

## Gender and Education for All THE LEAP TO EQUALITY



### Regional Overview

## Central Asia<sup>1</sup>

Since they regained their independence in the early 1990s, the region's countries have undergone profound economic, social, political and demographic upheavals that have damaged their education systems. Most education indicators have fallen. To achieve EFA, commitments to international treaties and declarations<sup>2</sup> will have to be fulfilled.<sup>3</sup>

### Early childhood care and education (ECCE): big setbacks over the decade

All countries except Georgia have very low pre-primary enrolments, with GERs of less than 30% (and less than 15% in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan). Enrolment has fallen since 1990 in many countries because of demographic change (a major decline in the school-age population) and a drop in the real value of state spending on education. For example, in Kyrgyzstan, severe cuts in ECCE funding forced many schools to close. But by the late 1990s, enrolment in Georgia and Azerbaijan began rising again, although from very low levels.

Gender disparities in ECCE are almost non-existent, except in Tajikistan, where far more boys are enrolled than girls (GPI of 0.84), and Mongolia, which has high disparities in favour of girls (GPI of 1.11).

1. This is the EFA classification of regions. The countries of Central Asia are listed in the Table.

2. The first was the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which acknowledged the right of all to education and stated that elementary education would be free and compulsory and higher levels of education accessible to all on the basis of merit.

3. Despite legally-guaranteed free education, primary school fees continue to be charged in most countries – Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan – according to a World Bank survey (2002).

### Universal primary education: enrolment on the rise

This level is perhaps the only exception to the region's general educational decline between 1990 and 2000. Total primary enrolment rose from 5.1 to 6.7 million, up more than 30% and boosting NER from 81 to 91%. But enrolment declined in Georgia and Kyrgyzstan, with NER falling from 92 to 82% in this latter country.

Gender parity has been achieved in most countries with data. However, Kyrgyzstan and Mongolia are now moving away from the parity they reached in 1990 and might not regain it by 2015 if adequate policies and strategies are not implemented.

Repetition is very low and boys repeat more than girls.

### Participation in secondary and tertiary education: free fall in secondary, less so in tertiary

In all countries with data, gross enrolment in **secondary education** has declined sharply, from 4.5 percentage points in Azerbaijan to more than 17 in Georgia. In Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan, girls have been the main victims but in Mongolia, boys, already far less enrolled than girls, have suffered most.

Enrolment in tertiary education has also dropped in most countries with data, though less markedly, except in Kazakhstan, where GER fell from 41 to 31%, and Tajikistan, from 23 to 14%. Gender parity has been achieved in Azerbaijan and Georgia, but elsewhere women are either less enrolled (with GER one-third that of males) or much more enrolled than men (in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Mongolia).

### Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education

Achieving this goal involves understanding what holds girls and boys back so that policies can be designed to overcome these obstacles and improve access to and participation in education.

Urgent action is needed in countries where the gender gap is still large in primary and secondary education. An overriding priority is to tackle poverty constraints by reducing the direct and indirect cost of schooling to families and addressing the incidence of child labour. The school environment requires equal attention. Sexual violence and harassment within schools, particularly where HIV/AIDS is prevalent, needs to be confronted vigorously. Revising biases in teaching materials, training teachers to be gender aware and working with them and parents to break taboos are essential ingredients of an "engendered" strategy.

In Central Asia, the big task of eliminating gender disparity is mostly at the secondary level, which is in deep crisis. Countries where disparities and inequalities are increasing will have to take appropriate measures if they are to achieve parity in either 2005 or 2015. Prospects for countries achieving it are based on past rates of change in the gender parity index in primary and secondary enrolment.

#### Countries that have already achieved gender parity:

- Primary education (4 out of 7 with data): Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Kazakhstan.
- Secondary education (4 out of 7 with data): Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

#### Gender parity prospects

[2 countries with data in 1990 and 2000 for both primary and secondary education have not yet achieved it]:

- Countries that may not achieve parity by 2015 at primary level: Kyrgyzstan; at primary and secondary levels: Mongolia.

These are forecasts base on recent trends. In the two countries likely to miss reaching gender parity by 2015, policies are available to deliver it within a few years.

#### Resources and aid

Eliminating gender disparities and inequality while achieving all the other EFA goals is costly. Countries will need to allocate more of their own resources, use them more effectively and make education a renewed priority, in particular by revising budgets for early childhood care and education and for the crisis-ridden secondary education sector. At present aid is a tiny proportion of national education budgets. The region received just 2.6% of total bilateral aid to education in 2000.

Central Asia: Selected education indicators, 2000.

Countries	Total population (thousands)	Compulsory education (age group)	Legal guarantee for free education	Adult literacy rate (%)		Pre-primary education		Primary education			Secondary education		Tertiary education		Total public expenditure on education as % of GNP	EFA Development Index (EDI)
				Total	GPI	GER (%) Total	GPI	NER (%) Total	GPI in GER	% of female teachers	GER (%) Total	GPI	GER (%) Total	GPI		
Armenia <sup>1</sup>	3787	7-15	Yes	98.4	0.98	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	2.9	0.91
Azerbaijan <sup>1</sup>	8041	6-17	Yes	...	...	24.1	...	93.0	...	83.6	85.2	0.97	22.5	0.99	4.1	...
Georgia <sup>1</sup>	5262	6-12	Yes	...	...	38.9	0.99	95.2	1.00	92.2	77.7	1.02	34.5	0.99	...	...
Kazakhstan	16172	7-17	Yes	99.4	0.99	12.9	0.96	88.7	0.99	97.1	88.5	0.97	30.9	1.19	...	...
Kyrgyzstan <sup>1</sup>	4921	7-16	Yes	...	...	14.2	0.96	82.5	0.96	95.1	85.6	1.00	41.1	1.04	...	...
Mongolia	2533	8-16	No	98.4	1.00	28.7	1.11	88.8	1.04	92.5	70.0	1.22	32.7	1.74	...	0.94
Tajikistan <sup>1</sup>	6087	7-16	Yes	99.2	0.99	8.7	0.84	96.2	0.93	60.1	78.5	0.83	14.0	0.32	...	0.95
Turkmenistan	4737	7-15	Yes	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Uzbekistan <sup>1</sup>	24881	7-15	Yes	99.2	0.99	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
<b>Central Asia</b>	<b>76421</b>	...	...	<b>99.6</b>	<b>1.00</b>	<b>19.1</b>	<b>0.99</b>	<b>90.7</b>	<b>0.99</b>	<b>92.3</b>	<b>81.9</b>	<b>0.95</b>	<b>31.8</b>	<b>1.30</b>	...	...
<b>Developing countries</b>	<b>4700496</b>	...	...	<b>73.6</b>	<b>0.82</b>	<b>30.9</b>	<b>0.99</b>	<b>82.1</b>	<b>0.92</b>	<b>61.5</b>	<b>59.9</b>	<b>1.01</b>	<b>10.4</b>	<b>0.73</b>	<b>4.1</b>	...
<b>World</b>	<b>6041386</b>	...	...	<b>79.7</b>	<b>0.87</b>	<b>46.7</b>	<b>1.01</b>	<b>83.8</b>	<b>0.93</b>	<b>72.3</b>	<b>77.5</b>	<b>1.06</b>	<b>22.9</b>	<b>1.04</b>	<b>4.5</b>	...

Source: EFA GMR 2003, Statistical annex. Data in italics are for 1999.

1. Primary school fees continue to be charged despite legally-guaranteed free education, according to a World Bank survey (2002).

Note: EDI is a new composite index that incorporates indicators for the four most quantifiable EFA goals – UPE, adult literacy, gender parity and quality of education. It aims to give a broader picture of progress toward EFA and identify countries doing well on all fronts, those succeeding in only some areas and those with all-round difficulties (for further explanation, see Appendix 2 of the full Report). The EDI for a country is the arithmetical mean of the observed values of indicators selected for each of the EFA goals. Since these are percentages, the value can vary from 0 to 1. The higher it is, the closer a country is to the goal and the greater its EFA achievement.

#### ACRONYMS

**FTI** Fast-Track Initiative. Designed primarily by the World Bank, the FTI was launched in April 2002 as a process that would provide quick and incremental, technical and financial support to countries that have policies but are not on track to attain Universal Primary Education by 2015.

**GER** Gross enrolment ratio. Number of pupils enrolled in a given level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the population in the relevant official age group.

**GPI** Gender parity index. Ratio of female to male value of a given indicator. A gender parity index equals 1 indicates parity between sexes; a GPI that varies between 0 and 1 means a disparity in favour of boys; a GPI>1 indicates a disparity in favour of girls.

**GNP** Gross national product.

**NER** Net enrolment ratio. Number of pupils in the official age group for a given level of education enrolled in that level expressed as a percentage of the total population in that age-group.

**UIS** UNESCO Institute for Statistics.