*. p.106-107

²⁴ United Nations (2010). *Achieving the Millennium Development Goals in an era of global uncertainty: Asia Pacific Regional Report 2009/10*, p.10

education, China and India – the two most populous countries in the region – are both early achievers of gender parity targets for secondary education.²⁵

These achievements have been possible because the countries in the region have demonstrated strong political commitment to girls' education and have taken effective measures to increase gender parity in primary and secondary education, including the abolition of school fees, introduction of scholarships and cash transfer initiatives, provision of girl-friendly schools, recruitment and training of female teachers, and boosting community involvement among others. Through bold initiatives favouring girls and women, some countries like Bangladesh have succeeded in achieving the 2005 gender parity target.

Despite these achievements, gender disparities remain a problem in the region. The challenge is to bring in the out-of-school girls back into school. In Central Asia and South and West Asia, some 55% of out-of-school children of primary school age group are girls. In secondary education, only 42% of girls in South and West Asia are in school. (See tables 3 & 4)

Table 3: Out-of-school girls (primary education)

Sub-region	Out-of-school children School year ending 2008	% Female
Central Asia	322,000	55%
East Asia	7,307,000	38%
Pacific	562,000	52%
South and West Asia	17,919,000	54%

Source: UNESCO (2011). *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010 The hidden crisis*.

Table 4: NER and GPI in secondary education, 2008

Sub-region	Female NER in secondary education	Gender Parity Index
Central Asia	87%	0.98
East Asia & Pacific	71%	1.03
South and West Asia	31%	0.56
World	54%	0.87

Source: UIS Database, Dec. 2010

Reaching out-of-school girls at the primary and secondary levels requires policy-makers to focus on the core problem of why they are not in school in the first place. Girls from poor families, rural areas, urban slums and ethnic and language minorities are much less likely to complete full education cycles. Different forms of exclusion can combine and interact with one another. Coming from a poor household in a remote area greatly increases the risks of marginalization in education. In many countries, girls are faced with multiple barriers to education ranging from negative attitudes, to household work, to long commutes to school. Special efforts – from recruiting female teachers to supporting poor families to making schools more girl-friendly – are needed to address this imbalance.

Education is the key to addressing gender-based inequalities and discrimination across societies. As demonstrated in the following chapters, the education of women and girls has a strong multiplier effect on progress across all the other MDGs. Beyond private returns, girls' and women's education has even higher social benefits and significant positive impact on health, fertility, child education and social cohesion. Notwithstanding the positive effects of primary schooling, evidence suggests that post-primary levels of education have the greatest

²⁵ United Nations (2010). *Achieving the Millennium Development Goals in an era of global uncertainty: Asia Pacific Regional Report 2009/10*, p.12

benefits for women's empowerment as well as the improvement of their well-being and that of their families.²⁶

²⁶ UN Millennium Project (2005). Taking action: achieving gender equality and empowering women, United Nations Development Programme.

Part III. Education contributing to the progress of the other MDGs

III.1 Education and poverty reduction (MDG 1)

- *Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than one dollar a day*
- *Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people*
- *Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger*

Education is a powerful driver for poverty reduction and sustainable socio-economic development. It empowers people with the knowledge and skills they need to increase individual and household income, expand employment opportunities, and fight against hunger and malnutrition. Public spending on education is one of the most beneficial investments a country can make for its future well-being.

No country has ever climbed the human development ladder without steady investment in education. Social change, employment, competitiveness, innovation and long-term prospects for economic growth rely considerably on the expansion of quality learning opportunities for all. One year of schooling can increase a person's earnings by 10%, while each additional year of schooling can lift average annual GDP by 0.37%.²⁷ These benefits are even higher for low-income countries, for lower education levels and for girls and women. Furthermore, recent estimates by the EFA GMR team for the 2010 MDG Summit hold that **"171 million could be lifted out of poverty if all students in low-income countries left school with basic reading skills"**. This would be equivalent to a 12% drop in the number of people living on less than \$1.25 a day.²⁸

Greater equity in education can help fuel a virtuous cycle of increased growth and accelerated poverty reduction, with benefits for the poor and for society as a whole. Doubling primary school-age attendance rates for rural populations is associated with an average decrease in food insecurity by 20 to 25%.²⁹ In the agricultural sector, increased female schooling is associated with more productive farming methods and reductions in malnutrition.³⁰ When education is broadly shared and reaches the poor, women and other marginalized groups, it raises the chances that economic growth will be broadly shared. On the other hand, poverty pushes children out of school and into work because parents cannot afford to send their children to school.

Poverty trends in Asia and the Pacific and the impact of economic crisis

As reported in the Asia-Pacific Regional MDG report (which used figures obtained prior to the global financial crisis), the region as a whole is on track to achieve the target of halving the proportion of people living below the poverty line, though it has also been slow to reduce hunger.

Between 1990 and 2005, Asia and the Pacific reduced the number of people living on less than \$1.25 a day from 1.5 billion to 979 million – all the more impressive given that over the

²⁷ Hanushek et al., in UNESCO, UNICEF, State of Qatar and Save the Children. (2010). The Central Role of Education in the Millennium Development Goals. 2010 MDG Summit High-Level Round-Table

²⁸ UNESCO (2010). "Education is the key to lasting development."

²⁹ UNESCO, UNICEF, State of Qatar and Save the Children. (2010). The Central Role of Education in the Millennium Development Goals. 2010 MDG Summit High-Level Round-Table

³⁰ In Kenya, if women farmers are given the same level of education as their male partners, their yields for maize, beans and cowpeas increase by up to 22%. (IFPRI)

same period the region's population increased by some 800 million. The fastest growth and sharpest reductions in poverty continue to be recorded in East Asia. Because of its large population size, the Asia and the Pacific region nevertheless has the greatest number of poor people in the world. A particular challenge for the region remains the situation of underweight children – it is home to over 70% of the world's underweight children under age five.³¹ Feeding and body weight monitoring provided by many early childhood programmes can directly alleviate malnutrition.

The Asia-Pacific region has been affected by the food price increases of 2007 and 2008, followed by the financial and economic crisis in late 2008 and early 2009. While the final impacts of these crises are still being projected, there is reason to believe that the momentum towards the 2015 goals has been weakened. The recession has increased the vulnerability of poor households and led to rising child malnutrition, which may slow down efforts to achieve not only UPE, but all the other MDGs as well. Marginalized groups are those suffering the worst from the crisis, which has also aggravated the impact of natural disasters such as floods and cyclones.³² Indeed, even when economic growth has been possible, inequalities continue to grow.³³

UNESCO is monitoring the impact of the crisis on the education sector of its Member States. It undertook a quick study in 50 countries in March 2009, produced case studies for 12 countries in mid-2009, and carried out assessments of how schools and households were affected by budget cuts in November 2009 to reveal the impact of the crisis on education. Country case studies reveal that, for the moment, most governments have protected their education budgets (the share of education expenditure in government finance). The resilience of the economies of the Asia-Pacific region – even those affected directly by conflict or post-conflict situations such as Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste, and lately Pakistan – has somewhat mitigated the effects of the crisis. At the same time, the studies (for instance in Mongolia and Pakistan) indicate that vulnerable households face difficulties in meeting school costs, forcing children to be moved to cheaper schools or public institutions that provide food or material. There are a growing number of reports suggesting a rise in absenteeism, school dropouts and increased child labour. In some countries, educational quality and equity in public schools are being jeopardized. Demand for education is likely to be affected due to a decline in household income and an increase in families' contributions to rising indirect and direct schooling costs. Furthermore, it is feared that international aid, already insufficient before the crisis, will further decline as a result of the crisis.

Discussion points:

- Despite the overall progress made in the region in reaching MDG 1, what are the key challenges in helping the marginalized overcome poverty? And what role can education play?
- How can investment within the education sector be better targeted to support poverty reduction? What can be done to promote investment in education as part of national development strategies?
- How can regional cooperation in the field of education be strengthened to assist South and West Asia in meeting MDG 1?

³¹ United Nations (2010). Achieving the Millennium Development Goals in an era of global uncertainty: Asia Pacific Regional Report 2009/10, p.15

³² UNESCO Education Sector & Campaign for Popular Education (2010) "The Implications of the Global Financial Crisis for NGOs Working Towards the Achievement of Education for All Regional Report: Asia and the Pacific", p.9

³³ United Nations Development Programme (2010) Can the MDGs provide a pathway to social justice? The challenge of intersecting inequalities

III.2 Education and health (MDG 4, 5 & 6)

Child mortality (MDG 4) and Maternal health (MDG 5)

- *Reduce by two-thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate*
- *Reduce by three quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio*
- *Achieve, by 2015, universal access to reproductive health*

Significant advances have been made in reducing child mortality over the last two decades, notably in some of the world's poorest countries. The under-five mortality rate has dropped by 28% in developing countries since 1990. Meanwhile, one in four children under age five are underweight in developing countries.³⁴

Unfortunately, the Asia-Pacific region is not advancing as fast towards MDGs 4 and 5. According to the Asia-Pacific Regional 2010 MDG report, the proportions of underweight children under age five are often high and a large number of women across the region are dying from causes related to childbirth. To address these challenges, the region needs to reinvigorate its health-related policy frameworks. Along with health-related programmes, education can substantially improve the health status of children and mothers. In fact, the positive links between education and health are well established across all education levels, from early childhood to post-primary, positively impacting young children's health in a variety of ways. The Asia-Pacific Regional MDG 2010 report states that promoting UPE (MDG2) and gender equality (MDG3) will help reduce under-five mortality rates (MDG4).³⁵

Educated parents, particularly mothers, make better use of available health services and provide greater quality care to their children.³⁶ Education can save lives and influence the well-being of young children. Enhanced educational opportunities are associated with reduced child mortality rates, better nutrition and healthier livelihoods. Educating a woman greatly reduces the chance that her child will die before the age of five. In some countries, having a mother with secondary or higher education more than halves the risk of child mortality (compared to cases where the mother has no education). In the Philippines, the under-five mortality rate is reduced by one third for mothers with primary education and by close to five times when the mother has secondary schooling.³⁷

Girls and women who are educated are far more likely to immunize their children. National demographic data from several countries (see table 6) reveal that the education levels of mothers are strongly correlated with indicators of child mortality. In Pakistan, a mother with an education at secondary school level is twice as likely to vaccinate her children compared to mothers with no education. Moreover, having a mother who has completed primary education reduces the risk of growth stunting by 22% in Bangladesh and 26% in Indonesia.³⁸

³⁴ United Nations (2010). The Millennium Development Goals Report 2010

³⁵ United Nations (2010). Achieving the Millennium Development Goals in an era of global uncertainty: Asia Pacific Regional Report 2009/10, p.26

³⁶ Save the Children (2010). Women on the Front Lines of Health Care S. State of World's Mothers 2010.

³⁷ UNESCO (2009). EFA Global Monitoring Report 2009 Overcoming inequality: why governance matters, p.32

³⁸ UNESCO, UNICEF, State of Qatar and Save the Children. (2010). The Central Role of Education in the Millennium Development Goals. 2010 MDG Summit High-Level Round-Table

Table 5: MDG 4 (child mortality) indicators & relationship with education level

Country/ Education Level of women*	Indicator 1: Under- five mortality rate (number of children per 1000 live births)	Indicator 2. Infant mortality rate (number of children per 1000 live births)	Indicator 3. Proportion of 1 yr old children immunized against measles
Cambodia (2005)			
No education	135.7	110.7	64.3
Primary	107.1	89.5	77.7
Secondary or higher	53.0	44.5	91.2
India (2005-06)			
No education	106.2	77.7	41.0
Primary	77.6	63.8	60.6
Secondary or higher	48.8	42.6	80.2
Philippines (2008)			
No education	135.8	87.4	45.6
Primary	46.8	32.5	72.6
Secondary or higher	30.1	24.3	83.3

Source: Macro International Inc, 2010. Measure DHS Statcompiler

*Ever-married women age 10-49

Maternal education is one of the strongest preventive measures for reducing childbearing-related risks. Educating girls and women empowers them to make better health-related decisions. Complications in pregnancy and childbirth are a leading cause of death and disability among women of childbearing age, claiming over 500,000 lives a year. Women with education are more likely to seek assistance from trained health personnel.

Across South and West Asia, 44% of women with no education give birth without receiving antenatal care compared to 22% of women with a primary schooling and 9% of women with at least secondary education.³⁹ As *Table 6* indicates, women's education has positive relationship to several factors contributing to the health of mothers.

Table 6: MDG 5 (maternal health) indicators & relationship with education levels

Country/Education Level of Women*	Indicator 1. Proportion of births attended by doctors	Indicator 2. Adolescent birth rate	Indicator 3. No Antenatal care coverage
India (2005-6)			
No education	16.3	25.9	38.0
Primary	34.1	16.2	17.3
Secondary or higher	61.9	6.3	6.3
Nepal (2006)			
No education	4.5	24.0	34.2
Primary	10.8	16.6	17.6
Secondary or higher	26.6	7.7	6.8
Pakistan (2006-7)			
No education	21.8	11.4	44.3
Primary	37.2	6.9	21.5
Secondary or higher	67.7	2.2	9.1

Source: Macro International Inc, 2010. Measure DHS Statcompiler

*included in the study are girls/women aged 10-49 that have been married

³⁹ UNESCO (2010). *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010. Reaching the Marginalized*.

Furthermore, education delays the age at which young women give birth. Adolescent girls are up to five times more likely to die from complications in pregnancy compared to women in their 20s, and their babies are also at a higher risk of dying.⁴⁰

Education policy-makers can greatly contribute to the achievement of health goals by raising the overall education attainment level, especially among girls and women. It is noteworthy that access to education is only one side of the coin. Quality is equally important – good skills-based health education encourages health-promoting values and attitudes, not only during school years but throughout life as well. Policy-makers should therefore pay adequate attention to curriculum, teaching pedagogy and other issues that foster healthy lifestyle choices.

Education and HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases (goal 6)

- *Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS*
- *Achieve, by 2010, universal access to treatment for HIV/AIDS for all those who need it*
- *Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases*

According to the 2010 MDG Report, “HIV remains the world’s leading infectious killer”. Globally, 33.4 million people were living with HIV in 2008, with 2 million dying from the effects of HIV/AIDS. Despite massive reductions in infection rates, an estimated 2.7 million people are newly-infected every year,⁴¹ which amounts to some 7,400 people per day. Women are more vulnerable to the epidemic: in many countries, the majority of new infections are among females, and women account for about two-thirds of young people living with HIV.⁴² Similarly, conflict and post-conflict situations increase HIV vulnerability – between 8 and 10% of people living with HIV are affected by conflict, humanitarian crisis and/or displacement.⁴³ In the light of this global epidemic, the positive news out of Asia and the Pacific is that the region as a whole is an early achiever in stopping the spread of HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis.⁴⁴ However, there are some sub-regions and countries where progress in slowing the HIV epidemic has regressed; North and Central Asian countries (excluding Russia), and South Asia excluding India and the Pacific Islands.⁴⁵ Tuberculosis is still a major problem in Asia-Pacific too, home to 68% of infected people worldwide.⁴⁶

Education unleashes a virtuous cycle in the fight against HIV/AIDS and other preventable diseases. It prevents new infections, fosters access to affordable quality treatment and helps to combat stigma and discrimination against infected and affected people. In addition, education helps overcome the socio-economic barriers that foster the spread of HIV, such as poverty, ill health, and gender abuse and violence.

In this context, education is essential to providing protection against HIV/AIDS, and to ensuring that those living with HIV have the knowledge and skills to access appropriate health and social care, even in the absence of HIV-specific interventions. As knowledge of the HIV epidemic has improved, education has developed more differentiated and regionally-specific approaches for generalized, low prevalence and concentrated epidemics. It imparts

⁴⁰ Annan, K. (2001). We the Children Meeting the promises of the World Summit for Children. Report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

⁴¹ United Nations (2010). The Millennium Development Goals Report 2010. p.40

⁴² UNICEF (2004). Girls, HIV/AIDS and Education

⁴³ UNAIDS Interagency Task Team (2008). HIV and AIDS Education in Emergencies. Advocacy Briefing Note

⁴⁴ United Nations (2010). Achieving the Millennium Development Goals in an era of global uncertainty: Asia Pacific Regional Report 2009/10, p.9

⁴⁵ The regions are based on the ESCAP regional classifications. See Annex 2

⁴⁶ United Nations (2010). Achieving the Millennium Development Goals in an era of global uncertainty: Asia Pacific Regional Report 2009/10, p. 15

knowledge and skills and can encourage positive behaviours, lowering the risk of acquiring and transmitting HIV. Through empowerment, increased access to equitable and quality education reduces vulnerability to HIV. As a result of well-established educational benefits, approximately 700,000 new infections would have been prevented every year through the achievement of UPE.⁴⁷ Education has been recognized by UNAIDS as a key element of effective HIV prevention, and new strategies aimed at HIV prevention in the education sector are increasingly focused on comprehensive sexuality education. Even in the absence of HIV-specific interventions, education offers an important measure of protection against HIV. In particular, it reduces the vulnerability of girls, with each year of schooling offering greater protective benefits. One study, covering 32 countries, found that women with post-primary education were five times more likely than illiterate women to know about HIV/AIDS. Appropriately-delivered education can enhance knowledge with skills, such as negotiation and critical decision-making, needed in adolescence and beyond to protect against HIV infection.

Progress is being made, but national education systems, especially in the countries that are regressing, need to reinforce their pivotal role. School-based HIV education offers a very cost-effective approach to prevention, as schools provide a practical means to reach large numbers of young people from diverse social backgrounds. Until recently, insufficient data was available on the cost of school-based interventions. The results of a UNESCO study into the cost and cost-effectiveness of school-based HIV prevention and sexuality education are expected in 2011 and will provide a valuable set of benchmarks for international use. Non-formal and informal education should also be provided to youth and adolescents to encourage healthy sexual behaviour.

Discussion points

- What can education policy-makers do to ensure that sexuality and health education is integrated holistically within the education policy planning process and practice within the formal education system?
- What policies can be implemented to reach out to specific populations – e.g. rural and under-served communities, people living with HIV, men who have sex with men, injection drug users – to improve their sexuality and health education, especially through non-formal and informal education?
- What can the education sector do to promote health education and literacy to improve the general awareness of the population at large of the causes and treatments of infectious disease such as tuberculosis?
- What kind of policies should be adopted across the education and health sectors to maximize the strengths of both systems? What measures can be taken to develop the human resources of health services through education?

III.3 Education and Sustainable Development (Goal 7)

- *Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes, and reverse the loss of environmental resources*
- *Reduce biodiversity loss, achieving by 2010 a significant reduction in the rate of loss*
- *Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation*
- *By 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers*

⁴⁷ Global Campaign for Education (2004). Learning to survive: How education for all would save millions of young people from HIV/AIDS. Strategic Approach: HIV & AIDS and Education

The Asia-Pacific region is both on track and regressing on MDG Goal 7 on ensuring environmental sustainability. On certain indicators – such as ensuring a proportion of protected areas to maintain bio-diversity, reducing consumption of ozone-depleting substances, and halving the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water – the region is an early achiever. However, on indicators such as forest area coverage and CO₂ emissions, the entire region is either regressing or showing limited progress.

Education is at the heart of the long-term solution for environmental sustainability. Quality and relevant education programmes enable children, youth and adults to better understand local environments, manage waste, preserve and manage ecosystems, design greener technologies, change consumption and production patterns, and anticipate future ecological threats. They equip people with the knowledge, skills, values and behaviours needed for sustainability.

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) addresses key issues, such as poverty reduction, sustainable livelihoods, climate change, gender equality, corporate social responsibility and protection of indigenous cultures. It aims to change the way we think, behave, look at the world, interact with nature and address social, economic and environmental problems. Governments are realizing the urgent need to take action in these areas. According to a recent survey, 79 countries, of which 13 are in the Asia-Pacific region, now have a national ESD coordination body.⁴⁸ Recognizing the linkages between education and environmental sustainability, some governments have integrated climate change modules into their compulsory education programmes. Additionally, a number of school-based projects and activities have been designed and implemented throughout the region.

In the context of climate change, education can address the causes of environmental depletion and degradation. It provides the knowledge and promotes the attitudes needed to maximize the future use of natural resources and energy production. Research and innovation are key drivers to reducing reliance on non-renewable resources. The integration of ESD in school curricula, teacher training programmes and non-formal education can transform the learning process into a driver of environmental sustainability. This learning process also reinforces the relevance of environmental studies to learners' everyday lives. Results from PISA 2006 demonstrate that students with higher performance scores in science are systematically more aware of environmental issues and less likely to be ignorant of human impact on the environment.⁴⁹

Education can also help mitigate environmental degradation and prevent natural disasters through knowledge transfers, social strategies, economic models and technologies.⁵⁰ Rural populations can, for example, be taught sustainable agricultural practices such as drought-resistant farming for seasons with little rainfall. Likewise, proper training can improve water governance aimed at reinforcing resource management and safety. Moreover, both formal and non-formal education – through their ability to give hope, confidence and a sense of normalcy – can help mitigate the psychosocial effects of disaster and displacement.

UNESCO's Associated Schools Project Network (ASPnet) has served as a platform to initiate, innovate and integrate ESD approaches into the school environment. Various activities help teachers and students gain valuable knowledge and develop new attitudes in support of sustainable development, such as recycling water and energy, participating in the monitoring of beaches, and many others.⁵¹ Recently, more than 50,000 students from 27 primary and

⁴⁸ Australia, China, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Mongolia, the Philippines, Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka, Uzbekistan, Viet Nam

⁴⁹ OECD (2006). PISA 2006 Science Competencies for Tomorrow's World

⁵⁰ UNESCO (2009). EFA Global Monitoring Report 2009 Overcoming inequality: why governance matters.

⁵¹ UNESCO (2009). Second Collection of Good Practices Education for Sustainable Development UNESCO Associated Schools.

secondary schools in China have been actively engaged in learning about and protecting the Yangtze River as part of an ESD project. The students proposed a policy change to better protect the river that was approved by the local government. This is just one example of learning by doing and changing mindsets and behaviour – not only of the students, but of the community at large. Such positive outcomes of school-based activities give hope for even larger and more beneficial environmental education policies.

Despite some positive signs of progress, the 2010 MDG Report suggests that MDG 7 is at risk of not being achieved due to high rates of deforestation, continued biodiversity loss, uneven provision of safe drinking water and basic sanitation, and an increasing number of slum dwellers in developing regions. Education can foster the change of attitudes and values of individuals and the social transformation patterns required to address these issues and accelerate advances towards the attainment of MDG 7. The stakes are particularly high in low-income countries and among poor population groups, who are generally less prepared for extreme weather conditions, more susceptible to the ill-effects of environmental hazards and more reliant on biodiversity.

In order for education to contribute to achieving MDG 7, education policy-makers must ensure that the principles, values and practices of sustainable development are integrated throughout the planning and practice of the formal education system. Non-formal and informal education must also be encouraged to change mindsets and instill the values of sustainable development among the general population.

Discussion points

- What can education policy-makers do to integrate the knowledge, skills, values and behaviours needed to promote sustainable development into education planning and practice? What types of education pedagogy can be used to foster such qualities?
- How can formal, non-formal and informal education be integrated to create synergy in promoting and delivering education for sustainable development? What types of regional cooperation could promote and enhance education for sustainable development throughout the entire region?

Conclusion

The Asia-Pacific region as a whole is progressing well towards achieving the internationally-agreed MDGs by 2015, but further efforts are necessary to meet all goals on time. This background note to the regional preparatory meeting for Asia and the Pacific to the ECOSOC AMR highlights the crucial role of education, not only for the intrinsic value of education, but for the larger purpose of achieving other socio-economic development goals. It puts forward the argument that education is one of the main catalysts to achieving all of the MDGs including poverty reduction, improvement of health and environmental sustainability. Research demonstrates the positive correlations between education, poverty reduction and health. Sustainable development is possible only when citizens are educated to be aware of the consequences of their behaviour and are encouraged to change the society in which they live to better preserve the environment.

Reaching out to marginalized groups remains a particular challenge for the region and should be actively pursued as a strategy to ensure that all benefit from the far-reaching transforming power of education. A stronger focus on equity in education can generate a virtuous cycle to address inequalities in other MDGs and ultimately reach the goals on time.

Six-months after the MDG Summit in New York, it is hoped that the regional preparatory meeting for Asia and the Pacific to the ECOSOC AMR will be an occasion to discuss regional, sub-regional and national follow-up initiatives to the recommendations of the Summit and to engage in a regional dialogue across different sectors on the role education can play in achieving the MDGs.

ANNEX I. Millennium Development Goals

- **Goal 1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger**
 - Target 1.A: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than one dollar a day
- *Indicators*
 1. Proportion of population below \$1 (PPP) per day [\(a\)](#)
 2. Poverty gap ratio
 3. Share of poorest quintile in national consumption
- Target 1.B: Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people
- *Indicators*
 - 1.4 Growth rate of GDP per person employed
 - 1.5 Employment -to-population ratio
 - 1.6 Proportion of employed people living below \$1 (PPP) per day
 - 1.7 Proportion of own-account and contributing family workers in total employment
- Target 1.C: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger
- *Indicators*
 - 1.8 Prevalence of underweight children under -five years of age
 - 1.9 Proportion of population below minimum level of dietary energy consumption

- **Goal 2. Achieve universal primary education**
- Target 2.A: Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling
- *Indicators*
 - 2.1 Net enrolment ratio in primary education
 - 2.2 Proportion of pupils starting grade 1 who reach last grade of primary
 - 2.3 Literacy rate of 15-24 year-olds, women and men

- **Goal 3. Promote gender equality and empower women**
- Target 3.A: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015
- *Indicators*
 - 3.1 Ratios of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education
 - 3.2 Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector
 - 3.3 Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament

- **Goal 4. Reduce child mortality**
- Target 4.A: Reduce by two-thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under -five mortality rate
- *Indicators*
 - 4.1 Under-five mortality rate
 - 4.2 Infant mortality rate
 - 4.3 Proportion of 1 year-old children immunised against measles

- **Goal 5. Improve maternal health**
- Target 5.A: Reduce by three quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio

- *Indicators*
 - 5.1 Maternal mortality ratio
 - 5.2 Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel
- Target 5.B: Achieve, by 2015, universal access to reproductive health
- *Indicators*
 - 5.3 Contraceptive prevalence rate
 - 5.4 Adolescent birth rate
 - 5.5 Antenatal care coverage (at least one visit and at least four visits)
 - 5.6 Unmet need for family planning

- **Goal 6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases**
- Target 6.A: Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS
- *Indicators*
 - 6.1 HIV prevalence among population aged 15-24 years
 - 6.2 Condom use at last high-risk sex
 - 6.3 Proportion of population aged 15-24 years with comprehensive correct knowledge of HIV/AIDS
 - 6.4 Ratio of school attendance of orphans to school attendance of non-orphans aged 10-14 years
- Target 6.B: Achieve, by 2010, universal access to treatment for HIV/AIDS for all those who need it
- *Indicators*
 - 6.5 Proportion of population with advanced HIV infection with access to antiretroviral drugs
- Target 6.C: Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases
- *Indicators*
 - 6.6 Incidence and death rates associated with malaria
 - 6.7 Proportion of children under 5 sleeping under insecticide-treated bednets
 - 6.8 Proportion of children under 5 with fever who are treated with appropriate anti-malarial drugs
 - 6.9 Incidence, prevalence and death rates associated with tuberculosis
 - 6.10 Proportion of tuberculosis cases detected and cured under directly observed treatment short course

- **Goal 7. Ensure environmental sustainability**
- Target 7.A: Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources
- *Indicators*
 - 7.1 Proportion of land area covered by forest
 - 7.2 CO₂ emissions, total, per capita and per \$1 GDP (PPP)
 - 7.3 Consumption of ozone-depleting substances
 - 7.4 Proportion of fish stocks within safe biological limits
 - 7.5 Proportion of total water resources used
- Target 7.B: Reduce biodiversity loss, achieving, by 2010, a significant reduction in the rate of loss
- *Indicators*
 - 7.6 Proportion of terrestrial and marine areas protected
 - 7.7 Proportion of species threatened with extinction
- Target 7.C: Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation
- *Indicators*
 - 7.8 Proportion of population using an improved drinking water source
 - 7.9 Proportion of population using an improved sanitation facility
- Target 7.D: By 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers

- *Indicators*
7.10 Proportion of urban population living in slums

- **Goal 8. Develop a global partnership for development**

Some of the indicators listed below are monitored separately for the least developed countries (LDCs), Africa, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States.

- Target 8.A: Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system
Includes a commitment to good governance, development and poverty reduction - both nationally and internationally
- Target 8.B: Address the special needs of the least developed countries
Includes: tariff and quota free access for the least developed countries' exports; enhanced programme of debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) and cancellation of official bilateral debt; and more generous ODA for countries committed to poverty reduction
- Target 8.C: Address the special needs of landlocked developing countries and small island developing States (through the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and the outcome of the twenty-second special session of the General Assembly)
- Target 8.D: Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries through national and international measures in order to make debt sustainable in the long term

ANNEX II. Education for All (EFA) Goals

Goal 1. Expanding and improving comprehensive [early childhood care and education](#), especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.

Goal 2. Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory [primary education](#) of good quality.

Goal 3. Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate [learning and life skills](#) programmes.

Goal 4. Achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult [literacy](#) by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.

Goal 5. Eliminating [gender](#) disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.

Goal 6. Improving all aspects of the [quality of education](#) and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

ANNEX III. Regional classification of Education for All Global Monitoring Report

East Asia

Brunei Darussalam
Cambodia
China
Democratic People's Republic of Korea
Indonesia
Japan
Lao People's Democratic Republic
Macao, China
Malaysia
Myanmar
Philippines
Republic of Korea
Singapore
Thailand
Timor-Leste
Viet Nam

South and West Asia

Afghanistan
Bangladesh
Bhutan
India
Iran, Islamic Republic of
Maldives
Nepal
Pakistan
Sri Lanka

The Pacific

Australia
Cook Islands
Fiji
Kiribati
Marshall Islands
Micronesia (Federated States of)
Nauru
New Zealand
Niue
Palau
Papua New Guinea
Samoa
Solomon Islands
Tokelau
Tonga
Tuvalu
Vanuatu

Central Asia

Armenia
Azerbaijan
Georgia
Kazakhstan
Kyrgyzstan
Mongolia
Tajikistan
Turkmenistan
Uzbekistan

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