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East Asia regional analysis

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GLOBAL MONITORING REPORT: EAST ASIA REGIONAL ANALYSIS

Background This overview attempts to capture something of both the variation and underlying similarities of Education for All application in East Asia, as indicated through progress on the six Dakar goals. The region is comprised of Brunei Darussalam, *Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Japan, Lao PDR, Macao/China, Malaysia, Myanmar, People’s Democratic Republic of Korea, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam*. The eight italicized countries, rather than the region as a whole, are the principal “focus countries” of this report, the countries facing the greatest challenges in realizing EFA goals, and whose progress is of most concern to the development community.

Limitations The principal limitation of this report is that it is not built on the analysis of primary data. Pursuant to the terms of reference, it draws on “the most recent data available in the countries and region as well as from secondary research”. Because no field-work was included, the *significant majority of the analysis is based on secondary sources*. The report does not display their original data, but assumes them to be credible.

Data were collected over a 6-week period from on-hand materials and reports specifically requested from UNESCO/Bangkok and UNICEF/EAPRO¹; from national EFA Co-ordination offices²; and from various country and thematic reports. The report expressly did not collect statistical data from the UIS; references to national-level statistics, not vetted through the GMR process, are therefore presented as indicative only.

Overall, then, while data used in the report are considered of reasonable quality and validity, they are neither comprehensive nor representative either of the region as a whole or of the eight focus countries. They are skewed toward the specific situations and issues of concern to the eight focus countries, and to the information supplied.

1. Introduction to the Region

East Asia overall continues to make notable progress in realizing universal access to basic education, with “the highest primary participation rates in the entire developing world”³. It is also a region with major inter- and intra-country disparity. Four countries are not included on the EFA Development Index⁴, essentially EFA-secure. Four others⁵ have been characterized as “fragile”, struggling with major socio-economic and political barriers to their overall development, and EFA within this.

The eight focus countries of this report have drafted EFA National Plans of Action; most are officially approved⁶. All are being implemented as part of general national education policy. In all cases, national governments⁷ have led the NPA development process, the primary voices in determining direction, scope and emphasis. Due largely to limited experience with participatory policy-making processes and weak domestic NGO capacity, civil society consultations were minimal. Nevertheless, EFA integration into national-level thinking is happening, as central ministries attempt to finalize the NPA

process through actions to mobilize provincial and district buy-in and engage communities in addressing specific national EFA priorities.

2. *Progress on Education for All Goals*^a

Goal 1: Expanding and improving early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged.

ECCE in East Asia involves two fairly distinct perspectives, distinguished by:

- age group: 0-3//4-6
- purpose: to ensure the physical, emotional and intellectual development of young children//to prepare older children intellectually and psycho-socially for school
- modality: nonformal family and community-based//semi-formal pre-school or kindergarten
- provider: community groups and NGOs, often under the aegis of international agencies and using untrained care givers/teachers//government and communities, often through schools and formal school teachers, sometimes trained in ECCE
- targeted recipients: young children and families in disadvantaged and minority communities//children preparing for school, often in urban and better-off communities able to assume funding responsibility.

Assessing ECCE across the region is tenuous, limited by weak data, indicating varying trends. UNICEF, for example, notes evidence of stagnation and declining coverage, a contraction of support following the 1990s expansion⁸. Alternately, UNESCO notes ECCE as an “emerging priority”⁹. Both confirm “significant information gaps” regionally, with respect to content, processes and effectiveness¹⁰. Notwithstanding this uncertainty, it is clear that ECCE across the region is fluid, and diverse. The Republic of Korea, Thailand and Malaysia, for example, “have over 80% of their 3-5 year old children in organized learning centres”, while Lao PDR and Cambodia report less than 10% of 3-5 year olds in such environments¹¹.

However, in general, all countries are increasing enrolment¹². Part of this appears to be due to a trend noted in most countries of more pre-schools supported through private financing¹³. On the positive side, this suggests increasing domestic demand, upwardly-mobile parents seeking access to better education facilities and learning outcomes for their children¹⁴. Vietnam, for example, reports “gains in enrolment ...attributed to rising parental awareness of the benefits of ECCE and the diversification of school types” being realized through a “rapid increase in semi and non-public” provision¹⁵. On the other hand, a decline in public spending risks “increasing the disparity in school readiness between rich and poor, urban and rural”¹⁶. It may also undermine some of the gains being made by girls at this level; much of which has come through gender advocacy by international donors and NGOs with respect to government spending.

Brunei, Malaysia and Thailand, China to a lesser degree, emphasize formal pre-primary education with professionally trained teachers. These schools are generally free-standing and urban, serving the better-off communities. The less ECCE-advanced countries are

^a Goals 1-5 are discussed in this section. Goal 6, on education quality, is addressed in section 3 as a cross-cutting “necessary condition” of EFA.

also stressing support to preschool programmes, aiming to prepare children for school, a key strategy for improving enrolment and persistence especially in the early primary grades.

At the same time, the focus in these latter countries is a more complex. In part spurred by Dakar and international agencies, ECCE as reflected in all EFA/NPA is being enlarged to include an expressly development dimension. Typically, the view is holistic and long-term, toward ensuring children's full development and learning, birth to school age; and doing so by reaching out through a growing number of community-based programmes to include rural and ethnic minority poor communities in ways that link them to other development objectives (maternal health, literacy).

With less than 1% of eligible 1-2 year olds in crèches, only 6-10% of 3-5 year olds in kindergartens¹⁷ and the highest population growth rate in Southeast Asia, *Lao PDR* is focusing on improved ECCE action to increase enrolment -- anticipating an 11% increase for 3-4 year olds and 30% for 5 year olds by 2010, largely through expansion of community preschools¹⁸. ECCE is one of the four target EFA sectors in *Vietnam*. A specialized Strategy for ECCE for 2001/20 to strengthen a pro-poor policy and management framework is prioritizing disadvantaged, remote and mountainous areas, teacher training for children with learning challenges and school food programmes. *Cambodia's* EFA/NPA, while still struggling with uncertain targets and future financing, intends a dual track: broader access for 5-year old school readiness and family-based learning and development interventions for at-risk young children. Both build NGO-GO partnerships.

Initiatives such as UNICEF's Integrated Early Childhood Development network are encouraging a number of countries, with and without ECCE policies, to experiment with holistic approaches towards increasing quality and participation by vulnerable families.

- *Indonesia* is piloting integrated practices through projects such as Tanjungsari Integrated Women and Childcare Development to test the viability and effectiveness of strengthening village health posts as a modality for combining health and nutrition services with stimulation and learning activities for children under eight¹⁹.
- The EFA/NPA in *Myanmar* expects to synergize "whole child" interventions by "expanding 'parental education' and organizing technical services"²⁰ through an ECCD project mobilizing community-based childcare networks of pre-kindergartens attached to schools for 3-4 year olds and home-based Mothers Circles for younger children.
- The Education Strategic Vision of *Lao PDR* is promoting increases in both availability and quality of ECCE provision through initiatives such as the "best start in life" multi-sectoral cooperation programme of the Women's Union aimed at integrating early childhood with community development processes, focusing on the whole child and improved family and community care practices²¹.

Key lessons across this network are that the most effective interventions to support the development and learning of vulnerable children are organic: based within, and

developed in terms of, community traditions, and child-centred; delivered through interactive participation of families and communities; and adapted through local monitoring of costs, benefits and risks.

Goal 2: By 2015, ensuring all children, especially girls, children in difficult circumstances and children of ethnic minority communities have access to and complete free, compulsory primary education of good quality.

Regionally, enrolment levels are high, the average overall primary school NER 97%²². There are cautions, however. Strong countries are urged not to rest on success, with “relatively stagnant rates of national budget allocations to education” being reflected in stalled and declining enrolment²³. Nor can the region as a whole afford to ignore the growing two-worlds divide between the marginalized and mainstream, reflected in persistent and significant national and sub-national education inequalities.

Of middle and lower income countries, *China* displays the most dramatic success. 2003 government figures indicated 91% participation for 9-years compulsory education (98.6% for primary)²⁴. Much of this progress has come through stretching the education infrastructure close to its maximum effectiveness, systems are considered still weak with uneven outreach²⁵. The challenges now, therefore, are in “sustaining past gains without sacrificing quality and relevance”²⁶, and reaching those communities still excluded. An NER of 85% is not expected to be realized in the Western Region until the end of 2007, for example.

The eight countries in the region with low enrolment rates are showing modest improvement. Although at variance with a reported national NER of about 95% in 2002²⁷, for example, one 5-province study of 1000 urban, rural and mountain children in *Vietnam* found 99.5% were in school, rising to 100% in some urban and rural areas, and only slightly lower in the mountains at 98%. In total, 99.6% of 8-year old children in the 5 provinces were studying in public schools²⁸. As of 2004, primary enrolment in *Cambodia* was reported up from 2000, NER increasing 84% to 90%. The rise was “even greater for girls...in rural and remote areas” due to school facilities closer to home²⁹. Again, there was caution: lower secondary enrolment, having doubled in the 1990s, is beginning to “show signs of levelling off” at about 80%, with weaker transition rates³⁰.

Repetition, also varying regionally, remain problematic for most middle and less developed countries. Particularly disturbing is the persistent pattern of high repetition in the early grades, an indicator of systemic exclusion and poor quality. Repetition here is typically related to weak teaching, in turn a reflection of deficiencies in teacher training and distribution. Teachers with the least child-centred pedagogical skills and experience continue to be assigned to “low-status” young children. Exclusion is reinforced at this transition period between home and school cultures. Failing reconfirms marginalization for a child already made vulnerable by being culturally or linguistically different from the mainstream.

Ranging from over 90% in *China* and *Thailand*, to less than 50% in *Myanmar* and *Lao PDR*, varying completion rates at primary level reiterate regional disparity. For some, assuring even grade 5 survival is proving difficult -- indicative rates in the *Philippines*

79.3%, Cambodia 70%, Lao PDR 62% and Myanmar 59.9%³¹, for example. However, primary education completion is generally improving. This is an important quantitative measure of quality and inclusion, potentially at-risk children apparently feeling safe, secure and successful enough to persevere. Quality is also implied by completion insofar as children who experience a full primary cycle presumably acquire at least rudimentary knowledge of a curriculum considered adequate for living in their society.

Neither inclusion nor quality are confirmed by completion rates, of course. Children may stay enrolled, but be chronically absent -- a statistic ministries do not typically record, unfortunately³². Ethnic minority girls may be in class, but not learning where teachers consistently ignore them, as indicated in one Lao study³³. In many countries, patterns of weak student assessment and remediation, and of curricula neither relevant nor free of gender stereotypes, are threats to quality recognized, but largely untested.

Unsurprisingly, regional definitions of “basic” education are shifting. The terminology of Goal 2 is “primary”, but implies a level of education *sufficient* to enable self-directed, continuous learning. Graduates should be able to be healthy, responsible family members, citizens, workers. For a few countries, this level remains primary. For a growing number, lower secondary is now minimum for acquiring essential life and earning capacities; a level rising rapidly to upper secondary as access and completion targets are met and national socio-economic levels improve.

Also pertinent here is the region’s emerging “demographic window”³⁴: a combination of low fertility levels and relatively few over-60s, producing both disproportionately small “dependent”, and large adolescent-working, populations. The latter group is critical, young people with considerable potential for affecting, positively and negatively, the economic and social transformation of their countries. Regional disparity matters here, too. According to the UNICEF report, while many of these adolescents enjoy education, media access and mobility significantly greater than their parents, many others live in poverty, suffer violence and, while aware of being marginalized, lack the education or skills to move.

Research suggests that both groups are increasingly prepared to take personal, economic and social risks, and that the opportunity “window” is short-lived. Governments and the private sector need to track, plan and adapt in order to ensure the window is well used and the risks have positive outcomes. This includes making appropriate investments in education and training, as Thailand and Korea have already begun to do, creating a “framework for more open markets and for greater social participation”³⁵. Other countries are just beginning, in part through policies to address growing demands for secondary education.

But the shift of attention and resources to secondary education, while crucial, is also raising equity concerns, potentially putting at risk those hard-to-reach communities still without primary school access. Some countries are already being pushed to retool training colleges for secondary level, while still under-producing primary teachers. And secondary schools themselves tend to be less learner-friendly to vulnerable children.

Exam pressures, subject-oriented curricula and overloaded timetables make interactive, individualized instruction difficult. Drawing from multiple communities, comprehensive secondary schools limit connections with vulnerable families³⁶. The gender gap is also problematic here, 6% more boys than girls enrolled on average across the region.

Goal 3: Ensuring equitable access to appropriate learning of life capacities and skills programmes for all young people and adults³⁷

All EFA/NPA note the importance of life-skills, and some countries here and in other policies provide a reasonably clear sense of direction³⁸. Few, however, detail concrete targets in terms of what life skills, for whom, how they will be addressed and teachers prepared to enable them. In consequence, even where life-skills programming strategies appear to be coherent, they are limited in development and implementation terms. While international agencies and NGOs are supporting such activities, chiefly in reproductive health, HIV/AIDS and functional literacy, most are pilots yet to be institutionalized.

From a Goal 3 monitoring perspective, much of the difficulty arises from vagueness in defining what life skills mean beyond job skills. In fact, definitions tend to fall at both ends of an “abstract-practical” continuum: life skills as the generalized “ability and readiness to face and solve problems; ... adaptive and positive behaviours that enable individuals to deal effectively with demands and challenges of everyday life”; and as “things people should know and be able to do in order to live safely and securely in their societies” e.g. to earn income, produce crops, maintain a healthy household, avoid and manage risk - of abuse, disease, traffic, landmines, drowning³⁹.

There has been some movement toward greater clarity in the shift of perspective from life-skills as a single concept, to that of a *context-specific set of categories* signifying the knowledge and skills necessary and appropriate to one’s age/stage of life; social roles; cultural, socio-economic, political context; being in a “special circumstance” of risk, need or opportunity.

A further distinction helping to organize the field is that between life-skills *content* and *application*; between *knowing* the facts and *having the ability* to apply them. Progress is being made across the region on the first, indicated by increasing quantity and quality of life-relevant curriculum content. Progress is less on the second, systemic constraints here widely agreed as:

- weak capacity to determine appropriate standards for life-skills learning;
- insufficient data on skills and competencies needed by children/youth in specific contexts;
- limited expertise in designing appropriate, flexible curriculum and interactive teaching-learning materials;
- poorly trained, supervised and motivated teachers, with too few contact hours and facilities appropriate for active, experiential learning;
- recall-based student testing with little continuous assessment of higher-order cognitive or affective learning outcomes.

Contributing in part to the lack of specificity about life skills provision in EFA/NPA is the fact that, however defined, they are expected to be flexible and responsive,

accommodating to all types of learners and learning tasks and tailored to the unique situations of national and sub-national human resource demand. For this reason, the majority of life-skills programmes, and probably the most effective of these, are left to the relatively open-ended nonformal sector and extra-curricular activities of the formal.

- *China and Lao PDR*, for example, are confronting relatively large numbers of under-educated youth migrating to urban areas in search of work for which they lack requisite skills. Livelihood-cum-vocational training in China aims to enable them either to stay in the rural economy with better technical training, or to better fit into the urban one. By expanding both vocational-technical NFE programmes and the livelihood dimension of the formal system, the Lao EFA/NPA hopes to align more closely with this, the “major concern” of the National Poverty Eradication Programme⁴⁰.
- *Cambodia*, facing chronic post-war instability and serious human resource deficiencies, is promoting collaborative such GO-NGO programmes as IPM farmer and village life-schools⁴¹. Geared to both youth and young adults, contents focus on issues as diverse as basic life competencies (team building, problem analysis, data collection and solution testing), environmental protection, sustainable agriculture and food security, community health and conflict resolution, risk-avoidance behaviours.

Goal 4: By 2015, achieving 50% improvement in adult literacy, especially for women, and equitable access to effective basic and continuing education for adults.

By 2000, illiteracy in the region overall had dropped about 15% from 1990 levels. It is expected to decline another 24% by 2015, though only Thailand and Indonesia project the targeted 50% improvement. They, along with the Philippines and Vietnam, are also generally “on track” for female literacy; Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar continue to lag with 70%, 68% and 86% respectively⁴².

Improving progression and completion rates are, presumably, producing lower illiteracy levels, but quality remains a cautionary factor. Recent *Lao Literacy Survey* data⁴³, for example, show current primary school leavers relapsing into illiteracy at greater rates than those who left earlier. Perhaps a result of older people improving their skills through life experience, the trend is also linked to “deteriorating quality of primary education”⁴⁴. The Survey is also important in casting doubt on the assumed veracity of *reported* literacy claims. *Tested* literacy quality, calibrated according to its implied value to learners, showed the following rates for people over 15 years⁴⁵:

	<u>male</u>	<u>female</u>	<u>total</u>
Reported rates:	77.0%	60.9%	68.7%
Tested rates (a) basic:	53.7%	36.9%	45.2%
(b) functional:	45.2%	30.3%	37.7%
(c) secured ⁴⁶ :	37.4%	24.5%	30.8%

Correlates of illiteracy persist: poverty, ethnicity, location and, across all of these, gender. Again for *Lao PDR*, the poorest 20% had a “basic” literacy rate of 18.8%, a 13.6% “functional” level and a “secure” rate of only 8.7%. Female rates in all cases were less

than half that of male. Only 5.1% of the poorest women had “secure” literacy skills. 3/18 provinces had an overall functional literacy rate above 50%; five had less than 25%⁴⁷.

Indicating something of the range of people coming within the scope of literacy programming, *Cambodia* is pursuing a combination of three nonformal literacy and life skills education strategies: re-entry to primary/lower secondary for students out of school for more than 3 years (120,000 p.a.); equivalency for the same type of students, but those not in a position to return to school (150,000 p.a.); and expanded adult literacy through public, NGO and community partnership in border/remote areas (120,000 p.a.). The focus of all three is on the excluded: 60% female and 60% from poor families⁴⁸.

Goal 5: By 2005, eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education; and gender equality by 2015 through ensuring their access to, and completion of, basic education of good quality and relevance.

As of 2001 data, the region as a whole had “successfully removed the gender gap in NER at primary level”⁴⁹. There were significant exceptions, however: *Cambodia* with a GPI of .88, *Lao PDR* .95, *Thailand* .96 and *Vietnam* .94⁵⁰. Anecdotal country reports also suggest that, while gender *equity* continues to improve at a macro level, progress masks persistently serious problems of exclusion among rural and ethnic minority girls. In *Lao PDR*, for example, compared with lowland girls, girls of all ethnic minorities are less likely to be attending school⁵¹. At secondary level, girls’ transition and progression continue to lag. Again in *Lao PDR*, most recent data show a transition rate for girls to lower secondary of only 73% and for boys 81%. Both rates are an improvement, but the gap is not closing⁵².

Across the region, curriculum stereotyping, limited teacher capacity to use learner-centred methods and ‘glass ceilings’ at senior policy and management levels all render gender *equality* elusive. An Oxfam study in the *Philippines* noted that, despite realizing parity, gender biases against girls/women “are still deeply rooted in the school system in textbooks,... in school policies and practices, in curricula”. Especially serious are school climates which “create conditions which engender violence and sexual harassment”. Expulsion of pregnant teenage girls remains prevalent⁵³.

The UNICEF-supported Child-friendly School initiative in seven East Asian countries illustrates the challenges⁵⁴. Despite gender equality as a core dimension, most projects have yet to develop an “explicit strategy for dealing with gender as a specific strand of analysis and activity”. This includes, in several countries, an increasing decline in boys’ participation, and their poor learning outcomes in subjects such as language arts. Gender equality is “expected to be reflected in all activities”, meaning it often appears in none. Projects report limited use of “gender-oriented processes”, or a “deep understanding of gender issues” among partners. Qualitative indicators for monitoring gender outcomes have not been well developed, nor have gender-specific results been evaluated⁵⁵.

One problem especially for marginalized girls is an assumption of their automatic inclusion in efforts to reach vulnerable children. Gender is an easily-missed sub-factor in most exclusionary processes. In part, this results from a still-prevalent culture in the

region which, while accepting the inherent equality between boys and girls, holds as appropriate and important that they do and learn different things⁵⁶. One benchmark for gender-effective education not yet reached is balance: to create programmes appealing enough to bring girls into school, while introducing them to areas of knowledge, skills and cognitive processes often limited to boys. Similarly, more boys need to be included in those “girls” programmes typically aimed at strengthening family life, language and communication capacities.

A major barrier to improved gender equality in many countries are teachers and curriculum developers with poor knowledge of gender bias, its implications and remediation. Unfortunately, most country reports concur with the conclusion that “in reality, very little is known about the true extent of the issue of gender inequality among teachers, in the classroom or in the curriculum”⁵⁷. This suggests need across the region for more systematic analyses of gender-disaggregated baseline data, gender-sensitive indicators and gender-responsive policies and training⁵⁸.

3. Meeting the Necessary Conditions of Education For All

Three conditions underlie EFA progress: *enabling policy and institutional environments; education quality; and system inclusiveness*. None is sufficient in itself; each depends on, and is realized through, the others. Without *enabling environments* to mobilize EFA processes, good quality, inclusive systems are not emerging. Without evidence of *quality*, vulnerable children are not enrolling or are dropping out before reaching sustainable learning levels. Without quality, systems are not proving *inclusive*. Lacking observable progress on quality and inclusion, EFA policies remain hollow, dissuading public support. This section assesses the status of these three conditions in East Asia.

1st Necessary Condition of EFA: Enabling Policy and Institutional Environment

Across the region, progress on EFA targets has been, at least in part, a function of *national systems capacities*: to mobilize domestic support; to create, implement and monitor comprehensive EFA policies and programmes; and systematically to build institutional and resource bases to sustain these processes.

A key indicator of progress in establishing these capacities is reconciling EFA/NPA with wider policy agendas: poverty reduction, decentralization, fiscal accountability, SWAps. Such harmonization is proving important in pushing EFA/NPA implementation forward. It puts targeted EFA priorities a “at the policy table” of budget and human resource allocations. It provides opportunities to piggy-back actions on funds and systems (e.g. for rural outreach, monitoring and evaluation) often not otherwise available⁵⁹.

EFA/NPA in most focus countries are linked explicitly to broader constitutional and legal frameworks⁶⁰ aimed at guaranteeing right of access to basic education. In *Indonesia*, the NPA co-ordinates with the National Development Plan; in *Vietnam*, with the 5-year Socio-Economic Development Plan and Education Development Strategy. Both are committed to expanding basic education access, and promoting transparent and democratically-managed schools. *Cambodia’s* NPA is well-integrated into the Education

Sector Support Programme (ESSP), both initiatives framed within National PRSP priorities.

Decentralization is a recurring theme within all EFA policy environments, aimed at local participation and moving decision-making and resource control to those most affected by, and able to affect, practice. Positively, decentralization is consistent with EFA inclusion principles. It is, however, proving a double-edge sword: the right to manage and supervise schools and teachers brings responsibility to pay for these services. Education systems already over-dependent on household budgets and facing serious sub-national exclusion face the dilemma of increasing local control while ensuring effective and sustained pro-poor safety nets.

Synergies are being realized in this by a further policy pattern in the region: increasing openness to community and NGO partnerships. For EFA, these linkages are helping generate awareness, mobilize and co-ordinate resources and extend reach to vulnerable and remote communities. Local control, facilitated by NGOs, is proving not simply an “additional benefit” in “enabling schools and communities to create more relevant and flexible education opportunities”, but “the key building block” to inclusion and quality⁶¹.

Data⁶² suggest that school-community linkages are becoming gradually more effective. Communities in *Vietnam* are conducting annual health checks for children 0-5, addressing developmental and school readiness issues; in *Indonesia* they are participating in the design and execution of school development plans and serving as teacher aides. In several countries, parents mentor life-skills courses. *Thailand, China, Vietnam* and *Cambodia* all note progress in working with communities to counter dysfunctional perceptions about the right and capacity of girls and other excluded children to learn.

Beyond policy, institutional capacity for planning, implementation and monitoring, at central and local levels, is proving a second “necessary condition” of an EFA-enabling environment. Donor-funded education projects are increasingly framed around capacity gaps, and include considerable TA to address them. While few are tailored to EFA/NPA as such, their effect is being felt on access and progression targets.

Information management is a particular area of systems capacity weakness in most countries, the collection, management and application of comprehensive user-oriented data still embryonic. Weak, too, are capacities for making existing data and analyses readily available to all affected stakeholders, parents to policy-makers, in appropriately contextualized ways. The result is ministries frequently operating in the dark: “systems of assessing learning achievement inadequate or non-existent”; curricula and textbooks failing to “recognize the diversity of rural circumstance”, and “educational opportunities” insufficiently transparent or suited to what people want to learn⁶³.

Countries are generally aware of the problem, development of EMIS, as both management and learning tool, a priority for most. It is one of four NPA goals and six EFA strategies in *Myanmar*; *Cambodia* is developing quality indicators in four EFA priority areas⁶⁴, instruments intended to be used both for monitoring and evaluating

progress and building capacity for monitoring itself. Regionally, however, implementation remains slow.

Another still-emerging area of systems capacity concern is *institutionalizing what works* in EFA-targeted action. In most countries, such interventions are pilots, typically labour-intensive, costly in human and financial terms, and applied within limited geographic areas and themes. These characteristics make “going-to-scale”, converting piloted innovations into permanent structures and functions reaching all children in sustainable ways, a major undertaking. Beyond simply expanding numeric and geographic reach, education systems are needing to consolidate change by changing themselves, strengthening their own capacity for adaptation and integration⁶⁵.

2nd Necessary Condition of EFA: Education Quality

Explicit in Goal 6, education quality is implicit in all goals. This is making it a particular challenge for countries in determining what it means: in what ways will the students, classrooms and schools achieving quality actually be *different*? An important step toward answering this question has been countries becoming clearer about the various threats to quality with which, to varying degrees, they are all needing to deal and at increasingly comprehensive, systems level.

Most recognized threats concern quality of life and learning in schools and classrooms:

- unsafe and deteriorating infrastructures and incomplete schools too far from children’s homes;
- poor school-community communication and lack of collaborative, proficient school management;
- too few adequately trained, appropriately deployed teachers, and too many using poor pedagogy;
- inappropriate and insufficient pre-service preparation, exacerbated by weak in-service support and supervision;
- too few good quality and relevant learning materials; and
- dysfunctional student assessment procedures.

Comprehensive qualitative measures of these threats are limited, but proxies show a mixed picture. Pupil/teacher ratios are generally improving in the region, but not in all cases: *Cambodia* exceeds 50:1; *Lao PDR* was 30.4 as of 2002/3 data, albeit with wide sub-national variation⁶⁶. And PTR is proving an uncertain quality indicator, the number of students per class often less important than the teacher’s ability to manage learning events. Also, many countries are reducing class size through double and triple shifts, an arrangement which, while giving more children access, is also straining under-qualified teachers and already limited instructional contact hours. In cases of remote and sparsely populated areas, small class sizes are in some cases reducing the efficient deployment of what limited teachers are available -- leading to multi-grade arrangements which again undermine quality where teachers are inappropriately trained, irregularly supervised and lack adequate materials.

The high rate of partial schools in many countries is generally considered an indicator of poor quality. Schools not covering all “basic” education grade levels are a serious problem in most remote and ethnic areas of countries like Cambodia⁶⁷ and Lao PDR, denying primary completion for some, creating long trips to neighbouring schools for others, and excluding many girls and children with disabilities⁶⁸.

Partial provision is also affecting schools in the form of inadequate instruction time. Anecdotal evidence suggests many primary and lower secondary teachers are failing to provide full official contact hours: persistently late or frequently absent; declaring “no-school” days or assigning children to non-academic tasks for large parts of the day; doing work other than teaching in the classroom. A recent study in *Vietnam* found that, despite relatively good enrolment rates, “only 10% of children get a full days’ schooling”. This exacerbates an already below-standard 33-week school year⁶⁹.

Quality is proving difficult to achieve, in part, because it is proving difficult to measure. Consistent, interactive assessment of quality (of learner readiness, learning outcomes and effectiveness of input) is, in itself, a dimension of systems quality. Regularly monitoring their own behaviour and its effects on students’ learning is both a core component and key indicator of good teachers and effective teaching. In much of the region, however, neither measure is done comprehensively or consistently⁷⁰.

The significance of the problem is not unrecognized. How precisely to address it is less clear. Steps are being taken in most countries, however. School management capacity, regulatory frameworks and school-ministry/school-community co-ordination are all being enhanced. *Myanmar* is part of an East Asia Learning Achievement study to monitor learning achievement. *Lao PDR* is assessing learning outcomes through a project to strengthen the capacity of the NRIES⁷¹ to evaluate quality and monitor student learning as a function of school conditions, over time aiming to build local capacity for doing this⁷².

Indicators are a major aspect of assessing quality, and despite some concern about schools using too many, efforts are being made to strengthen their value, validity and use. UNICEF’s Child-friendly Schools review found qualitative tools and indicators gradually becoming more participatory, formative and user-oriented. Progress is also being made on local development and use of appropriately sensitive tools for identifying, tracking and assessing vulnerable children⁷³.

Good teaching and motivated teachers are fundamental to achieving education quality. Criteria for what this means are fairly consistent across the region, in principle if not yet in application. The message is that effective schools for children are equally effective schools for teachers: providing adequate conditions of service, professional training and capable supervision; and enabling, and requiring, teachers to be learner-centred, gender-responsive, flexible and protective, reflecting a sound knowledge of child development in general and each child’s socio-cultural, linguistic and developmental background in particular.

Progress in enabling such teachers and teaching practice is gradually being made. All eight focus countries are involved in some way with improving teacher training provision for both pre-service and in-service. *China* is one example of national efforts to make teaching “a more attractive profession”: salaries have been increased and a National Teachers Education Network has been launched to provide a “life-long learning platform” for strengthening professional skills⁷⁴. Unfortunately, while teachers may be “perhaps the most important constituency in education reform”, overall in the region they continue largely to be “ignored in policy dialogue, monitoring and implementation”.⁷⁵

One issue coming increasingly to the fore is the inadequacy of teachers’ *continuous* professional development. Persistently low teacher salaries, status and support are being coupled with increasing demands on them to apply child-centred methods, incorporate active learning curriculum and life-skills content, engage with families, identify missing children. It is hardly surprising that many fall short, become frustrated, demotivated or leave.

In-service training is being promoted as an effective, efficient remedial strategy, and a way to bring ethnic minorities, especially women, into the profession. Again, the challenge is quality. In *Lao PDR*, for example, poor co-ordination among in-service projects, coupled with “little planning and no (shared) recognition of teaching standards” is producing “widespread low competency”.⁷⁶

For countries attempting rapid reform, especially those with large national systems such as *China*, the cascade model remains the norm, able to reach many people quickly with relatively few resources. It is a model being seriously questioned, however, its outcomes often disappointing. In consequence, “stepping down” cascade training through facilitated, practice-based arrangements is becoming more wide-spread, especially through school clustering.

- In *Indonesia*, pilot schools are being formally “clustered” within the national structure. Master teachers trained at district level and district and provincial education officers visit schools to exchange new ideas with groups of teachers and support their classroom application of such strategies as AJEL (active, joyful and effective learning).
- In *Cambodia*, service menus allow school clusters a choice of child/teacher-friendly activities, including demonstration classes, peer-peer opportunities for in-service learning-by-example, and methods of continuous student assessment⁷⁷.
- The concept of “dream schools” is being operationalized in each district of *Thailand*. Equipped with the best teachers, facilities, equipment and trained managers, these 921 “ideal” schools are intended to serve as models around which their neighbours will “build and strengthen networks” for enhanced quality through better teaching and school management⁷⁸.

3rd Necessary Condition of EFA: Inclusive Education

EFA is, by definition, inclusive. Schools and NFE arrangements must be proactive in ensuring that *all* children learn, irrespective of ability, sex, ethnicity, family background or household circumstance. As East Asian countries democratize participation and access

to information, more parents and communities are pushing harder for schools that are welcoming of, and successful for, their children.

Exclusionary patterns persist across the region, however. Inclusion-oriented policies, their implementation and impact, remain sporadic. No country has fully addressed the key requirement of *finding the invisible and missing children* and adequately understanding why they are being systematically unaccounted for. Indeed, “the lack of clear data on exclusion is itself an indication of ...the plight of marginalized children (making) it extremely difficult for governments to take concrete and effective steps to address factors that create disparities”⁷⁹

More work also remains on overcoming persist *exclusionary cultural beliefs and traditional practices* in the region: that pregnant girls should not be in school; children with disabilities cannot learn; use of indigenous languages will undermine national integration; physical punishment and verbal abuse are appropriate disciplinary tools. While such attitudes are typically opposed in official policy, they remain in practice. Proactive interventions in schools and communities to enable pregnant girls to re-enter, facilitate transition of ethnic children to mainstream school culture, and deal with issues of abuse, bullying and sexual exploitation remain relatively few.

Based on GMR 2003⁸⁰, Asia is moving toward exceeding Africa in absolute numbers of people with HIV/AIDS by 2010. Despite this, and the potential this has for the exclusion of the students, families and teachers affected, the epidemic does not appear high in any of the national EFA agendas⁸¹. While policies for HIV/AIDS education in schools have been in place or in draft since early in the decade (Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, China, Cambodia and Vietnam), policy application has been more limited⁸². Little action has been focused on primary or lower secondary schools and their teachers. While senior secondary has been the main focus, this has most typically been within a biological and/or family-oriented framework.

Curricula and teacher preparation have been relatively slow in catching up with the broader dimensions of the epidemic, less than fully effective in helping teachers face the uniquely complex intellectual, psychosocial, behavioural and ethical dynamics of HIV/AIDS as a life (not simply academic) issue. The main vehicle for providing teachers the knowledge, pedagogical skills and, especially, means of dealing with their own sensitivities has been in-service teacher training, largely through the often less-than-effective cascade model. Where conditions of service are poor (low wages, weak supervision, limited community status), inadequate training has made it particularly difficult for teachers to make the effort, and absorb the risk, of using strategies most likely to encourage young people to ask questions, express opinions and reveal risk-taking behaviours e.g. role playing, debates, small group work and brainstorming⁸³.

That said, and despite a relative absence of references in EFA/NPA, governments are being mobilized, especially by wider life-style programmes of agencies like UNESCO, UNICEF, WHO, UNAIDS and NGOs, into incorporating HIV/AIDS into education systems⁸⁴. It will be critical to bring these to scale over the next half of the decade.

Most country EFA/NPA and “good practice” experience agree that *local-level solutions* are the most effective strategies for enabling participation by vulnerable children. Insufficient *outcomes-oriented monitoring* is limiting knowledge as to whether such strategies are working; are themselves becoming sources of systemic exclusion through second-class provision; or need to be extended, adapted or replaced.

One less obvious threat to inclusion concerns the concept itself. How can the principle of *equal participation by all* be applied on a multi-dimensional basis *without simultaneously* creating terminology too all-encompassing to guide policy and intervention? The fact that “national policies and legal Acts on special, integrated and inclusive education often seem to overlap” suggests a basic “lack of clarity” about what inclusion means and what to do about it⁸⁵. So, too, does the mix of ministries often responsible for its various dimensions: health, education, social welfare, information, rural development. Without an overarching authority to pull the strands together -- a key task of EFA co-ordination -- the result is often limited coherence, contradictory laws and gaps in pro-inclusion regulation, all leading to delayed and denied provision.

Despite these threats, progress on inclusion is happening⁸⁶. All countries have at least embryonic policies supportive of children with disabilities⁸⁷. The common problem now is to ensure their fair and consistent application: teachers and managers sufficiently motivated and capable, and with adequate resources, to be proactive and effective; curricula flexible enough to accommodate children with diverse levels of readiness, learning styles and educational priorities. For several countries, the question of providing separate facilities, with their risk of isolation and lower-quality, or integrating children into regular classes, with their costs in trained and equipped teachers, remains unsettled.

On a wider pallet, projects such as *Vietnam’s* “Primary Education for Disadvantaged Children” are attempting to improve access for all at-risk children by strengthening the supply side: training teachers and managers to do better situation analyses of, and interact more effectively with, vulnerable groups. As noted earlier, most countries are focusing to some degree on ethnic minority and other marginalized communities; for some, it is an area of major concentration⁸⁸. Where ethnic children are the school majority in *China*, their language becomes the medium of instruction and teachers receive incentives to locate in these regions. *Cambodia* is pursuing similar policies, including targeting 95% of teacher graduates for remote communities by 2008, and backing them up with housing support and performance-based allowances. Early grade mother-tongue instruction is being piloted in these countries, as well as the *Philippines* and *Vietnam*.

Considerable attention is being given across the region to eliminating official fees and unofficial charges, key factors in exclusion. Compliance remains problematic in most cases. *China* eliminated fees for the first 9 grades in the 1980s, resulting in “virtually universal enrolment in primary”. This is now being undercut by slowly raising private/household costs. In *Indonesia* and *Cambodia*, despite dropping registration fees, “charges and hidden costs are reported on the rise”⁸⁹. *Vietnam* has been reducing charges

for disadvantaged families over the past decade, but “they are unevenly applied and substantial costs ...still fall on the parents”⁹⁰.

Another area in which some, but still insufficient, attention is that of creating *learner-centred* and *seamless* education systems. Implied by Dakar in the principle of life-long learning, such systems accommodate themselves to the needs and life circumstances of the most hard-to-reach children, not vice-versa. For countries with persistently high non-enrolment and drop-out rates and large numbers of adults without basic literacy, reaching these last 10% or 20% requires formal and nonformal sectors to cooperate much more than is currently the case; to plan and implement flexible, integrated programmes that allow children to enter, leave and return to school without having to exit the learning environment.

Across the region, Community Learning Centres are beginning to do this, enabling a mix of adult, adolescent and child-oriented literacy, life skills and basic education equivalency opportunities. *Vietnam* is expanding CLC provision to all 10,436 communes “as a concrete measure to advance toward a life-long learning and knowledge society”⁹¹. *Cambodia* and *Myanmar* have initiated remedial and accelerated programmes aimed specifically at capturing faltering and over-age children using a mix of school and CLC arrangements.

In most countries, however, NFE is well reflected in EFA/NPA, but marginalized in implementation⁹². Creating seamless systems will require strengthening the relevance, quality and sustainability of these programmes, and improving their alignment with school planning and delivery. This means more attention to ensuring the fundamentals: adequate core budgets, identification of potential learning communities, planning and monitoring of implementation and learning outcomes, and long-term human resource development of the sector itself in the theory and methods of andragogy and adult-based teacher training.

4. In Summary

Progress on access and progression has been good overall in the region, albeit tempered by signs of stagnation and some decline. However, persistent and extensive inter- and intra-country disparities warrant action on several levels: new thinking on the multiple dimensions of exclusion and on finding and engaging the excluded; integrated political and economic intervention on the disabling socio-cultural and poverty environments currently marginalizing many; more seamless, child-centred and locally interactive education planning and school management; qualitative approaches to continuous assessment of teaching methods and learning outcomes; and stronger support to teachers’ professional development and conditions of service.

ANNEX 1 - ACRONYMS

CFS	Child-Friendly School (UNICEF-supported)
CLC	Community Learning Centre (UNESCO-supported network)
COMPAS	Community-based Monitoring & Programme Assessment System, Vietnam
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
EFA	Education for All
EFA/NPA	Education for All National Plan of Action
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ESG	Education Sector Group, Vietnam
ESSP	Education Sector Support Programme, Cambodia
FTI	Fast Track Initiative
GENIA	Gender in Education Network in Asia (UNESCO/DfID/Danida-supported)
GER	Gross Enrolment Rate
GMR	Global Monitoring Report
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IE	Inclusive Education
IECD	Integrated Early Childhood Development (UNICEF-supported network)
IPM	Integrated Pest Management
LWU	Lao Women's Union
MOE	Ministry of Education, Thailand
MOET	Ministry of Education and Training, Vietnam
MoEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, Cambodia
NET	Net Enrolment Ratio
NFE	Nonformal Education
NGO	Non-Government Organization
PEDC	Primary Education for Disadvantaged Children, Vietnam
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
SAVY	Survey and Assessment of Vietnamese Youth
SMIS	School Management Information System
SWAp	Sector-wide Approach
TA	Technical Assistance
UNGEI	UN Girls' Education Initiative

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In Addition:

Correspondence from EFA Coordinators: Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Philippines and Republic of Korea in response to report preparation questions.

ANNEX 3 - Questions To Co-ordinators

To: National EFA Co-ordinators

From: Anne Bernard

Cc: Ko-Chih Tung, Jon Kapp, UNESCO/Bangkok

Subject: East Asia Regional Overview Report on Progress towards EFA Post Dakar

Date: February 14, 2005

The Request With my apologies and many thanks in advance, this note is to ask for your assistance in the preparation of the above report. It was commissioned by UNESCO/Paris as a contribution to the 2005 edition of the Global Monitoring Report. Unfortunately, the schedule for the report is fairly tight (first draft due March 31st). If possible, therefore, I would appreciate very much receiving your response, by Friday March 11th

The Background As you know, progress on the six EFA goals varies across the world, and in the region. In some countries, resource constraints and social instability continue to limit progress. In many others, however, strong political commitment, popular pressure and well-conceived and implemented programmes are enabling significant advances to be made toward more inclusive and better quality schools and programmes.

The annual Global Monitoring Report (GMR) is responsible for presenting an international picture, coupled with individual country studies. This year, for the first time, the GMR has decided to prepare a set of *short regional studies*, including this in East Asia, to complement and enrich these other levels of data summary and analysis. The report for East Asia is one of these.

It is hoped that, as much as possible, the report will draw on *the most recent data* available in each country. Most of these data will come through the information you have been gathering in conjunction with UNESCO/AIMS. However, if more *indicative data* is available through national studies and secondary analyses, these would also be valuable.

The Questions Below are a few questions which, I hope, will guide your response, and not take up too much of your time. Please feel welcome to answer only those questions you consider relevant to the situation in your country, and in the detail you think most appropriate.

1. Do you/the EFA Secretariat have any *indicative data* on the progress of EFA goals?
 - These may not be data sufficiently confirmed to allow being included in the GMR itself. However, they may be sufficiently reliable to give you and the government a *sense of progress or problems* and, therefore, could be included in this more informal regional report.
 - The data could refer to progress on EFA as a whole, or to specific aspects/ selected areas of the overall National Plan (e.g. gender equality; primary-to-secondary transition, teacher training and support etc).
2. What is the status of the **EFA National Action Plan**?
 - Has it been completed? Is it being implemented -- on schedule? over the whole country? for all goals?
 - What are proving to be the main *strengths/successes* of the NAP?
 - What have been the main *challenges* in completing the NAP and having various stakeholders “buy into” and implement it?

- Is the NAP integrated into other national policy commitments – e.g. a PRSP? A SWAp? a Fast Track Initiative process? How is the integration, or lack of it, influencing EFA progress?

3. Were any EFA-related **analyses or evaluations** conducted over the past 2 years, and can they be shared?

- These could be by the Ministry, the EFA Secretariat, donors, NGOs.
- They might have looked at specific goals or cross-cutting themes or at application of the EFA/NAP in a particular part of the country or with reference to a particular group e.g. a minority community or urban street children. They could include either qualitative or quantitative data, or both.
- What were the main issues or conclusions raised?
- If the whole report is not available, perhaps an executive summary could be sent?

4. **Looking forward**, what are your expectations for how EFA will develop over the next year?

- Do you see any particular *patterns* emerging in terms of progress on the six goals, of areas where there appears little movement or actually falling back?
- Are there particular examples of *lessons learned* about what works and does not work which should be continued, expanded or changed? In terms, for example:
 - o of policy-making processes or policy contents?
 - o of strategies for implementing policies and building commitment?
 - o of types of partnerships within government; between government and civil society; between national and donor agencies?

Thank you again, very much, for your input into this report. It is important that it as fully as possible reflect the realities of EFA progress in the region, as it exists and as you and your colleagues see it.

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ANNEX 4 - END NOTES

¹ East Asia and Pacific Regional Office

² Five of twelve responded to emailed questions

³ Ordonez: 6

⁴ Brunei Darussalam, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore. ROK and Japan have already met MDG education and gender equity goals. While the DPRK is not on the EDI, too few reliable data made assessment unreliable.

⁵ Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR and Myanmar (DfID, 2004) are defined by DFID as countries “where the government cannot or will not deliver core functions to the majority of its people, including the poor” (p.7). Education, a basic service, is one of the core functions, enabling people to sustain their lives and livelihood and, for the poorest, to move out of poverty.

⁶ Philippine and Lao NPA will be presented to their respective authorities in 2005

⁷ Though typically with considerable support from international agencies to strengthen capacities in planning, content options, coordination.

⁸ UNICEF 2005/b: 5

⁹ Ahuja: n.p.

¹⁰ UNESCO/SEAMEO pg 5

¹¹ UNICEF 2005/b: 5

¹² UNESCO/SEAMEO: 5

¹³ Although Cambodia notes a drop in private pre-schools vis-à-vis a rise in those publicly supported, “private” here refers largely to NGO and community-managed schools. Lack of resources is a factor in both of their declining provision (MoEYS 2004/c)

¹⁴ This is also suggested by the significant numbers of children enrolling in after-hours programmes in countries like Vietnam where parents see regular classes as inadequate in instruction time and content.

¹⁵ Ministry of Education and Training, Vietnam: 96

¹⁶ UNICEF 2005/b: 6

¹⁷ MOE, Lao PDR 2004/b: 1 Based on 2002-3 data

¹⁸ MOE, Lao PDR, 2004/a:5

¹⁹ UNICEF 2004/b: 8

²⁰ EFA coordinator correspondence: 7

²¹ UNICEF 2004/b:16

²² Ordonez: 6

²³ Ibid: 6 Statistics are noted in detail in Ordonez, most drawn from GMR 2005

²⁴ ICE Country Papers/a /1.1.4

²⁵ Wang: 27

²⁶ Thailand is facing much the same dilemma. Ordonez: 6

²⁷ Fast Track Initiative Secretariat: 15

²⁸ Tran, 2004: 10

²⁹ MoEYS. Cambodia 2004/a: 10, 11

³⁰ A “main lesson learned” in the Cambodian case is that “abolition of start of year payments has proven insufficient in stimulating demand” in the face of persistent problems of too few grade 7-9 facilities and significant real and perceived opportunity costs, especially for girls and ethnic minorities (Ibid: 11)

³¹ Ordonez: 10-11. The sources of these specific figures were not referenced in the text, but figures throughout the paper were generally derived from GMR 2005.

³² Ordonez notes that for both South and Southeast Asia, “systematic data [are] not available” for this factor (11). The case could be made that persistent absenteeism is a good indicator of poor learning outcomes, potential repetition and eventual dropping out.

³³ MOE/Lao PDR 2004/d

³⁴ Meyers et al: 8

³⁵ Ibid: 8

³⁶ UNICEF, 2004/a: 51

³⁷ Much of the data for this section comes from the UIS 2003 report and workshop.

³⁸ Except for Lao PDR, the following examples are taken from UIS, 2003.

Cambodia: The EFA National Plan of Action intends to address those who have been most excluded and underserved through an emphasis on life skills programmes in both the formal and nonformal sectors. As such, four priorities underpin these programmes: realizing Universal Basic Education, improving education

quality, linking training with the market, and widening opportunities for youth. While life skills as such are not yet integrated into the national curriculum, this is being redressed in the revised version just developed through the Pedagogical Research Department.

Indonesia: Defined in 2002 as “Broad-Based Education”, current policy intends to integrate a life skills orientation into all aspects of formal and nonformal education. Building on existing curriculum, the aim is to refocus both the *approach* to handling subject matter, to make it more context-specific and application-oriented; and *the ways teachers interact* with learners, as facilitators of student-centred learning-to-learn processes. Learning outcomes are to be defined by a range of observable competencies: abilities to read and write functionally, think scientifically, resolve problems, manage natural resources, work in a team, and use varieties of technology.

Vietnam: The National Education Strategy 2000-2010, various education regulations and the EFA National Plan of Action 2003-2015 all refer to life skills, the last chiefly within the nonformal sector. There has apparently also been some influence on the direction of life skills programming through the PRSP-development process, with different sector ministries accepting responsibility to support training for specific target communities.

Lao PDR: The EFA/NPA includes two life-skill related programmes. (i) *Youth and Adult Literacy* focuses on school dropouts, children not admitted into primary school, illiterate adults -- and within these, girls, ethnic minorities and the poorest. Through expanded CLCs, training primary teachers for literacy and basic skills training, and organizing mobilization campaigns, targets are reasonably specific: annual enrolments of 1% of illiterate adults and 20% of dropouts from grade 1 and 2 of the previous year in non formal primary courses; and annual enrolment of 1% of illiterate adults in literacy and basic skills training programmes. (ii) *Skill Development Program for Disadvantaged Groups* aims to «provide disadvantaged groups with skill development training aiming at promoting self employment» and to expand/strengthen the nonformal system in terms of vocational and life skills. Concentration is on «young illiterate adults, especially women who do not have any basic vocational training and are motivated to acquire such skills for income generating activities». Targets: annual enrolment of 0.5% of illiterate adults, 3% of dropouts from grade 1 & 2 of the previous year in basic vocational and life skills programmes. (Tschanz: 88-90)

³⁹ UIS 2003: 3-4

⁴⁰ Tschanz: 24

⁴¹ Integrated Pest Management, with World Education

⁴² Based on UNESCO/SEAMEO, 2004: 16-17

⁴³ Based on 2001 data

⁴⁴ Tschanz: 20

⁴⁵ MOE, Lao PDR, 2004/c: 45, 55

⁴⁶ Considered a level capable of being sustained and improved through independent learning

⁴⁷ MOE, Lao PDR, 2004/c: 56-58

⁴⁸ EFA Coordinator communication.

⁴⁹ UNESCO/SEAMEO: 11

⁵⁰ Ibid: 11

⁵¹ MOE, Lao PDR, 2004/b :4. Very limited statistical data were collected on this; however, most countries noted exclusion of ethnic minorities as an issue to some degree. Two countries most seriously affected: Cambodia 2002/3 data for ethnic minority provinces (MoEYS, 2004/c:34)

National average	NER Total	90.1%	Girls:	86.6%
Steung Treng		88.4		85.6
Ratanakiri		54.3		46.4
Preah Vihear		82.6		81.9
Mondulkiri		74.4		65.9

Lao PDR Reported literacy rates age 15+ in any language (MOE 2004/c: 45):

Main ethnic group	total:	77.2	male:	83.0	female	71.9
Third largest		40.7		50.4		31.4
Smallest group		4.6		65.1		22.9

Lao PDR NER (MOE 2004/c: 35):

Main ethnic group	total:	76.4	male:	77.2	female	75.4
Third largest		46.2		47.8		44.7

Smallest group	45.2	46.3	44.2
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⁵² Ibid: 5 “Over the 1999/00 -2002/03 period, enrolments in LSE increased at a rate of 7.7 percent per year, in relation with a significant increase of the transition rate from grade 5 to 6 (from primary to lower secondary education) and improved retention in grade 6 to 8. From 1999/00 to 2002/03 the transition rate increased respectively from 67.8 to 75.7 percent and from 73.5 to 81.2 percent for females and males, showing that: a) an increasingly higher proportion of pupils completing primary education were admitted into lower secondary, and b) the gap between girls and boys is not bridged, both rates increasing in the same way”.

⁵³ Rao: 77

⁵⁴ Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam (also Mongolia and Vanuatu, not included in the East Asia region)

⁵⁵ UNICEF/EAPRO, 2004/a:30

⁵⁶ A recent two-part study of girls’ and ethnic minority educational experience by the Gender and Ethnic Minority Education Unit of the Lao Ministry of Education and supported by GENIA provides a mixed message, largely pessimistic with respect to the current situation and change in the short-term, but with some degree of optimism for the future in terms of girls’ own attitudes.

On the first, Lao girls from remote ethnic communities continue to be dissuaded from going to school by tradition, distance and poverty; and pushed or pulled out if they do get there. Neither they nor their parents and teachers appear to question the factors excluding them. In fact, a pervasive theme running through the case studies was one of passivity. Where parents, teachers or administrators knew that girls have the right and capacity for an education equal to boys, they were doing little to make it happen; where they were uncertain that girls could learn the same things and to the same degree as boys, they were doing little to find out and continued to assume the worst.

On the more positive side, girls (and boys) did not question their innate equality and, for the most part, capacity. The reason for their different learning outcomes and success in school was environmental: parents and teachers treated them differently, taught them differently, encouraged and expected different behaviours from them as children, students and eventual adults. Importantly, environments can change. A 2003 social assessment of ethnic communities in four provinces found that most parents valued education for all their children and “several village leaders had introduced incentives and sanctions to encourage parents to send both girls and boys to school”. (MOE, Lao PDR. 2004/d)

⁵⁷ UNESCO/SEAMEO, 2004: 17

⁵⁸ The knowledge gap is changing, slowly. Established in 2002, the Asia Pacific UNGEI working group focuses on regional-level information sharing and co-ordination among its UN agency, NGO and bilateral members. Activities include dissemination of regional “good practice”, in-country workshops on selected aspects of gender in education, and monitoring and advocacy on the status of girls’ education in the region. Two other initiatives with important potential in the region include development of a guide for integrating gender into education SWAps and country “maps” of who is doing what, and with what results, on issues of gender equality and equality. Both of these are currently priority matters in a number of countries, where despite structures for enabling gender equality being in place (gender mainstreaming strategies and focal points) capacities remain inadequate for effective action.

⁵⁹ There are risks, of course. While these other agendas and their proponents (the Banks, large bilateral donors) often have more political clout than EFA Secretariats and their supporters (UNESCO, UNICEF, NGOs) and can attract/focus resources, they can also derail the harder-to-achieve EFA inclusion and quality goals and the longer-to-achieve capacity development process prerequisites.

⁶⁰ Ahuja. n.p.

⁶¹ UNICEF, 2004/a: 32

⁶² These are drawn from the UNICEF CFS projects: Cambodia: “Child-friendly and Gender-sensitive Schools Initiative (CFI)”; China: “Teacher Training and the Child-friendly School”; Indonesia: “Creating Learning Communities for Children/CLCC”; Myanmar: “Child-Friendly Schools”; Philippines: “Child-Friendly School System/CFSS”; Thailand: “Child-Friendly Schools Initiative/CFSI”; Vietnam: “Child-friendly Learning Environment”.

⁶³ UNESCO/SEAMEO: 24

⁶⁴ ECCE, basic education, NFE and life-skills with gender cross-cutting these. Two instruments have been completed; the last are expected by mid-2005. The four instruments focus on indicators to be tested in application for validity and feasibility. Based on earlier drafts, indicators include the following -- ECCE, expanded programming and better access for vulnerable children, reasonable child-care provider ratio, sound child development principles integrated into all activities, children engaged in creative, interesting activities, evidence of cultural, moral and equality factors in interactions. Gender: unbiased materials, equal educational opportunities, programming developed against domestic violence and sexual exploitation, community gender-equality outreach activities. NFE: flexibility in curriculum tailored to various learners, adequate equipment, relevant literacy materials, increased numbers of literacy-trained teachers, linking of parents' reading/writing skills with children's. Life Skills: improved accessibility of programmes, priority given to health, nutrition, capacities of living together, teachers and caregivers knowledgeable about geographic and demographic characteristics of their communities. Basic Education: adequate school facilities, relevant curriculum, well-trained teachers, parents ensuring healthy children ready-to-learn and in regular attendance.

⁶⁵ The multi-country Child-friendly School initiative underway across the region with UNICEF support is beginning variously to confront this issue. Steps are being taken to localize ownership and enable adaptation either of the CFS "package" as a whole or, in a sequenced way, selected components of it: in *Indonesia* the focus is on sustaining CFS mobilization and support through shared best practice of stakeholder actions; similarly in *Cambodia*, on parent visits to successful CFS demonstration classes as a way to engage interest and calm concerns about the school changes being attempted. *Myanmar* is expecting to produce "clear operational criteria" from its pilots, guidelines which can be disseminated through Township EFA Committees. For the *Philippines*, "organic" change agents and ground level implementers are being mobilized through the convergent national frameworks of the "Child-Friendly Movement" and the "Child 21" strategic child development framework

⁶⁶ MOE, Lao PDR, 2004/b:8

⁶⁷ According to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, "a key constraint" to EFA targets "is the continued existence of incomplete primary schools, offering less than the full 6 primary grades, which results in higher levels of repetition and drop-out. Incomplete schools correlate strongly with both smallness and remoteness, especially in border and ethnic minority areas. For example, in Ratanakiri and Mondulkiri, average primary dropout rates are 27% and 22% respectively, compared to the national average of 12%. Girls are particularly adversely affected" (MoEYS 2004/c: section 2.2).

Repetition Rates

Measure	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Incomplete Schools	20.8%	12.6%	10.1%	7.2%	7.3%
National Average	17.7%	10.9%	7.9%	5.4%	3.6%

Drop-Out Rates

Measure	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Incomplete Schools	19.0%	12.1%	8.3%	7.3%	N/A
National Average	15.6%	11.5%	9.3%	9.9%	N/A

⁶⁸ *Myanmar* has made concerted efforts in this regard. Plans to renovate over 5,500 primary schools by 2006 are 85% complete; and an increase of 4000 post-primary schools (primary schools with grades 6-8 added on) since 2002 has "resulted in 300,000 more children receiving secondary education" (EFA Coordinator correspondence).

⁶⁹ Tran: 2. Figures based on 2002 data. One consequence of this has been a growing problem with illegal "extra" classes i.e. those without Ministry sanction to help students who fall behind, but the result of schools "reducing the standard time and learning content of classes in order to create demand" and teachers seeking added income. Classes are not effectively monitored, lack standards and are especially hard on disadvantaged parents. Not necessarily of poor quality, neither are they proving helpful: learning outcomes in writing and numeracy are not improved; reading rates are only slightly better, not compensating for the "associated pressure on the child, the lack of time for recreation and...for self-education" (Tran: 16)

⁷⁰ The quality of monitoring and evaluation with respect to life skills, in both formal and nonformal sectors, is an especially serious problem, reflecting uncertainty about both what the contents of life skills should be and how they should be taught. In general, monitoring of life skills is unsystematic, with few guidelines or targets; supervisors and teachers unclear as to what they should be doing or their results. Life-skills elements are not included in exams, and there are no measures of longer term, out-of-school application of skills or competencies. This lack of both needs assessment and results-oriented data are impeding progress in all countries.

⁷¹ National Research Institute for Educational Science

⁷² MOE, Lao PDR, 2004/b: 15

⁷³ CFS schools in *Cambodia* have categorized 90 friendliness indicators in a “user-friendly menu” from which schools and communities can negotiate priorities, make plans, select and monitor actions. A similarly large list in the *Philippines* is grouped under seven categories for use by schools in formatively assessing their own “colour-coded” friendliness status and mobilizing remedial actions. The *Philippine Student Tracking System/STS*, a school-based approach used by teachers in “seeking out and assisting unreached, at risk and faltering children” in ways which give each a “face” (UNICEF, 2004:48). Together with MOET, CFS schools in *Vietnam* are learning to apply the Community-based Monitoring and Programme Assessment System, a “forward-moving cycle” of twice-annual baseline surveys in 200 schools expected to be used on a regular basis to guide CFS implementation and serve as a forum through which to advocate child rights, enable school self-assessment and planning, track missing children, assist principals managing in more effective and participatory ways and provide input to local and national planning.

⁷⁴ ICE Country Papers/a /1.2.3, 2.4.1. Vietnam is also being challenged -- and made advances. Though more than 66% of teachers are considered to be at national qualification standard, the emerging problem is how to match the pedagogical changes implied by EFA targets with the ability of teachers to implement them. According to one recent study, in aiming to create a “knowledge society” with its “premium on solving problems and adding value through the fluid analysis, adaptation and evaluation of existing knowledge”, a serious misalignment is forming “between the radically new competencies demanded of students...and the knowledge, teaching skills and approach with which graduates of the current teacher training system are equipped” (Huang: 5). Large scale and smaller pilot projects are underway to institutionalize new curricula and model teaching methods; a “teacher professional profile” has been developed; a revised lower-secondary teacher pre-service curriculum proposed; academic qualifications standardized and upgraded. As a result, there has been critical movement in breaking traditional mindsets toward change: “most stakeholders, if they are not clear on how or what they should be doing differently, are aware they should be doing something differently” (Ibid: 5)

⁷⁵ World Economic Forum: 55

⁷⁶ MOE, Lao PDR, 2004/b: 1 2

⁷⁷ The target communities for these projects are different; Indonesian and Cambodia, as part of the CFS network, aim at the most at risk children; the Thai Dream School model is national. Evaluations are being done, formally and informally of the CFS projects; a major evaluation of CFS/Cambodia is about to begin. Specific data on the results of analyses were not collected for this report, but general comments cases can be found in UNICEF/EAPRO, 2004/a.

⁷⁸ ICE Country Papers/d/53

⁷⁹ UNICEF/EAPRO, 2005/b:2

⁸⁰ UNESCO/SEAMEO: 23

⁸¹ According to UNAIDS, even Thailand appears to be losing ground in terms of sufficiently aggressive MOE policy and action.

⁸² Smith: 7

⁸³ According to 2003 data, “even in countries such as Thailand, it was reported that sex and HIV/AIDS education are often considered ‘indecent’. For teachers who strive to be models of modesty, it may be difficult to address such issues directly. Here, as elsewhere within the region, it may be especially inappropriate for a single male teacher to talk to female students, and for a single female teacher to raise the subject of sex. ... One respondent noted that there was a wide gulf between required courses and their implementation, and suggested that teachers were ‘almost uniformly uncomfortable with discussions of sexuality’. For this reason the topic is often avoided. Some countries circumvented this problem by inviting speakers from outside the school to provide such education, though such an approach raises a concern about on-going coherence...” (Smith: 17)

⁸⁴ Life skills through projects such as FRESH is gaining traction in several countries. Myanmar initiated its School-based Healthy Living and HIV/AIDS Prevention Education (SHAPE) in the mid 1990s under Department of Education and UNICEF support. Its continuation and extension to out-of-school children through SHAPE Plus is, in fact, noted in the EFA/NPA. Cambodia's ESSP considers HIV/AIDS a “high priority cross-cutting” issue, aimed chiefly at awareness raising; World Education and UNICEF are working with teachers and students in IPM-type learning arrangements; and, as early as 2003, “poor quality teacher training (was) being addressed in Cambodia where the Education Ministry has been encouraged to start new work in teacher training colleges and in school clusters”. In China, national authorities have also accepted that HIV/AIDS education is more likely to succeed where teachers have been adequately trained and supported. A National Training Centre for HIV/AIDS Prevention in Schools has been created at the Institute of Child and Adolescent Health of Peking University” (Smith: 19) The CFS project in Thailand began with targeting poorer provinces in the North/Northeast, focusing especially on disadvantaged children and those affected by HIV/AIDS. It since helped catalyze government policies and teacher-parent collaboration on the Thai SMIS and the Philippines Student Tracking System aimed at monitoring at-risk children, including those affected by HIV/AIDS, and linking them with family-based psychosocial intervention and child counselling (UNICEF 2004/a)

⁸⁵ UNESCO/Bangkok. 2004/a: 18

⁸⁶ The UNESCO regional IE review enabled sharing of current innovative approaches and exploration of others considered to have good potential, toward helping countries put inclusive education more securely on EFA/NPA agendas. It also launched a toolkit (Creating Inclusive, Learning-friendly Environments, developed by UNESCO/Bangkok Appeal Unit) aimed at guiding teachers and managers in implementing the kinds of changes needed to make classrooms and schools facilitative of all children's learning.

⁸⁷ Under its Strategies for Educational Development 2001-2010, *Vietnam* expects to provide access to 50% and 70% of children with disabilities in 2005 and 2010 respectively. *Myanmar* plans a 2005/6 pilot project in which 35% of Townships will assess school-level accessibility data as a guide to improved practice. Of the eight focus countries, *Thailand* is furthest ahead. Catalyzed by strong disability and parent organizations, the 1999 National Education Act ensured education for all and resulted in fairly dramatic increases in enrolment of children with disabilities, in both special schools and integrated classrooms. The Ministry's Special Education Division has dedicated budget, a network of special education centres and trained teachers. Improved monitoring and analysis are needed now to develop clearer criteria for identifying the full range of children to be served; assess “what works” in successfully integrated classrooms; and ensure that teachers and managers remain aware and proactive.

⁸⁸ Lao PDR, Vietnam, Cambodia, China; to some extent, Myanmar

⁸⁹ World Economic Forum: 55

⁹⁰ Fast Track Initiative Secretariat: 15

⁹¹ Hang: 4

⁹² Thailand is an exception, managing a strong, creative and interactive NFE sector since the late 1970s.