Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

**OUTLOOK**

The prospects for achieving this goal have a good start due to near-universal primary school enrolment and gender parity achievements to date in Asia and the Pacific overall. Ensuring equal access for marginalized groups and quality dimensions of education will be major challenges, with investment needed to provide lifelong learning opportunities, the development of relevant skills and early childhood development and care.

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**THE PHOTO**

Only 15 years old, Shahzaman Nazar Ali taught at a school run by volunteers at the Pakistan Navy Relief Camp during the 2009 floods

Photo credit: ADB
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INSIGHTS

- Despite increases in government spending on education in some countries of the region, education is still not a priority in many national budgets. In some countries, international assistance makes a significant supplement to the education budget.

- Available data indicate that 44 countries in the region received official development assistance (ODA) for education from the donor community in 2014. Among them, India received the largest share of donors’ education assistance in terms of total United States dollars received per year, followed by Pakistan, China and Bangladesh.¹

- Early childhood interventions are necessary for all children because of the enormous impact on their readiness for primary school and then their transition to secondary education. Yet, large numbers of children continue to miss out, and inequality in opportunity is increasing for the poorest children, for children living in rural areas or slums and for children marginalized due to a disability or their ethnic origin, religion or language.²

- Children with disabilities make up a considerable proportion of marginalized groups. Early childhood services to assess and address disability in children as soon as possible helps children and their families improve their life outcomes.

- In many countries where the most important shortcomings in investment in education are seen, in particular the least developed countries, investment in education falls far short of the required level. Low human capital formation is a barrier to development.

- Technical and vocational education and training helps strengthen job-relevant skills and is becoming a strategic priority in many countries but lacks investment needed to improve. Greater employer engagement and better workplace linkages are key priorities.
BRIGHT SPOTS

Primary and secondary education

- Most countries in the region have achieved or are close to achieving universal primary education. Nearly 78 million children across the region were enrolled in pre-primary education in 2013, almost double the number for 1999. The six most significant increases (latest year compared with 1999) were recorded in China, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal and Viet Nam, where the gross enrolment ratios increased by 40–75 percentage points.

- The transition from primary to secondary education and the completion of secondary education is also on the rise

HOTSPOTS

Quality of education and relevant skills

- Based on available data, 18.2 million children were not enrolled in primary school in the past few years. Bhutan, Cambodia, India, Tajikistan and Timor-Leste recorded the lowest ratios of pre-primary enrolment, ranging from 10 per cent to 18 per cent.

- Based on the latest data available, a considerable number of teachers in pre-primary, primary and secondary education do not have the necessary teacher training qualifications. In addition, the percentage of trained teachers in primary education is quite low in some countries, such as Bangladesh, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.

- Quality of education is a major concern. Results of international assessments indicate that learning outcomes in many developing countries in the region have stagnated, except in Viet Nam. Disparities between girls and boys in terms of education outcomes (proficiency level in mathematics, science and reading) are significant.

- ODA to education is declining, with total assistance to the region dropping to $4.7 billion in 2014 from $5.1 billion in 2011.

- Traditional models of higher education institutions in Asia and the Pacific lack the ability to innovate and create knowledge—and to find innovative applications of what is learned, which is problematic in a dynamic region with a rapidly increasing number of middle-income countries.
EMERGING ISSUES

- There is rising demand to strengthen the post-basic education system as primary education completion rates improve, coupled with demographic trends. The transition of many developing countries to middle-income status is creating pressure to improve employability and close skill gaps among graduates.

- Skills development will have an increasingly important role in regional integration, which will provide countries with a valuable opportunity for shared prosperity and more even economic development.

- Disadvantaged and marginalized youth will need mentoring to improve their learning outcomes and to provide the industry with a diverse talent pipeline.

- The education system is only as good as the teachers who provide hands-on instruction. Additional teachers are needed for universal primary and secondary education to replace or supplement the teaching workforce.

- There is a need to increase innovative financing on education projects by strengthening collaboration between governments, financial institutions and other stakeholders, including civil society, and by expanding access and the use of personal savings and loan products to help families plan for and finance education costs.

- Collaboration across the industry and exploration of good practices for advancing financial literacy is needed, both in schools and for men and women, including marginalized groups (such as people with disabilities, indigenous peoples and racial and ethnic minorities).

- Expanding health, life and livelihood insurance coverage in developing countries will enable reducing the risk of children missing school due to untreated medical conditions because they must care for a sick relative or they must undertake livelihood activities to supplement household income.

- Small and medium-sized enterprise entrepreneurs will need accounting, customer service and business management training, thereby building loyalty with their customers and helping them to attract new ones.

TARGETS

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

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

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

4.4 By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship
4.5 By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations.

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

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

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

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

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