

12 Participation in education

Asia and the Pacific has made considerable progress in bringing children into the educational system. Nevertheless, more than 29 million of the region's children are still not in school.

The Millennium Development Goals and the Education for All (EFA) initiative state that by 2015, all children should have access to, and complete, good quality primary education. To achieve this, most countries in the region have passed laws making primary education compulsory, and in some cases free. Additionally, some countries are aiming to achieve full participation in basic education – covering both primary and lower secondary levels.

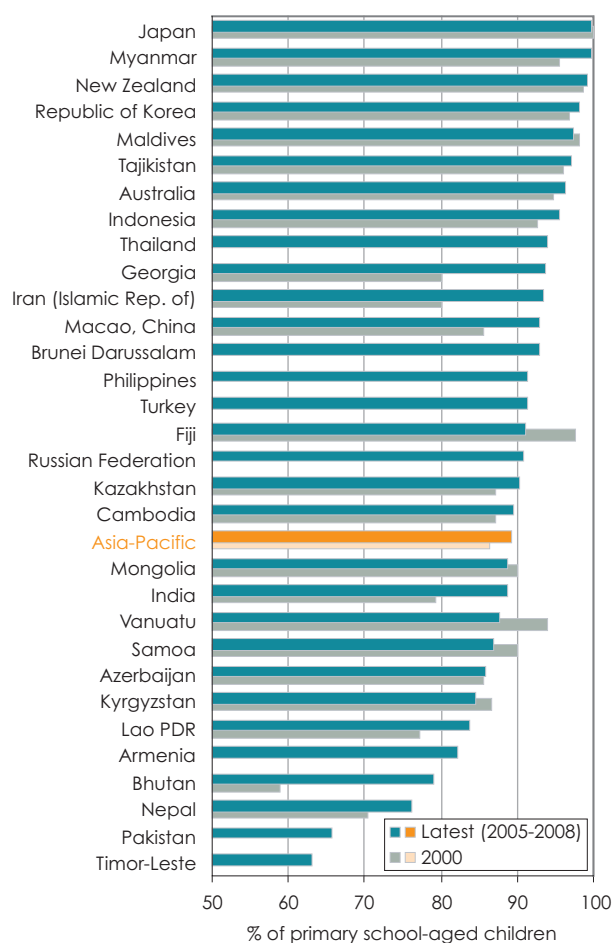
Partly due to the EFA initiative, which started in 1990, most countries in Asia and the Pacific have made steady progress in bringing education to children and keeping them in school. Between 2000 and 2006, the region's average net enrolment ratio (NER) in primary education increased from 86 to 89 per cent – significantly higher than in Africa, which in 2006 reached 73 per cent, but somewhat lower than in Latin America and the Caribbean, which reached 94 per cent.

Among the various country groups in 2006, the highest primary NERs – above 90 per cent – were in South-East Asia, East and North-East Asia, and ASEAN, as well as in high- and middle-income economies. The lowest – below 80 per cent – were in landlocked developing countries, Pacific developing economies, ECO member States and low-income economies. Some of the most rapid progress was in the SAARC countries: between 2000 and 2006, the rate increased from 75 to 85 per cent.

The situation is even more diverse at the country level. For the 30 countries in the Asia-Pacific region for which data were available, 17 had primary NERs of more than 90 per cent – including Japan, and the Republic of Korea with rates above 98 per cent. At the other end of the scale, some countries have NERs below 80 per cent

Figure 12.1

Net primary enrolment, Asia and the Pacific, 2000-2008



– Timor-Leste (63 per cent), Pakistan (66 per cent), Nepal (76 per cent) and Bhutan (79 per cent).

In their efforts to achieve universal primary education many developing countries are channelling the bulk of their resources to primary education. However, as the number of primary school leavers increases governments are now paying greater to secondary schooling. In the ASEAN countries, for example, between 2000 and 2006 the NER increased by only one percentage point, but the secondary NER increased by 8 percentage points, from 53 to 61 per cent. Nevertheless, many

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primary completers are still unable to move to secondary education. In the Asia-Pacific region, while 9 out of 10 children of primary-school age are enrolled in school, for secondary school the proportion is only 6 out of 10.

The chances of receiving a secondary education are far greater in the richer countries. In 2006 in the Economic Cooperation Organization countries, for example, the secondary NER was 50.8 per cent, but in the high-income economies, the ratio was at least 95 per cent.

Compared with primary education, differences between countries are greater at the secondary level. In 2006, secondary NERs ranged from a low of 29.7 per cent in Pakistan to a high of 98.7 per cent in Japan. Of the countries where data were available, Bhutan, Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Pakistan enrolled less than half their secondary school-age children. In Cambodia and Pakistan, the proportion was only one child in three.

Some countries and areas have made noticeable improvements. Between 1999-2000 and 2006-2007 a number of countries/areas recorded more than 10 percentage point increases in secondary NERs: Bhutan; Cambodia; Indonesia; Macao, China; Myanmar; Mongolia and Tajikistan. On the other hand, some countries have slipped into reverse: in Tonga after 2000 the secondary NER decreased by more than 10 percentage points.

Compared with the primary level, there are fewer data available for secondary and tertiary levels of subregional averages are available only for a limited range of indicators.

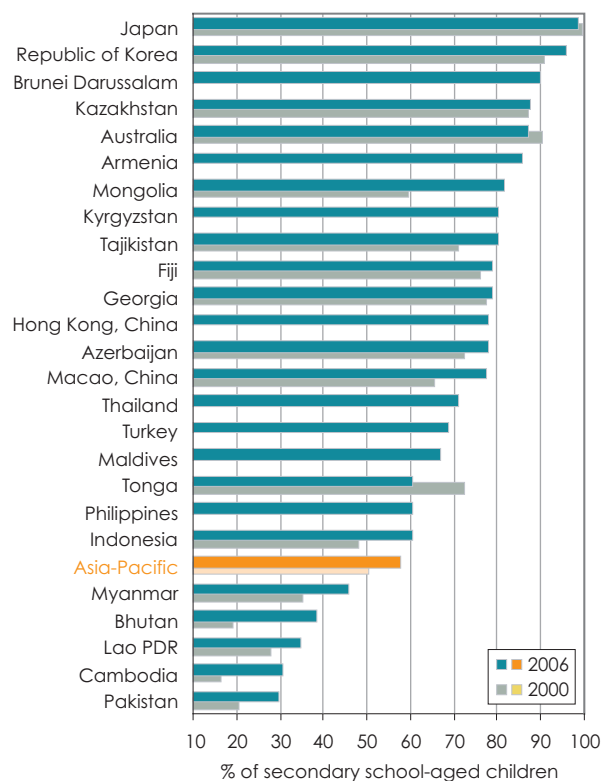
Many more young people in Asia and the Pacific are now benefitting from tertiary education. In this report, participation in tertiary education is measured by the gross enrolment ratio (GER) – the number of students enrolled in tertiary education, regardless of age, as a percentage of the five-year age group population following on the secondary school leaving age.

Between 1999 and 2006, the average tertiary GER increased from 12 to 20 per cent. Among the subregions, the highest GERs were in North and Central Asia, at 54 per cent followed by 52 per cent in the Pacific, and 26 per cent in East and North-East Asia.

Compared with secondary education, the chances of receiving tertiary education are even more dependent on income. Among the high-income economies, the GER was 67 per cent, compared with 8 per cent for the low-income group.

Figure 12.2

Net secondary enrolment, Asia and the Pacific, 2000-2006



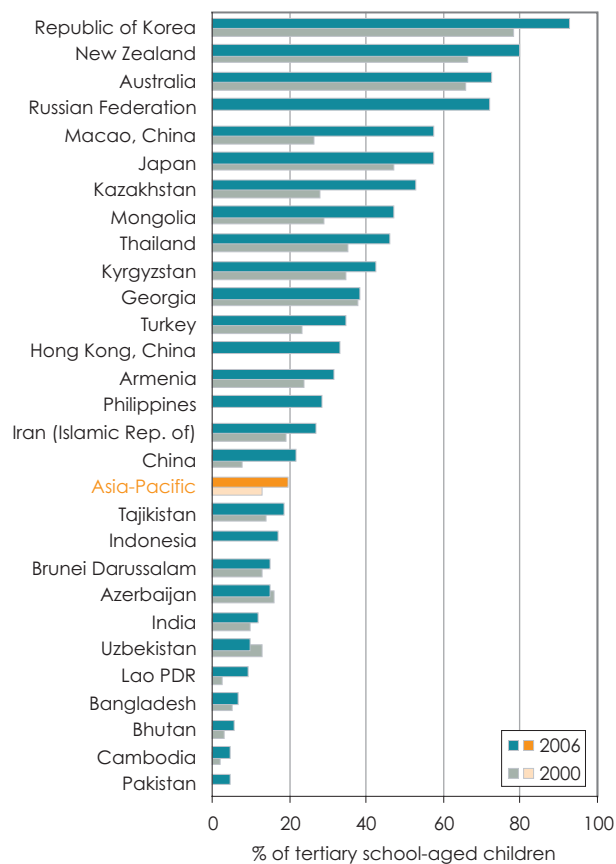
Among the 28 countries with available data between 2006 and 2007, only seven countries and areas had tertiary GERs above 50 per cent: Australia; Japan; Kazakhstan; Macao, China; New Zealand; Republic of Korea; and the Russian Federation. Of these, the Republic of Korea and New Zealand had the highest GERs: 93 and 80 per cent, respectively. On the other hand, some countries had GERs below 10 per cent – Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Pakistan and Uzbekistan – almost all low-income economies.

The second main measure of educational attainment is school life expectancy (SLE). This is the number of years a child of school entrance age is expected to spend in school or university, including years spent on repetition – and is a useful measure of the quality of education, reflecting the resources that countries are investing. In 2006, the Asia-Pacific region had an average SLE of 10.5 years – male 10.8, female 10.2 – indicating that most young people never reach the tertiary level. The SLE for Asia and the Pacific was greater than in Africa at 8.4 years, but lower than that in Latin America and the Caribbean at 13.3 years and Europe at 15.3 years.

SLEs in Asia and the Pacific also show considerable subregional variation. In 2006 the values ranged from 8.5 years in the low-income

Figure 12.3

Gross tertiary enrolment, Asia and the Pacific, 2000-2006



economies to 16 years in the high-income economies. Variations were even more marked at the country level. Based on the 2006-2007 data, SLEs were less than 10 years in Pakistan, Nauru (both sexes) and Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, India (female only). On the other hand, Australia, Japan, Kazakhstan, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea and Macao, China had SLEs greater than 14 years for both sexes. Brunei Darussalam, the Russian Federation and Thailand had SLEs greater than 14 years for females only. Australia (both sexes) and New Zealand (females only) had SLEs of more than 20 years.

In many countries women stay longer in education than men. Of the 46 countries where data was available between 1999 and 2007, 22 had women's SLEs longer than men's. Among these, the most favourable to women previously was Kiribati: in 2000 its SLE for women was 2.8 years higher than that of men, but by 2005 the gap had been reduced to 0.8 years. However, over the period 2005-2007, the biggest gaps favouring women were in New Zealand and Mongolia, both at 1.8 years. In contrast, Afghanistan was the most disadvantageous for women, in 2004 with a 6.5 year gap.

Net enrolment ratio in primary education (% of primary school-aged children)

The number of pupils of the theoretical school-age group for primary education, expressed as a percentage of the total population in that age-group. **Aggregates:** Aggregate values have been calculated by UNESCO Institute for Statistics. **Source:** UNESCO Institute for Statistics, Data Centre (online database, accessed on 19 November 2008).

School life expectancy from primary to tertiary, boys and girls (years)

The number of years a four-year old girl or boy is expected to spend in education from primary to tertiary level, including years spent on repetition. Data are disaggregated by sex. **Aggregates:** Aggregate values are calculated by UNESCO Institute for Statistics. **Source:** UNESCO Institute for Statistics, Data Centre (online database, accessed on 1 December 2008).

Net enrolment ratio in secondary education (% of secondary school-aged children)

The number of pupils of the theoretical school-age group for secondary education, expressed as a percentage of the total population in that age group. **Aggregates:** Aggregate values have been calculated by UNESCO Institute for

Statistics. **Source:** UNESCO Institute for Statistics, Data Centre (online database, accessed on 19 November 2008).

Gross enrolment ratio in tertiary education (% of tertiary school-aged children)

The number of pupils enrolled in the tertiary level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the population in the theoretical age group for the same level of education. For the tertiary level, the population used is the five-year age group following on from the secondary school leaving age. **Aggregates:** Aggregate values have been calculated by UNESCO Institute for Statistics. **Source:** UNESCO Institute for Statistics, Data Centre (online database, accessed on 19 November 2008).

Gender parity index for net enrolment – Primary and secondary education and gross enrolment for tertiary education (ratio)

Ratio of female to male enrolment ratios for each level of education. A GPI of 1 indicates parity between sexes. **Aggregates:** Aggregate values have been calculated by UNESCO Institute for Statistics. **Source:** UNESCO Institute for Statistics, Data Centre (online database, accessed on 21 November 2008).

