

# Early Childhood Care and Education in the Asia Pacific Region

*Moving towards Goal 1*

Nirmala RAO  
Jin SUN



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

**Bangkok Office**  
Asia and Pacific Regional  
Bureau for Education

**Comparative Education Research Centre**  
The University of Hong Kong



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## **Acronyms**

AKDN	Aga Khan Development Network
ARNEC	Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood
ASEAN	Association of South-East Asian Nations
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
DFID	Department for International Development
ECCD	Early Childhood Care and Development
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECE	Early Childhood Education
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
EC-SGD	Early Childhood Care for Survival Growth and Development
EFA	Education for All
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GMR	Global Monitoring Report
GMS	Greater Mekong Sub-Region
ICDS	Integrated Child Development Services
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MONE	Ministry of National Education
MSSRF	M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NSED	National Strategy for Education Development
OMEP	World Organisation for Early Childhood Education
PDR	People's Democratic Republic
PPE	Pre-Primary Education
PSE	Preschool Education
PTRs	Pupil-Teacher Ratios
SRP	School Readiness Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WCECCE	World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education

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## Executive Summary

Goal 1 of the Dakar Framework of Action (UNESCO, 2000), adopted by 164 countries in 2000, was to expand and improve comprehensive early childhood care and education. This book, prepared for UNESCO's World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education, considers progress made in the Asia Pacific region over the last few years in meeting this goal.

**Diversity in the Region.** The region includes countries which vary widely in terms of their cultural geography, social-cultural beliefs, levels of development, demographic profiles, political systems, and government commitment to early childhood services.

**Child Well-being.** The review indicates that the well-being of children in the Asia Pacific region is improving, but that countries in the Mekong Delta still have very high under-5 mortality rates and high levels of stunting. This is also true for South and West Asia where maternal mortality rates are also high. A corollary to this is that several countries in the region will not be able to meet the associated Millennium Development Goals by 2015. However, maternal and child mortality rates are likely to continue to decrease in the region because of the provision of child and maternal health services in low resource environments.

**Access and Equity.** In all sub-regions in the Asia-Pacific, the gross enrolment ratio in pre-primary education increased between 1999 and 2007. Children attend school-based, centre-based, community-based or home-based programmes and gender does not seem to be an issue for pre-primary participation rates. The rapid expansion of school/centre-based pre-primary programmes for children over three and of the for-profit sector in some parts of Asia has led to concerns that an expansion of quantity is associated with less favourable teacher-child ratios and less holistic programmes, and in turn, a decrease in programme quality. However, millions of children in the Asia-Pacific still do not have access to services. Factors such as language, ethnicity, rural residence and disability can exacerbate disadvantages presented by poverty and very low levels of parental education.

**Neglect of the under Threes.** Reliable data on access to services by children under three is not available in most countries. Even when data are available, they are often not disaggregated by age and type of programme attended.

**Quality Matters.** Quality is a critical variable but has to be defined taking culture and context into account. While some programmes in South and West Asia would be deemed to be of low to mediocre quality using western benchmarks for quality, something is better than nothing in these contexts. In cases of extreme educational poverty and when children are very socially disadvantaged, even the minimum input provided by programmes which include food supplementation and some cognitive and psychosocial stimulation seems to make a positive difference to young children's development. Since preschool teachers and carers are not very highly qualified in many countries in the region, supervision and support are critical to improving the quality of services. Further, governments should enforce facility- and provider-focused regulatory standards for the operation of early childhood programmes in order to monitor and enhance their quality.

**Policy Matters.** There has been considerable momentum in the development of early childhood policy in the Asia Pacific region. In all countries surveyed, existing educational laws have typically been amended and new ones have been drafted to include early childhood education. However, not all countries are legally bound to provide prior-to-school services to children. Many have recently completed major reviews of their early childhood policy and others are in the process of doing so. International developmental agencies have strongly supported the policy development and implementation process. The formation of the vibrant Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood illustrates the importance accorded to early childhood in the region. That stated, the review also shows that few countries have established national frameworks that comprehensively address the diverse needs of children in the first three years of life.

**Multiple Ministries.** In many countries in the Asia Pacific region, a number of ministries, non-governmental organisations and community groups are involved in the provision of early childhood services. Having multiple ministries involved has often caused the fragmentation, overlap and duplication of services, and a diffusion of responsibility. Hence, some countries in the region have nominated a lead ministry, usually education, to coordinate and implement early childhood provision.

**Finance.** In most countries in the region, integrated policies for financing and governance of early childhood care and education programmes are typically absent. As is the case for other regions, all governments in the Asia-Pacific allocated more money to primary than pre-primary education. Given that investment in high quality early childhood services increases primary school efficiency and yields high returns on investment, governments should ensure that early childhood policies are both comprehensive and adequately funded.

**Distance from Goal 1.** While data on enrolment in pre-primary institutions and the percentage of Grade 1 children who have had preschool experience are routinely collected, not enough attention has been accorded to collecting accurate data related to access to and the quality of other forms of early childhood services. Distance from Goal 1 varies markedly across countries in Asia and the Pacific. This is a function of differences in: cultural geography; levels of economic development; the extent of poverty and inequality; government expenditure on education and early services; social inclusion and educational policies and the degree to which they are implemented; and the political will to meet Education for All and Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

## Series Editor's Foreword

In September 2000 the United Nations Millennium Declaration was established to reduce extreme poverty and to bring about a series of development targets with a deadline of 2015. The eight fundamental goals, of which eradication of extreme poverty is the first and universal education is the second, have become known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). As I am writing this, the Millennium Development Monitor at the United Nations' web site<sup>1</sup> shows the countdown to 2015 in years, days, hours, minutes and seconds. At the same time, the site declares, "hope dims for universal education by 2015."

Yet, the "hope" of universal, free and compulsory education was established as a human right already in 1948 with the adoption of Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In March 1990, the World Conference on Education for All (EFA) in Jomtien, Thailand, reaffirmed the notion of education as a fundamental human right, and set up a Framework for Action to Meet the Basic Learning Needs by the year 2000. But the Jomtien EFA targets were not achieved by the year 2000. Instead, a new World Education Forum was held in Dakar, Senegal, assembling more than 1,100 participants from 164 countries, to discuss the progress made towards universal education ten years after Jomtien. The vision of EFA was re-affirmed, and the international community set six major goals to achieve quality education for all by 2015, of which the first was to expand and improve early childhood care and education (ECCE). The EFA objectives are different from the MDGs, but parallel and dovetail with them.

This current study analyses the progress and shortcomings in movement towards the first EFA goal. It explains how difficulties in establishing norms and definitions covering the concept of ECCE have impeded its implementation. Early childhood care and education is essential to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, as it cuts across numerous sectors, including health, hygiene, sanitation, nutrition, child psychology and education. However, this also means that no specific government service provides integrated childhood care and education services, with the danger that, as the authors of this book note, "Funding, provision, coordination and administration become entangled in, layer after layer, bureaucratic inertia".

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/education.shtml>

This book contains important messages for policymakers, students, academics, and all those interested in the Millennium Development Goals, integrated childhood services, and creating a better tomorrow for our children. It gives a vivid analysis of the Asia-Pacific region with extensive case studies and local examples. CERC is proud to co-publish this work with UNESCO, the lead agency in the UN system for the implementation of the EFA goals.

***Bjorn H. Nordtveit***  
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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### Background and Rationale

The Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report 2007 *Strong Foundations for Early Childhood Care and Education* (UNESCO, 2006a) provided compelling reasons for investment in the early years. The report summarised research evidence on the short- and long-term benefits of early childhood programmes for children and nations, provided examples of high quality services and effective national policies, and recommended strategies to develop effective Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programmes and policies. These included following a holistic approach to ECCE; according more attention to ECCE policy and integrating ECCE into national policy strategies for children; identifying a ministry to coordinate ECCE; regulating and enhancing programme quality; increasing funding of ECCE; targeting the most vulnerable and excluded children; and improving the monitoring of ECCE and its effects on primary school performance.

Using the Global Monitoring Report 2007 as the point of departure, this monograph reviews progress in early childhood care and education in the Asia Pacific region as a background study for the first World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education to be held in Moscow, Russian Federation, in September 2010. It will consider the extent to which holistic, integrated and inclusive ECCE is evident in legislation, policies and implementation frameworks in the Asia Pacific region. Specific examples will be provided from countries within the region and an attempt will be made to highlight regional/sub-regional trends against the backdrop of global ones.

This study covers the 46 of 48 countries listed in UNESCO's Asia and Pacific Regional Group; the exceptions are the Russian Federation and Turkey. The Asia Pacific region includes countries belonging to both the Majority and Minority worlds and which vary widely in terms of their cultural geography, social-cultural beliefs, levels of development, demographic profiles, political systems and government commitments to early childhood services.

Given this diversity, it is perhaps prudent to focus on sub-regional trends in discussing the development of ECCE in the region since the publication of the Global Monitoring Report 2007. Table 1.1 shows the sub-regions. An attempt has been made to provide examples from a

range of different countries and sub-regions. However, the amount of information available in terms of country and sub-regional reports, research documents, and statistics varied, and the dearth of information from some countries resulted in us not being able to provide examples from these countries.

**Table 1.1: Sub-Regions in the Asia and Pacific Region**

<b>Sub-regions</b>	<b>Countries</b>
Mekong Sub-Region	Cambodia*; Lao PDR*; Myanmar*; Thailand*; Viet Nam*
Insular South-East Asia Sub-Region	Brunei Darussalam; Indonesia*; Malaysia*; Philippines*; Timor-Leste
South Asia Sub-Region	Bangladesh*; Bhutan*; India*; Maldives*; Nepal*; Sri Lanka*; Pakistan*
West Asia Sub-Region	Afghanistan; Iran
Central Asia Sub-Region	Kazakhstan*; Kyrgyzstan*; Tajikistan*; Turkmenistan*; Uzbekistan*
East Asia Sub-Region	China*; Democratic People's Republic of Korea; Mongolia
Pacific Sub-Region	Cook Islands*; Fiji*; Kiribati; Marshall Islands*; Micronesia; Nauru; Niue; Palau; Papua New Guinea; Samoa*; Solomon Islands; Tonga; Tuvalu; Vanuatu
Developed Countries	Australia; Japan; New Zealand; Republic of Korea; Singapore
Others	Russia Federation; Turkey (not covered under this regional study)

\* Countries which prepared national reports for the EFA Mid-Decade Assessment.

## Goal 1

<b>Education for All Goal 1:</b>
Expand and improve comprehensive early childhood care and education. Dakar Framework of Action (UNESCO, 2000)

The Jomtien Declaration (UNESCO, 1990) acknowledged that “learning begins at birth” and that basic education began much before primary school entrance. This was a cornerstone in the understanding of early childhood as it brought ECCE under the remit of mainstream education. Limited expansion of early childhood services in the developing world was achieved in the decade following the Jomtien declaration, but the emphasis placed on the early childhood period continued. Ten years later in 2000, governments from 164 countries adopted the Dakar Framework of Action (UNESCO, 2000) which focused on achieving the six Education for All (EFA) goals. Most fittingly, the **first** goal of the Dakar Framework of Action is to expand and improve comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for disadvantaged and vulnerable children. The international community also adopted eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000, which summarise the aspirations of world leaders in the areas of poverty, child and maternal health, nutrition, education and disease. The first five of these goals: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; Achieve universal primary education; Promote gender equality; Empower women and reduce child mortality; and Improve Maternal Health as well as other goals, are intimately linked to the Education for All Goal 1. The provision of comprehensive, holistic, integrated and high quality early childhood services to all young children and their families will clearly help attain the first five MDGs.

## What is “Early Childhood Care and Education”?

### *Conceptual Issues*

Professional organisations concerned with early childhood, such as the Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development, OMEP (World Organisation for Early Childhood Education) and the US-based National Association for the Education of Young Children, typically consider the early childhood period as covering the time from birth to 8 years. However, most other groups consider the early childhood period as lasting from birth to primary school entry, which is 6 or 7 years in most countries.

A variety of terms including Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), Early Childhood Development (ECD), Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) and Early Childhood Care for Survival Growth and Development (EC-SGD) have been used to describe services for young children. The different terms are a reflection of variations in the foci of services

and the age group covered.

The term ECCE has been used by UNESCO to refer to services for children from birth until a child enters primary education. These may be provided in more formal settings such as primary school or formal preschool institutions, as well as informal and non-formal settings, such as parent education programmes, home-based settings, and community-run centres or in more formal preschool institutions. Given the needs of children in this age group, ECCE services include much more than child care and education. They are holistic in approach and include health, nutrition, hygiene; cognitive, social, emotional and physical development; and social protection. Further, they encompass measures to support families, which include micronutrient supplementation to enhance maternal and child health; psychosocial support to families; programmes to promote household food security; and parental leave and childcare allowance.

Other international development agencies typically use the terms ECCE or ECD, ECCD to refer to holistic and converging services in health, nutrition, family care, education, and social protection for children from birth to 8 years. It should be noted that although the term ECD is used to refer to holistic, integrated services in common parlance, the term actually refers to the process of development during the early years. Therefore, ECCE, ECD, ECCD all include parenting interventions for children below three and school readiness programmes for children above six who have had no preschool experience. On the other hand, the term Early Childhood Education (ECE) is used interchangeably with Preschool Education (PSE) or Pre-primary Education (PPE) and focuses on services for children ranging in age from three to six years. This type of pre-primary education typically aims to prepare children for formal primary education (Choi, 2006).

To further complicate matters, what many countries refer to as ECCE, ECCD, or ECD are actually services for children ranging in age from three to six years. These may be better conceptualised as “preschool services”. However, in this study, we have used the terms “ECCE”, “ECE” or “PSE” to refer to these pre-primary education services to be consistent with the terms that are used by the governments in the countries considered.

Another difficulty is that ECCE lacks the conceptual clarity of primary education. We all know what a school is, but ECCE cuts across numerous boundaries involving as it does health, hygiene, sanitation, nutrition, child psychology and education. In turn, this means that in relation to government policies, it belongs to many ministries and is in danger, therefore, of belonging to none. Funding, provision, coordi-

nation and administration become entangled in, layer after layer, bureaucratic inertia.

### *Regional Perspectives*

An issue in many Asian sub-regions which hampers the development of ECCE is the generally uncontested view that small children are the responsibility of their families, not of the authorities. In many Asian countries, the population prefers to keep a safe distance between themselves and officials and there is no ground swell of demand for government-backed ECCE provision. It is hard for people to conceptualise benefits from services they and those around them have never experienced. But Asia contains many nations, including five of the most populous nations in the world: China, India, Indonesia, Pakistan and Bangladesh, and meeting the ECCE needs of so very many young children requires a role for the State in expanding access to ECCE services and in supporting parents in positive family care practices at home. In contrast, the Soviet era in Central Asia created a culture in which child rearing was largely the responsibility of the State;

**Table 1.2: Terms Used to Denote Early Childhood Services and Age Ranges Covered in the Mekong Delta**

Country	Definition and Age Ranges
Cambodia	ECCD (conception-6 years); primarily State, community, home-based, and private preschools (3-under 6 years)
Lao PDR	ECCD, including crèches (0-2 years), pre-primary education (3-5 years) in kindergartens, schools and other spaces
Myanmar	ECCE, (0-5 years); Preschool (3-5 years), including State, NGO and other programmes; Child rearing and day-care (under 3 years)
Thailand	ECCD (0-5 years)
Viet Nam	Care and Education (0-6 years), including crèche (0-3 years), kindergarten (3-5 years) and a one-year preschool programme (age 5)

Sources: Royal Government of Cambodia (2010); Ministry of Education, Lao People's Democratic Republic (2008); Union of Myanmar (2007); Office of the Education Council Ministry of Education of Royal Thai Government (2008); Noonan (2008).

instead of preferring to tend to the needs of young children at home, many parents in Central Asia find themselves awaiting the State to again provide ECCE services.

As shown in Tables 1.2 to 1.7, the terms used to refer early childhood services vary considerably across sub-regions and across countries in a sub-region. The terms ECCE (India, Myanmar), ECCD (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand), ECE (Indonesia, Cook Islands, Fiji, Marshall Islands), ECC (Viet Nam), ECD (Nepal) and Preschool Education (China, Central Asian republics) are used to denote prior-to-school services for young children.

**Table 1.3: Terms Used to Denote Early Childhood Services and Age Ranges Covered in Central Asia**

Country	Definition and Age Ranges
Kazakhstan	PSE (0-7 years), including preschool (5-6 years) and care and early learning (1-5 years) based in kindergartens, mini-centres, schools and in family
Kyrgyzstan	PSE and Child Care (0-7 years), focused on preschool (3-7 years) in State kindergartens and new expansion in community-based models
Tajikistan	PSE (1-7 years), primarily in State kindergartens and new growth in school- and community-based programmes (5-6 years)
Turkmenistan	PSE (1-7 years), including preschool establishments (3-7 years), day nursery groups (1-3 years), and parental educational centres, particularly where preschools are not available
Uzbekistan	PSE (3-6/7 years), now broadly targeted at (1-6 years) to fill available space in preschool institutions <sup>1</sup>

Sources: Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan (2008); Ministry of Education of the Republic of Tajikistan (2007); Ministry of Education of Turkmenistan (undated); Ministry of Public Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan (2007); Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan (2008); UNESCO (2008b).

<sup>1</sup> An increase in available preschool space is attributed to: the increase in maternity leave that covers up to age 3, increased budget allocation to the preschool sector, and increased private sector participation.

**Table 1.4: Terms Used to Denote Early Childhood Services and Age Ranges Covered in the Pacific**

Country	Definition and Age Ranges
Cook Islands	ECE (3/4-5 years), comprising early childhood centres based in primary schools and one private centre
Fiji	ECE (age 5)
Marshall Islands	ECE (4-5 years), including school-based kindergartens (age 5) and limited private school-based pre-kindergartens
Samoa	ECE (3-5 years), including church-, community- and home-based centres

Sources: Cook Islands Ministry of Education Secretariat (2008); Government of Fiji Ministry of Education, National Heritage, Culture and Arts (2008); Ministry of Education of the Republic of the Marshall Islands (undated); Government of Samoa Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture (2007).

**Table 1.5: Terms Used to Denote Early Childhood Services and Age Ranges Covered in South Asia**

Country	Definition and Age Ranges
Bangladesh	ECCE (3-5 years), in school-based pre-primary classes, community-based classes held in school areas, and home-based programmes
Bhutan	ECCE, including private day-care centres (enrolment of only 211 children). This is considered separate from the pre-primary Class (age 6)
India	ECCE (0-6 years), including an array of public, private and NGO-sponsored programmes, crèches for working mothers, and pre-primary section in schools (3-6 years)
Maldives	PPE (4-6 years), including centre-based preschools and a traditional home-based early learning programme, in addition to non-formal and community education initiatives
Nepal	ECD (0-5 years), including school-based, community-based and privately run pre-primary and kindergarten schools

*(continued on next page)*

Pakistan	ECE (3-5 years), including pre-primary classes organised in schools and private preschools; a new effort is underway to formally reintroduce the pre-primary class as the first year of primary school
Sri Lanka	ECCD (conception-5 years), including public, private and NGO-run early childhood development centres and pre-schools (primarily 3-5); These are differentiated from day-care centres and crèches which are designed with a focus on custodial care for children of working parents

Source: Jennings (2008).

**Table 1.6: Terms Used to Denote Early Childhood Services and Age Ranges Covered in Insular South-East Asia**

Country	Definition and Age Ranges
Indonesia	ECE (0-6 years but focused on 3-6 years), primarily private, including school-based kindergarten (5-6 years), informal and community-based care (3-6 years), qu'ranic programmes, and family education
Malaysia	ECCE (0-6, focused on 5-6 years), including pre-schools provided as an extension of primary schools (5-6 years), and workplace and community-based childcare centres (0-4 years)
Philippines	ECCD (0-6 years), including parenting effectiveness services (0-6 years), preschool (5-6 years), day-care(3-4 years), and, for children entering Grade 1 without preschool experience, an 8-week early childhood preparation programme prior to primary school

Sources: Caoli-Rodriguez (2008); Education for All Secretariat, Ministry of Education, Republic of Indonesia (2007); Ministry of Education, Malaysia (2008); Government of Philippines (2000).

In some countries within South Asia, early childhood services now cover the age range from birth to 6 years, which marks the entry into formal primary school. However, with the exception of India's Integrated Child Development Services scheme which was launched in 1975, the recognition of the importance of converging interventions for health and education is a more recent phenomenon. Bangladesh, Nepal

and Sri Lanka now also focus on holistic integrated services which are provided in a range of settings. On the other hand, Bhutan, Maldives, and Pakistan still tend to focus on pre-school education. However, according to the Global Monitoring Report (GMR) 2010 (UNESCO, 2009a), the Maldives and Pakistan have care and education programmes for the under threes. The Central Asian Republics have a shared history in Soviet-era kindergartens, which served children ranging in age from one to seven years with a more holistic approach. Kindergartens in this region have standards for care, education, and nutrition, as well as full time teaching and medical staff, though economic decline during the political transition has resulted in dramatic drops in access and quality. The term Preschool Education is used to include this full range of services, though new efforts to create part-day programmes focused on

**Table 1.7: Terms Used to Denote Early Childhood Services and Age Ranges Covered in Developed Countries**

Country	Definition and Age Ranges
Australia	ECEC (0-5 years), including long day-care centres and family day-care schemes (0-5 years), occasional care services and multi-functional aboriginal services (0-12 years, but mainly under 6 years); flexible and multi-functional services for children in rural and remote areas; playgroups (0-5 years), and preschools (3-5 years)
New Zealand	ECE (0-6 years), there are two kinds of ECE services: teacher-led services including education and care centres (birth to school age or to children of specific ages), kindergartens (birth to school age); home-based education and care services; and parent-led services, including playcentres, Te Kōhanga Reo, playgroups, Ngā Puna Kōhungahunga, Pacific Islands early childhood groups. Correspondence school and special education services are also provided.
Japan	ECE (0-5 years), including day care centres (0-5 years) and kindergarten (3-5 years)
Republic of Korea	ECE (0-5 years), including childcare facilities (0-5 years) and kindergartens (3-5 years)
Singapore	ECCD (0-6 years), including kindergartens (4-6 years) and child care centres (0-6 years)

Sources: OECD (2001); Kim & Na; (2003) Choo (2009).

Early Learning are leading to the creation of some new terms. On the other hand, none of the Pacific Islands we surveyed provided services for the under threes.

Table 1.7 shows the terms used to refer to early childhood services in the developed countries in the region. In recent years, New Zealand and the Republic of Korea have rapidly increased access to these services. Services in Australia and Japan have also increased but not to the same extent as New Zealand and the Republic of Korea (UNICEF, 2008; UNESCO, 2009a).

## Chapter 2

### Factors Affecting Attainment of Goal 1 in the Asia Pacific Region

This section considers factors that have influenced progress towards Goal 1 in different sub-regions and countries. These include cultural geography, demographic characteristics, levels of economic development, the extent of poverty and inequality, as well as the global economic crises.

#### Cultural Geography

Asia has 3.5 billion people who belong to over a 1,000 different ethnic groups and who speak over 1,600 languages and practice different religions. Physically, Asia covers the spectrum as well: from mighty mountains to flat lands; lush terrain to arid deserts; crowded cities to far flung hamlets. This array of diversity in geography, religion, ethnic groups and language also presents barriers. For example, social barriers have resulted in certain social groups and castes being excluded from education and many other activities of society; gender barriers have adversely affected girls' participation in education; ethnic and linguistic barriers that cause discrimination of ethnic minority groups are manifested by exclusion from, and discrimination within schools; geographical barriers caused by hard-to-access locations be they isolated mountain communities or isolated island communities; and significant barriers for children and adults with physical or mental disabilities.

The Pacific nations are spread out over 30 million square kilometres and the sub-region is divided into three parts on the basis of culture, ethnicity and language.

An overview of the cultural geography of some of sub-regions based on the sub-regional reports of the EFA mid-decade assessments (Caoli-Rodriguez, 2008; Jennings, 2008; Noonan, 2008; UNESCO, 2008a) is provided below.

The *Central Asian* states of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have a common history as they were all part of the Soviet Union before they became independent in the 1990s. For example, the Russian language is widely used in these countries and continues to be an official language in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. However the countries vary in their population sizes from 5 million in

Kyrgyzstan to 27 million in Uzbekistan. They also differ in terms of their physical sizes, natural resources, human development indicators and political persuasions. There have been disputes between some of these states regarding water and energy resources which has impeded free trade and led to strained relationships between countries.

Two geographical sub-regions comprise South-East Asia: Insular South-East Asia and Mainland South-East Asia. ***Insular South-East Asia*** includes the islands/peninsular countries of Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Timor-Leste. It includes a range of geographical landscapes which influence the way of life of the residents. For example, the sub-region includes rain forests, mangrove swamps, fertile plains and coral islands.

“The people of the present Indonesia (except in its easternmost extremity), Malaysia, the Philippines, Brunei Darussalam, and Timor-Leste share a common Austronesian cultural and linguistic heritage ... There are about 700 languages spoken in Indonesia. Although the official language is Bahasa Indonesia which is also the medium of instruction at all levels of education. ... The Malaysian society consists of indigenous Malays and immigrant Chinese and Indians. Overall, there are more than 60 ethnic or culturally differentiated groups making up the Malaysian population ... The Bumiputeras ... constitute 65.9% of Malaysia’s population. Non-Bumiputeras are mainly the people of Chinese (5.3%) and Indian descent (7.5%) and others (1.3%). The official language is Bahasa Malaysia but there are about 140 languages spoken in Malaysia including Chinese and Tamil ... The Philippines has around 78 ethnic groups speaking around 170 different languages and dialects. About 87% of the population belongs to mainstream groups ... About 6% belong to Islamic groups... while about 6.5% make up the other indigenous groups ...” (UNESCO, 2008c, p.7)

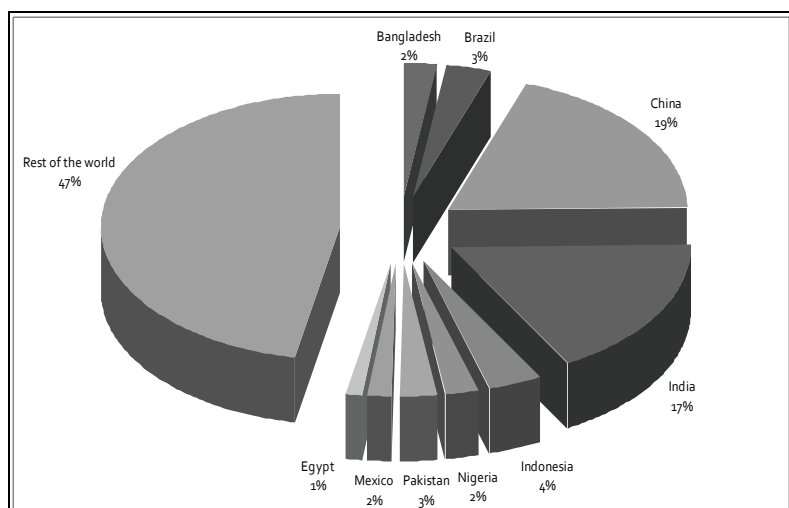
Islam is the dominant religion in Indonesia and Malaysia. About 88% of Indonesians are Muslims as are most Malays. However, Muslims are a minority group in the Philippines and comprise about 6% of the population. Other religions practiced in the region include Christianity and Hinduism. Religious preference influences family size. For example, Muslim families in Malaysia tend to have larger families than Chinese or Hindu ones.

Mainland South-East Asia which we refer to as the ***Mekong sub-Region*** includes Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, and

Viet Nam. It has considerable ethnic, linguistic and political diversity. Before political borders were defined in the early 1800s, Khmer, Lao, Burman, Tai and Viet peoples established powerful kingdoms and states in the coastal lowland areas of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam, respectively. Forested and mountainous regions were occupied by semi-autonomous tribal groups; indigenous peoples tended to live in central lowland areas and ethnic Malay and Moken peoples lived in the southern coastal regions. Despite the ethno-linguistic variations within the Mekong region, certain contextual factors have led to similarities among the low-lying and coastal parts of these countries. First, the central plains and coastal areas have been strongly influenced by Chinese and Indian culture. Second, they are all wet rice-based agricultural communities.

As is the case for the other sub-regions, **South Asia** has considerable topographic, ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity. The South Asian region includes Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Pakistan, and contains 1.5 billion people, about one quarter of the world's population. It is a very densely populated part of the Asian continent. Although it occupies only 10% of the Asian continent it has about 40% of the continent's population. Population sizes vary considerably as it includes three of the E-9 high population countries. A corollary to this is that data from these countries significantly affect data on global averages. For example, the per cent of children who are out of

**Figure 2.1: E-9 High Population Countries**



school globally decreased because of India's drive for Education for All. However, the South Asia sub-region also includes two countries which have populations of less than a million (Bhutan, Maldives).

The majority of South Asians are of Indo-Aryan or Dravidian descent but there is considerable ethno-linguistic diversity in the region. Over 500 different languages are spoken in the region and countries have ethnically and linguistically mixed populations. There three main religions practiced in South Asia are Hinduism, Islam and Buddhism. The predominant religion of India and Nepal is Hinduism. In Sri Lanka and Bhutan, the majority of the population practices Buddhism, while in Pakistan, Bangladesh and the Maldives, the majority of the population practices Islam. Large numbers of people in these countries follow Christianity, Sikhism or other religions. Pakistan is an Islamic republic but the other countries are secular in nature.

China is vast and shares a land border with 14 countries, and sea borders with 8 countries. The terrain of China tilts from the west toward the east, with mountains, plateaus and hills accounting for 67% of the total land area, and basins and plains accounting for the other 33%. China is the largest and most ethnically diverse country in *East Asia*. About 90% of the country's 1.3 billion people belong to the Han ethnic group while the rest are considered one of 56 ethnic minority groups. There are over 80 spoken languages, and about 30 written languages. Chinese is the language with the largest population of users in China. The language of the Hans, Modern standard Chinese (Putonghua), is the official language and is spoken widely.

China's urban population has been increasing at a rate of 1% per annum in recent years. In 2005, about 43% of the population lived in urban areas and the rest in rural areas, and the migrant population living in cities was about 147 million. It is expected that another 300 million people will move from rural areas to cities within the next decade. This migration has clearly strained public services in the cities. Even if adults obtain employment in the cities, the state still faces challenges to ensure that these migrants enjoy rights related to medical service, healthcare, social security and children's education (Chinese National Centre for Education Development Research & Chinese National Commission for UNESCO, 2008). It should be noted that China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in the East Asian sub-region are only two socialist economies in the Asia Pacific region.

The *Pacific* sub-region consists of 7,500 islands but less than 550 are inhabited. On the basis of cultural and ethno-linguistic differences, the sub-region is further sub-divided into three parts: Melanesia (West), Polynesia, (South-East) and Micronesia (Central and North). About

98% of the 30 million square kilometres which accounts for the Pacific Islands is the ocean, and the Pacific Island nations have a “scattered geography” (UNESCO, 2003).

“Even within many Pacific nations, populations are widely dispersed. The Federated States of Micronesia, for example, consists of 607 different islands spread out over an area of 2.5 million square kilometres. Remoteness in the Pacific has been called ‘the tyranny of distance’. The geography of the Pacific nations makes administration, communication and the provision of basic services complicated and expensive. The islands are also very vulnerable to natural disasters such as cyclones, hurricanes, droughts, tidal waves, and, in some cases, volcanic eruptions. The atoll countries are particularly susceptible to rising sea levels. These factors affect development in the Pacific region. Another issue that affects the development process in this region is the flow of funding. The Pacific region is at times bypassed by some of the major funding institutions. There are various reasons for this and one is the small size of populations in the Pacific. Another reason is a lack of understanding about developmental issues in the Pacific.” (UNESCO, 2003, p.1)

### *Demographic Characteristics*

The countries in the region covered by this study varied markedly in terms of the size of their populations in 2007 from 2,000 in Niue, to 1,328,630,000 in China (UNESCO, 2009a). We also see wide variations in the annual growth rate of the population under four within the region. In 2000-2005 the average growth rate for this age group was 0.1% globally and it was 0.5% in 2005-2010. While global figures show a slight trend of increasing births, the growth rate of the population in countries within the Asia Pacific region have typically decreased during the past 10 year period. The most dramatic changes occurred in Timor-Leste<sup>1</sup> showing the influence of post-conflict situations. There have been a few exceptions to the trend. Some of the more developed countries such as Singapore and the Republic of Korea<sup>2</sup> recorded a decrease in the birth rates while growth rates have been increasing in

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<sup>1</sup> Timor-Leste: 12.3% (2000-2005) to 3% (2005-2010)

<sup>2</sup> Singapore: 4.7% (2000-2005) to 3% (2005-2010); Republic of Korea: 4.7% (2000-2005) to 1.8% (2005-2010)

Iran and Maldives<sup>3</sup>.

A most worrying trend is the “missing girl” phenomenon in the under six population in countries in the developing world where son preference is prevalent. In the absence of sex selection practices, the usual sex ratio at birth is 105 males to 100 females (Guilmoto, 2009). The imbalance in sex ratios during the early childhood period in China and India is marked. In India, the female to male ratio was 927 to 1,000 for the birth to six years age group (Government of India, 2001) but the sex ratio at birth has begun to improve since 2001 (Sharma & Haub, 2008). The skewed sex ratios reflect discrimination against females in Indian society, especially since these low ratios are evident in all age groups. As a composite indicator, it captures unfavourable practices including female infanticide and foeticide and the neglect of girls through inadequate nutrition and health care, little or no education, early marriage, premature child bearing, and poor maternal nutrition. Son preference is the outcome of cultural, social, and religious beliefs and social norms, and cuts across all strata of society.

China also has a serious gender imbalance. In 2005, the sex ratio at birth in China was 114 boys to 100 girls. The sex ratio was 115.2 in cities, 119.9 in towns and 122.9 in rural areas (Li, 2007), but the sex ratio at birth was abnormally high in provinces with strong traditional cultures. For example, Jiangxi and Henan provinces had ratios of over 140 boys to 100 girls in the 1-4 age group (Zhu, Lu, & Hesketh, 2009). In urban China, due to the single-child policy, however, the female singleton enjoys many privileges not afforded to girls in previous generations as she is the only child of her parents.

While some countries in the region, including China, South Korea, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh Nepal and Viet Nam, show a strong son preference, it is non-existent or weak in Indonesia, Thailand, and Sri Lanka. Again, there are wide variations within countries. For example, the son preference is not apparent in Indonesia except among two ethnic groups, and there is relatively little son preference in India’s southern states although it is strong in the north western states (Banister, 2004).

## **Varying Levels of Development**

### *Economic Development*

Approximately 900 million people, or a quarter of the population in

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<sup>3</sup> Iran: 0.2% (2000-2005) to 3% (2005-2010); Maldives: 0.4 (2000-2005) to 3.1 (2005-2010)

Asia live on less than USD 1.25 per day at 2005 exchange rates<sup>4</sup>. Almost half of the population lives on less than USD 2.0 per day and is more concerned about where their next meal will come from, than health care or education. Significant numbers of these poor face additional hardships. They live in slums, are refugees, displaced people, live in areas of armed conflict; or are affected by natural disasters. Unfortunately, many of these situations are considered temporary and this is frequently given as a reason for not providing services. That stated, despite high levels of poverty, a number of countries have achieved impressive improvements in enrolment rates in primary education. Much remains to be done however, since poverty when combined with other factors often results in non-participation or insufficient engagement to achieve sustainable basic education.

The **Central Asian sub-region** has high poverty levels despite economic growth, and Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are the poorest countries in the region. The sharp economic decline following dissolution of the Soviet Union has now reversed and some growth is noted. Social sector investment has not matched economic growth, however, so the devastating loss of what were once well-functioning social service systems remains a challenge for child and economic development in these countries. Natural resources, such as oil and gas in other Central Asian countries have facilitated much stronger growth, but also a rise in disparities.

The countries in the **Insular South-East Asian sub-region** have recorded varying growth rates after the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997. The average aggregate gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate for the period 2001-2006 in the sub-region was 4.3%. Indonesia and Malaysia recorded an average of 4.9% annual GDP growth rate from 2001 to 2006. Corresponding figures for the Philippines, Singapore and Brunei are 4.6%, 4.7% and 2.4%, respectively.

The ASEAN (Association of South-East Asian Nations) is considered a major institution in South-East Asia which promotes close economic cooperation among members and negotiates with the more developed countries on economic and security issues. Despite the economic development which has occurred, it is assumed that countries in this sub-region will have to overcome several obstacles to hasten economic development. These include the provision of education and training so that countries can compete in the globalised economy and appropriately deal with the sizes and growth of their populations

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<sup>4</sup> The revised international poverty line is \$1.25 at 2005 purchasing-power parity (PPP) based on World Bank estimates in 2008.

(Caoli-Rodriguez, 2008).

With the decrease of conflict within the *Mekong sub-region* in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Viet Nam, Lao PDR and Cambodia went from being very controlled economies to open market economies. The Greater Mekong Sub-Region (GMS) was formed to increase economic integration in the sub-region and by 2006, sub-regional projects worth more than USD 6.5 billion had been implemented by countries in the sub-region (Noonan, 2008).

After the Asian financial crises, Thailand, a middle income economy, recorded an annual growth rate of 4-5%. On the other hand, the low-income economies of Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Viet Nam have been growing at a rate of 6-10% annually since 2001. The region has experienced increases in the standards of living and decreasing poverty rates. The poverty rate in Lao PDR declined from 46% in 1993 to 31% in 2005, and poverty in Viet Nam decreased from 62% in 2001 to 36% in 2006. Uneven economic growth has benefited urban populations more than rural residents and led to increased levels of inequality. Further, concerns have been expressed about the health, social and environmental impact of rapid economic development (Noonan, 2008).

The *South Asian* economy did very well in the 1990s and showed an even higher growth in the early 2000s. The sub-region has now established a pattern of high economic growth. In 2005 the average GDP for Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Pakistan grew 8.1%. Comparable figures for the whole of Asia, the United States and Europe were 7.6%, 3.2% and 1.3%, respectively. Export growth in 2005 was 24.3%. Because of its size, India accounted for about 80% of South Asia's GDP. The increasing growth rate in India is assumed to benefit neighbouring economies in the future. It should be noted that this growth has occurred against the background of pervasive poverty and growing inequality within countries. Economists forecast that the implementation of sub-regional policies can foster intra-regional trade, can sustain high economic growth and alleviate poverty (Jennings, 2008).

In *East Asia*, China has recorded sustained and rapid economic growth with GDP having grown at an average annual rate of 9.7% between 1979 and 2006. This has led to increases in standards of living and decreases in poverty. Since the implementation of economic reform in the 1970s, standards of living have increased and poverty has decreased. However, in China, marked economic imbalances exist between the prosperous coastal regions and the under-developed western regions, which has been a concern. Further, as the cost of labour has increased in China, production units are moving to countries

with lower costs (Chinese National Center for Education Development Research & Chinese National Commission for UNESCO, 2008).

### *Poverty and Inequality*

Poverty is one of the most pervasive sources of disadvantage in education as the cost of schooling competes with other basic needs such as healthcare and food. Progress has been made, yet as noted earlier, a very significant number of people in Asia remain in poverty. The two most populated countries, China and India, have 35% and 80%, respectively, of their population living on less than USD 2 per day. Poverty in Asia is also more the norm than the exception with many countries having in excess of 15% of their population in extreme poverty (living on less than USD 1 per day) and over 40% of their population in poverty (living on less than USD 2 per day) (UNESCO, 2009a).

Compared to other sub-regions, South Asia was the worst off with the Mekong region not far behind. Insular South-East Asia had amongst the lowest levels of extreme poverty though 43% of the Philippines population and 52% of Indonesia's population was in poverty. Extreme poverty as measured by the percentage of the population that has less than two years of education was also highest in South Asia and the Mekong region and lowest in Insular South-East Asia. It should also be noted that current national spending in many countries falls short of the levels needed to achieve Education for All goals by 2015 with Cambodia, Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh all having to triple their spending to achieve these goals.

The recent economic crisis has adversely affected progress in poverty alleviation. As noted earlier, economic growth in the region has decreased the poverty rate in the region but has exacerbated inequality between urban and rural residents. One measure of inequality is the ratio of income or expenditure share of the richest group to that of the poorest. Within the Asia Pacific region, Malaysia and China had the highest score of 12 with many countries falling in the 5 to 8 range. The Gini Index also measures the inequality of the income distribution in a country with a score of 100 indicating perfect inequality and a score of 0 signalling perfect equality. Using this measure, Malaysia and China again had the highest scores (49 and 47, respectively) with some of the poorest countries (Pakistan, Bangladesh, India for example) having the lowest scores (between 31 and 34). The relatively low Gini coefficients in poor countries do not necessarily signal equality but should be considered a reflection of the pervasiveness of poverty in these countries.

## The Global Economic Crisis

The following section is adapted from the *Global Monitoring Report 2010: The MDGs after the Crisis* (World Bank, 2010). While there has been a tendency for indicators of human development to decline more in bad times than they improve in good times, it remains to be seen if the recent economic crisis will have a similar result. The above noted tendency has been observed when social aspects caused a crisis: for example, political instability within a country causing domestic policy and institutions to fail miserably. The recent crisis however was a crisis of confidence in the financial sector and was an external shock (caused outside the country) and its impact on human development could be less severe so long as it is not allowed to deteriorate into internal political instability and strife; and so long as countries maintain social safety nets in the face of income declines while maintaining and improving upon policies and institutions. Even so, the deterioration in human development is severe and the outlook is grim.

The global poverty rate is expected to increase after the crisis but at a slower rate, with the global poverty rate now projected to be 15% in 2015 instead of the 14.1%. It was projected to be in 2015 before the crisis. This suggests that improvements made in decreasing poverty will be nullified with the recent crisis. As noted earlier, poverty adversely affects access to education as the cost of schooling competes with other basic needs. When food and healthcare are also unattainable, the impact on early childhood is even more severe (World Bank, 2010). Indeed, young children are those most vulnerable to the effects of poverty, which can negatively influence their growth and development with life-long consequences. For example,

“The food crisis and conflict are adversely affecting children in South and West Asia. In Bangladesh, where rice and wheat prices almost doubled in 2007, it is estimated that a 50% increase in the price of food staples increases the prevalence of iron deficiency among women and children by 25%. In northern Sri Lanka, 300,000 people were displaced by conflict in 2009 and about 13% of the displaced were under 5. A survey covering six of the thirteen camps for displaced people found one in four children to be malnourished and one in three moderately or severely stunted.” (UNESCO, 2009c)

Children are those most vulnerable to the affects of poverty; the impact of slower economic growth has a negative effect on certain

MDGs and access to ECCE. Further, trend analyses of child mortality under five, access to safe drinking water, gender parity in primary and secondary education indicate that all these factors are negatively impacted by lower economic growth rates. The danger therefore is that these factors could be more severe and have harmful consequences should a deteriorating economy cause reforms to be abandoned or policies to be reversed.

The International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and regional multilateral development banks have sharply boosted their assistance to developing countries. Developing countries have also largely maintained their access to markets despite some increase in protectionist measures, thereby avoiding potentially disastrous beggar-thy-neighbour policies. At the end of 2009, 350 trade-restrictive measures had been put in place around the world, but such measures introduced since 2008 have amounted to only about 0.5% of world merchandise trade. Simultaneously however, trade remedies primarily in the form of incremental trade finance were also on the rise and protectionism was somewhat contained.

The rapid growth in East Asia, particularly in China, had halved extreme poverty since 1990. With the exception of the MDG related to poverty, East Asia has also made notable progress in meeting the other MDGs. It performed better than other sub-regions on health goals while making progress along with other regions on other targets related to primary school completion, nutrition, access to safe water and maternal mortality. These factors buffered East Asian countries from the crisis.

Developing Asia was less impacted by the financial crisis with GDP growth falling by 4% from 10.6% to 6.6% between 2007 and 2009, compared to a fall of 6% from 8.3% to 2.4% for all Emerging and Developing Economies. Developing Asia's projected rebound is also consequently not as high as that of the Emerging and Developing Economies as a whole, suggesting a more stable and growing economic environment in comparison to other Emerging and Developing Economies. That stated, the less rapid deterioration in growth was due to exceptional policy stimulus that has led to increased fiscal deficits. While financial market conditions have been improving, continued policy stimulus is likely to be needed given that international bank financing and Foreign Direct Investment flows are projected to remain weak in 2010. Recovery in global trade is also fragile despite signs of recovery with end 2009 global trade still below its pre-crisis levels. Additionally, policy responses to crises have repercussions that must be dealt with: expansion of fiscal deficits must be reined in and the front loading of concessional assistance and rapid expansion of lending by

multilateral banks can lead to sharp declines in coming years.

While there are tools such as spending shifts and internal resource mobilisation that can help mitigate the impact of a slower economic recovery, it is stable economic growth combined with well thought through and executed policies and stable institutions that will cause a positive effect on the MDGs. In this hopefully transitional period back to economic growth, it is critical that multinational cooperation in trade is strengthened and aid expands to meet previous commitments – more so in countries facing financial constraints and already large fiscal deficits. Aid is even more important today, due in part to the failure of many governments to extend opportunities to the most marginalised sections of society and the underestimation of funding gaps.

It is critical that aid be delivered before economic pressures convert what is a financial crisis into a long-term human development crisis. An imminent danger is that without increased aid, governments will be unable to implement spending plans linked to targets in basic education.

In addition to the global economic crisis there are other global crises which can have very harmful effects on humanity. According to UNESCO,

“Four interrelated global crises are mutually reinforcing each other: climate change, the energy crisis, the food crisis and the financial and economic crisis. The consequences of these crises for development are likely to be devastating, hence the urgent need to develop effective counterstrategies.” (UNESCO, 2009b)

## **Current Status of ECCE**

The distance that a country is from Goal 1, its trajectories of growth and its policies to enhance access and equity in early childhood services determine whether or not it will attain Goal 1 by 2015.

In the following section, comparisons are made between the Asia Pacific region and other regions on indices of child well-being, participation in basic education and government expenditure on education. Comparisons between countries and sub-regions will be considered in Section 3.

### *Child Well-being*

Children everywhere require ECCE services and research indicates that these services are particularly important for children who are dis-

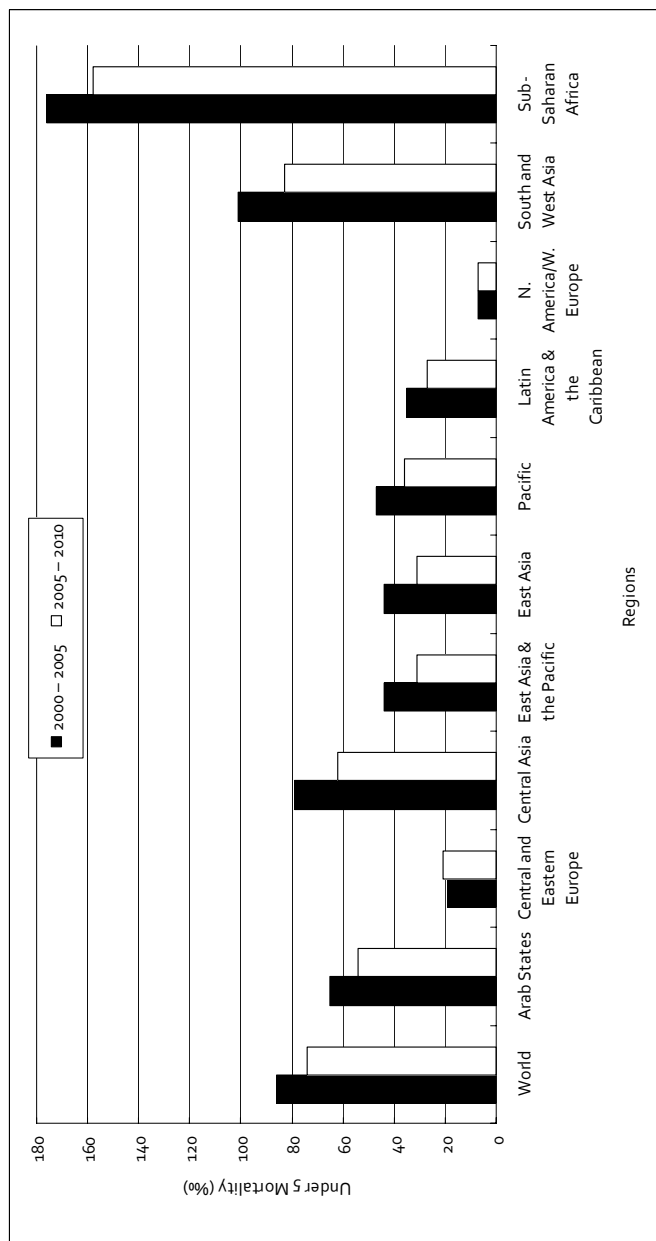
advantaged and vulnerable. With increasing inequality, we find hidden pockets of extremely vulnerable populations in every country: including children who are overlooked for services by Governments and donors because their presence is obscured by strong national averages. Early childhood interventions are particularly important in South and West Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa given their very poor status on indices of child well-being. It has been estimated that over 200 million children around the world under five do not develop adequately because they live in poverty and have poor health services, nutrition and care (Grantham-McGregor, et al., 2007). About 65 million of these children live in India and many millions more in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Lao PDR, and these children are at risk for delayed development and for underachievement at school, and poor child development has costs in terms of both, psychological well-being and economic development (Grantham-McGregor, et al., 2007). Integrated, intensive, long-lasting, high quality early childhood interventions are effective in promoting child development and avert the loss of young children's development potential (Engle, et al., 2007) and these should begin early. But data on access to services among the under threes are not easily available. Hence, we are using the under-five mortality rate (the number of children per 1000 of live births who die before reaching five) as a proxy for the extent of need for effective early childhood interventions in different parts of the world.

Worldwide, about 74/1000 children will not reach age five. The highest rate, 158/1000, is in Sub-Saharan Africa and the lowest is 7/1000 in Western Europe and North America. In East Asia and the Pacific it is 31/1000 and it is 83/1000 in South and West Asia (UNESCO, 2009a, p.314). Comparisons with figures for the previous decade show that there has been marked improvement in the under-five mortality rate (UNESCO, 2006a, p.244). In general, there has been a decline in the under-five mortality rates in the last five years. This decline has been attributed to better maternal and child health services and nutrition programmes.

### Participation in Education

As shown in Figure 2.3, all regions increased in their Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for pre-primary education in the past decade. It is important to note that these figures represent different age groups and only reflect services for children over 3 years. The figures for Central Asia represent access to services for 3- to 6- year-olds in all the countries in Central Asia, but this is not the case for other sub-regions and countries which have different conceptions of pre-primary services

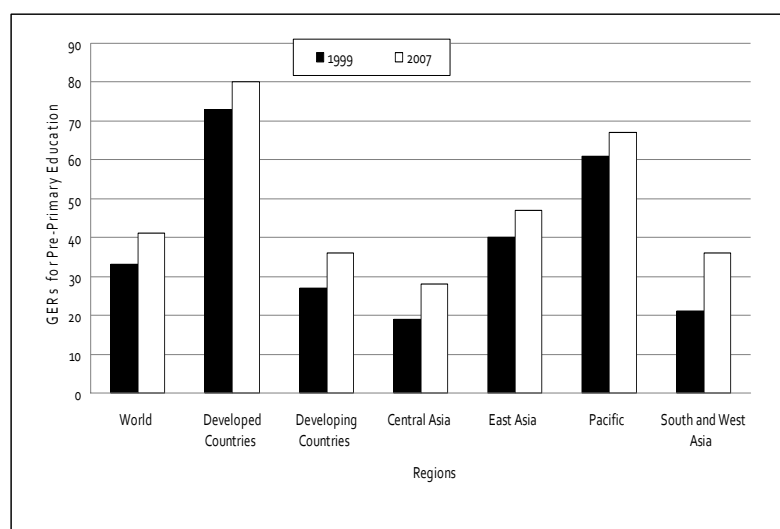
Figure 2.2: Weighted Average for Under-5 Mortality Rate



Source: UNESCO (2006a, 2009a).

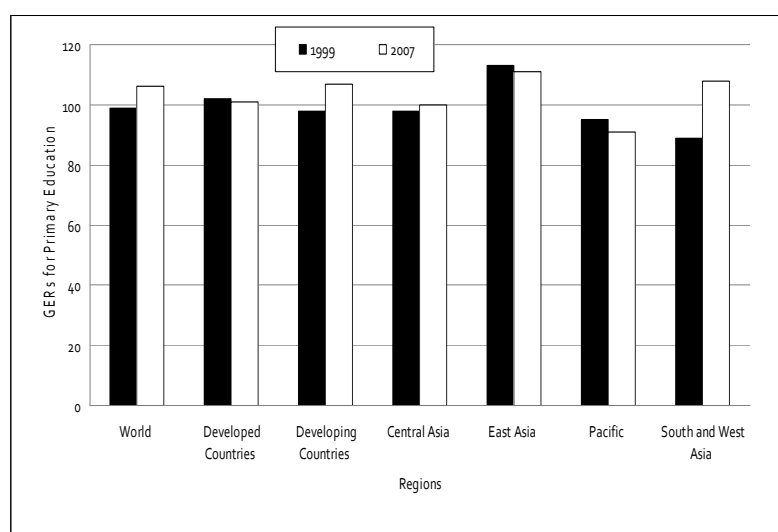
and have different ages at which children start formal primary school. For example, pre-primary education covers 3- to 4-year-olds in Nepal, Pakistan, and Samoa; 3- to 5-year-olds in Brunei, Cambodia, Lao, Fiji, Thailand, Viet Nam, Bangladesh, India and the Maldives; 4-5 year-olds, in Malaysia and the Marshall Islands, 4- to 6-year-olds in China, and 5-6 year-olds in Indonesia. The increase in GERs was marked in South and West Asia – GERs in India and Iran increased from 18 and 13 in 1999 to 40 and 54 in 2007, respectively. This reflects the emphasis governments have placed on meeting the Education for All and MDGs. With the exception of countries in the Pacific which have relatively higher pre-primary GERs, sub-regions in the Asia Pacific have some way to go to achieve Goal 1.

**Figure 2.3: Gross Enrolment Ratios in Pre-Primary Education**



Source: UNESCO (2009a).

Primary school enrolment was already high in 1999 in East Asia and the Pacific and there were no marked changes in enrolment in East Asia and Central Asia between 1999 and 2007. GERs for South and West Asia increased but decreased in the Pacific. However, the GERs increased dramatically between 1999 and 2007 in South Asia. Again, this reflects government efforts and figures from the most populous country in the sub-region.

**Figure 2.4: Gross Enrolment Ratios in Primary Education**

Source: UNESCO (2009a).

### Funding of Education

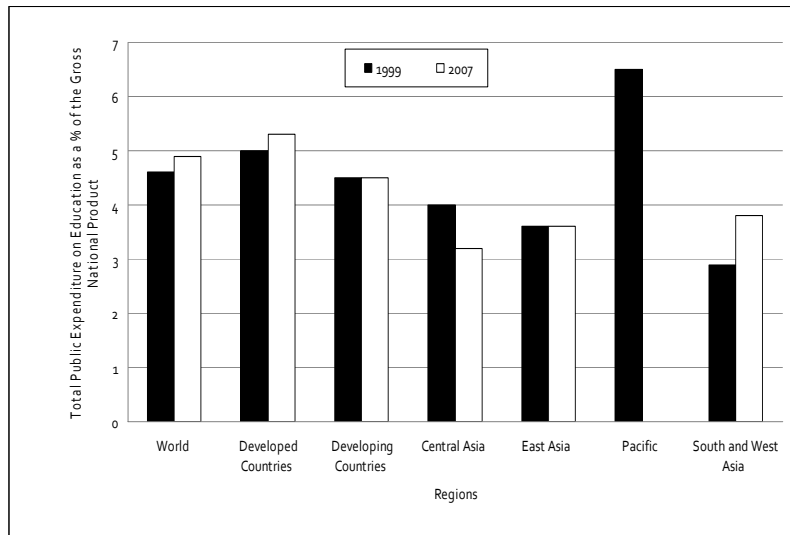
Three different, but mutually reinforcing strands support the position that early childhood should be given policy and funding priority all over the world. The first comes from brain development and neuroscience, which indicates that the brain develops most rapidly in the first years of life and that environmental stimulation positively affects the developing brain (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). The second strand points to the importance of preschool quality for child development (e.g., NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 2000). The last strand has drawn attention to the larger economic returns of government investment in early childhood compared to adulthood (Heckman, 2004; Lynch, 2004).

The 2007 Education for All Global Monitoring Report (UNESCO, 2006a) stressed the importance of policy, finance and governance for promoting the quality of early childhood services for all children. Countries also vary in the expenditure on education as a percentage of their Gross National Product. Figure 2.5 shows the percentages for the different regions<sup>5</sup>. Figures specifically for pre-primary education are not available. Although East Asia does not spend as much as other regions

<sup>5</sup> Data from the Pacific was not available for 1999

on education, the three countries (China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Mongolia) have achieved universal primary education. Government expenditure on education increased in South and West Asia.

**Figure 2.5: Total Public Expenditure on Education as a % of the Gross National Product**



Source: UNESCO (2009a).

### Legislation

Several countries in the region do not have specific policies for ECCE but it is included in the national educational policy of many countries. Tables 2.1 to 2.3 provide an overview of the National policies and legislation for the provisions of ECCE in countries from three sub-regions of the Asia-Pacific.

**Table 2.1: Policies and / or Legislations for the Provision of ECCE in Central Asia**

Country	Does Policy and/or Legislations for the provision of ECCE exist?
Kazakhstan	<p>Law on Education (2007) establishes ECCE as the first level of the Education system and provides for one year mandatory preschool.</p> <p>Draft State Education Programme (2011-2020) highlights the importance of Early Learning.</p> <p>Law on Social and Medical Educational Correctional Support (2002) calls for early intervention in preschool settings.</p> <p>Law on specialised social services (2008) provides for the support of families and children at risk for this age group as well.</p>
Kyrgyzstan	<p>Education Development Strategy (2007-2010) promotes flexible preschool provision to expand access. The Strategy (2012-2020) is drafted and under review.</p> <p>Law on Education addresses preschool.</p> <p>Law on Pre-School Education (2009) legitimises alternative models and promotes compulsory preschool preparation.</p>
Tajikistan	<p>Law of the Republic of Tajikistan "On Education" (2004) calls for compulsory preschool education of children aged 5-7.</p> <p>The National Strategy for Education Development (NSED) (2005) envisions the expansion of preschool budgets and institutions, by attracting private and foreign investment.</p> <p>The Ministry of Education has called for the development of a National Early Learning Strategy; as the NSED is currently under revision, the Early Learning component is likely to be included in the overall sector strategy.</p>
Turkmenistan	National Plan of Action for Early Childhood Development is drafted and under review by the Cabinet of Ministers of Turkmenistan
Uzbekistan	No specific mentions. As in other countries, regulations and programmes provide guidance for management and implementation of preschools.

Source: Government of Kazakhstan (2010).

**Table 2.2: Policies and / or Legislations for the Provision of ECCE in South Asia**

Country	Does policy and/or legislation for the provision of ECCE exist?
Bangladesh	Operational Policy Framework for PPE set national standards for monitoring developmental readiness in early childhood and learning programmes with age-based criteria.
Bhutan	A draft ECCD policy and guidelines were formulated in 2003 and have been incorporated into the Guidelines for Establishment of Private Schools.
India	The National Policy on Education 1986 which viewed ECCE as "an integral input in the human resource strategy, a feeder and support programme for primary education and a support service for working women." The National Policy for Children promotes holistic early childhood development and is supported by a national strategy for implementation.
Maldives	The EFA goal of expanding and improving comprehensive ECCD was included in the Fifth and Sixth National Development Plans, the Education Sector Master Plan (1995-2005), and has a clear focus in the Seventh National Development Plan which includes a specific goal to maintain the net enrolment in ECCD at over 85%.
Nepal	The EFA National Plan Action and the EFA Core Document 2004-2009 in Nepal have made commitments to expand and improve ECD provision throughout the country. Based on the ECD Strategic Plan (2004), an ECD Programme Implementation Guideline was prepared by the Department of Education under the Ministry of Education and Sports (MOES) in 2005. The Tenth FYP (2002-2007) highlighted ECD as the main initiative to prepare children for enrolment in primary schools and for their holistic development.
Pakistan	Pre-primary classes were at one time common in formal schools but from the 1980s, the practice was almost discontinued. Recognising the role and significance of ECE, provision has been made in the National Education Policy (1998-2010) to reintroduce pre-primary officially as a formal class in primary schools, in effect making primary education six years.
Sri Lanka	The National Policy on Early Childhood Care and Development (2004) is being introduced.

Source: Jennings (2008).

**Table 2.3: Policies and / or Legislations for the Provision of ECCE in Insular South-East Asia**

Country	Does policy and/or legislation for the provision of ECCE exist?
Indonesia	The National Education System Law of 2003 (Law 20/2003) of Indonesia provides the definition and modes of provision of ECCE (Part 7/Article 28).
Malaysia	The Childcare Centres Act of 1984 (amended in 2007) standardises and establishes minimum quality requirement for all child care centres and nurseries. The National Education Act of 1996 (Act 550) formally integrates pre-school education into the national education system.
Philippines	RA 6972 or the Daycare Act of 1990, provides for the establishment of at least one day-care centre in every barangay in the country. RA 8980 or the Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Act of 2000 was enacted to institutionalise an integrated and comprehensive national early childhood system. RA 9155 or the Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001 mandates that early childhood education be a part of basic education delivered in preparation for primary school.

Source: Caoli-Rodriguez (2008).

Tables 2.1 to 2.3 indicate that few countries have established national frameworks that comprehensively address the diverse needs of children in the first three years of life. Nor are there integrated policies in place to finance, co-ordinate and supervise ECCE programmes. For children aged three and older, most countries in the Asia Pacific region have newly established laws; but it is not common in the sub regions for attendance at pre-primary school to be made compulsory.

This section has considered factors affecting effective early childhood care and education services and the following will specifically discuss progress toward Goal 1 since the publication of GMR 2007 (UNESCO, 2006a).

## **Chapter 3**

### **Progress toward Goal 1**

#### **Child Well-being**

Broad indicators of well-being are levels of malnutrition and stunting in children under five and the under-five mortality rate. The latter is considered to be the most robust measure of childhood survival because it captures the accumulated impact of the birthing experience, neo-natal care, disability, breastfeeding, vaccination, malnutrition, inadequate health care and the effects of gender discrimination. This indicator captures 90% of global mortality under 18.

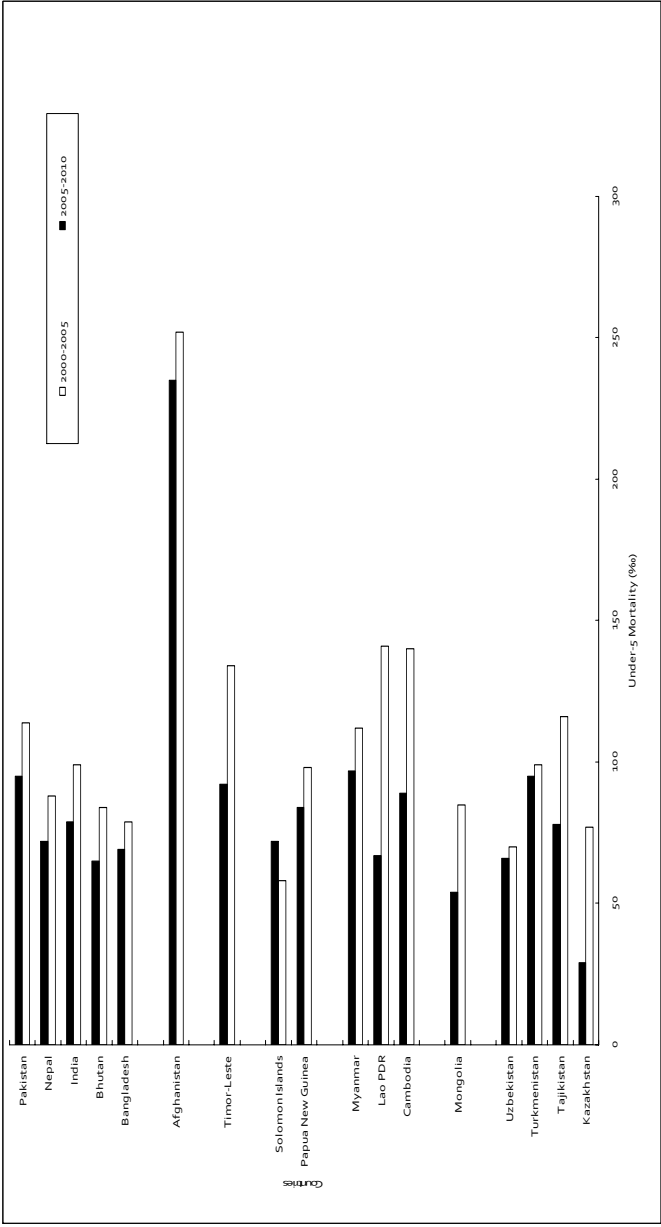
#### *Under-Five Mortality Rate*

In general, there has been a decline in the under-five mortality rates in the last decade. Figure 3.1 shows countries in the Asia Pacific region which had under-five mortality rates of over 70 in either 2000-2005 or 2005-2010. World and regional averages have been provided in Figure 2.2. Between 2000-2005 and 2005-2010, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Pakistan showed declines in their under-five mortality rates. All countries in Central Asia also showed declines with Kazakhstan and Tajikistan, which had high rates in 2000-2005, showing considerable progress. Among the Mekong Delta countries, there were very significant decreases over the past decade in the under-five mortality rates. They decreased from 140 to 89 in Cambodia and from 141 to 67 in Lao PDR. However, the Solomon Islands recorded an increase in the under-five mortality rate from 58 in 2000-2005 to 72 in 2005-2010.

What caused improvements in mortality rates? The decrease in mortality rates has been attributed to (i) improved maternal and child health services (Bangladesh and Nepal); (ii) vaccination programmes (Nepal); (iii) free basic health services (Nepal); and (iv) supplementary nutrition (Viet Nam) (UNESCO, 2009a).

However, the under-fives are most vulnerable in Afghanistan, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Turkmenistan, Timor-Leste, Cambodia, and Pakistan. The percentage of children who will not live to see their fifth birthday is unacceptable and these countries are not likely to meet the MDGs.

Figure 3.1: Changes in under-5 Mortality Rates in Selected in the Asia Pacific Region



Source: UNESCO (2006a, 2009a).

## Malnutrition

Malnutrition is closely related to child mortality and given that it is adversely affecting 178 million children under five years across the world, it has been deemed both a health and an education emergency. Globally, about one in three children under five years is moderately to severely stunted and the majority of these children live in South and West Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. Inter-uterine growth retardation, stunting during the early years and anaemia have detrimental effects on children's ability to learn and their readiness for formal schooling (UNESCO, 2009a).

Children who are malnourished in the uterus or during the early years have poorer developmental outcomes than other children. They have lower scores on tests of cognitive, psychomotor and fine motor development, poorer attention spans and show lower levels of activity than other children. Further, they are at risk of dropping out of primary school (UNESCO, 2009a).

### **Box 1: Long-Term Impact of Early Malnutrition on Cognitive Development**

*Young Lives* is a 15-year longitudinal study of 12,000 children who have lived in poverty in Ethiopia, India (Andhra Pradesh state), Peru and Viet Nam. The relationship between early nutrition status and cognitive achievements were examined comprehensively in this study by looking at the association between early nutrition status and children's cognitive achievement at age 4-5 and between nutrition status at age 7-8 and learning outcomes at age 11-12.

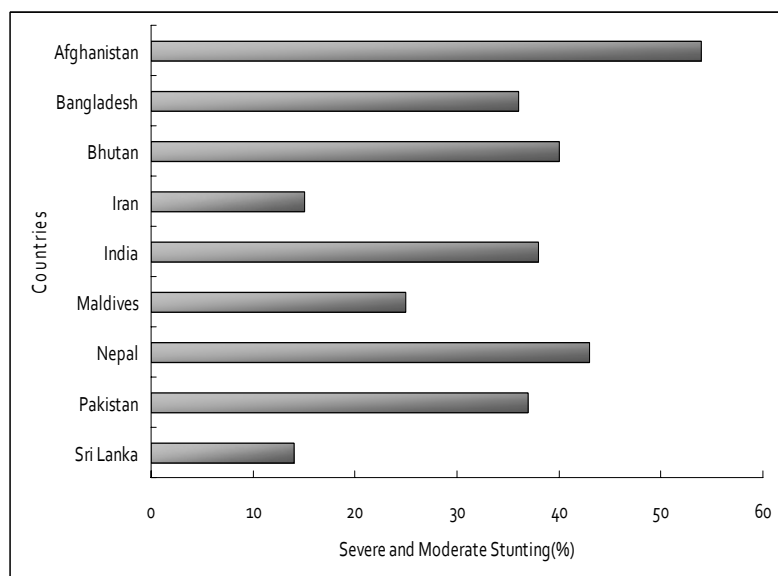
The results first point to a strong association between nutritional status measured at 6 to 18 months and cognitive achievement at age 4-5, even after controlling an extensive set of confounding variables from child, parental, household, and community characteristics. Similar findings were found in the examination of the relationship between nutrition status at age 7-8 and children's learning attainment at age 11-12. These results underline the significant costs imposed by malnutrition on education.

Source: Sanchez (2009).

**Stunting**

Low birth weight and stunting signal malnutrition and we see wide variations in the incidence of low birth weight and childhood stunting in the Asia Pacific region. They are particularly problematic in South and West Asia and in the Mekong Delta countries. There are 49 countries in the world which have childhood stunting rates of over 30%. As shown in Figure 3.2 below, six of nine countries in South and West Asia are included in this group.

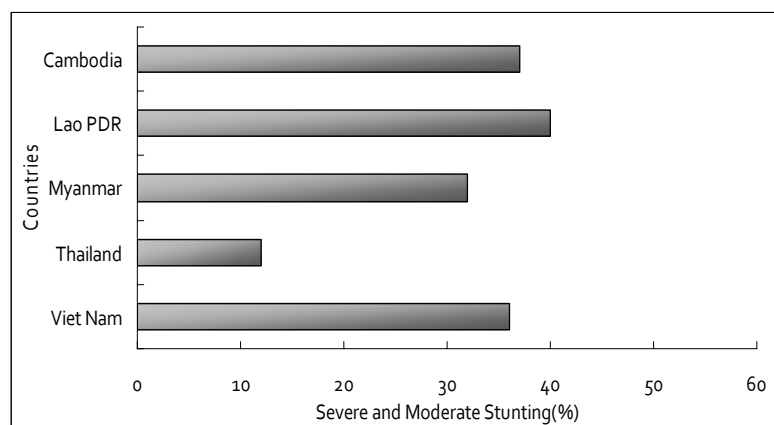
**Figure 3.2: Moderate to Severe Stunting among the under Fives in South and West Asia (2000-2007)**



Source: UNESCO (2009a).

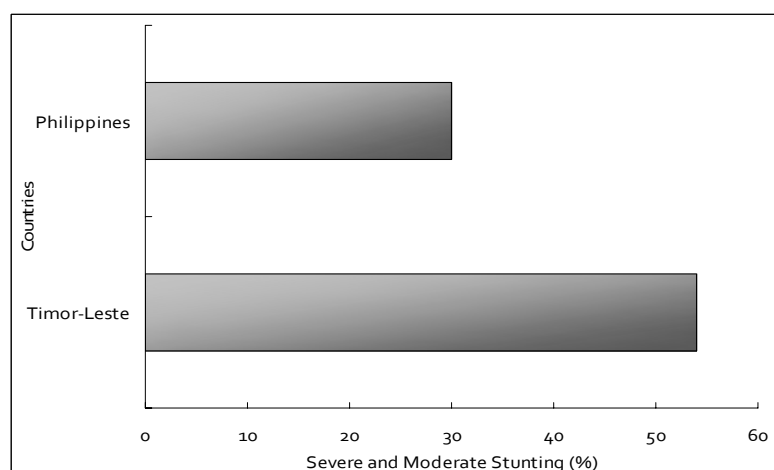
Recent comparable data on stunting are only available for 11 countries in the East Asia and Pacific Region. There are wide variations from 2% in Singapore (not shown in the figures) to 54% in Timor-Leste. As shown in Figures 3.3 to 3.5 below, 7 of these countries had stunting rates of 30% or more.

**Figure 3.3: Moderate to Severe Stunting among the under Fives in the Mekong Delta (2000-2007)**



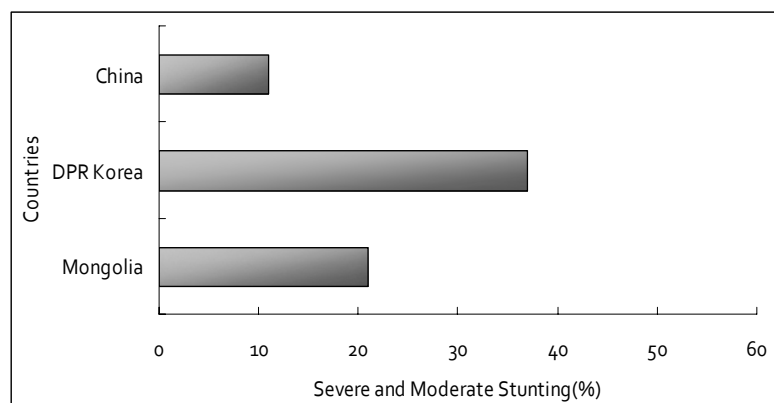
Source: UNESCO (2009a).

**Figure 3.4: Moderate to Severe Stunting among the under Fives in the Insular South-East Asia (2000-2007)**



Source: UNESCO (2009a).

**Figure 3.5: Moderate to Severe Stunting among the under Fives in the East Asia (2000-2007)**



Source: UNESCO (2009a).

Within the Central Asian region, none of the countries had rates of stunting that were above 30%, but Tajikistan had a rate of 27% (UNESCO, 2009a).

Because of the difficulties of comparing non-equivalent data across time periods, it is not possible to draw conclusions about trends in stunting. However, data suggest that the rate of stunting in Viet Nam decreased by 36.5% between 1990 and 2004 (Khan, Tuyen, Ngoc, Duong, & Khoi, 2007). This decrease has been attributed to maternal and child health and supplementary nutrition programmes. The current high rates of stunting (i.e., over 30%) in many parts of Asia are unacceptable. Large sectors of the child population will be irreversibly stunted, will not reach their potential, will suffer long term educational and social disadvantages, and countries will not meet their commitment to the MDGs. Goal 4 of the MDGs is to reduce the under-five mortality rate to 33.7% by 2015. It is predicted that this goal will not be reached, partly because of the economic crisis and is expected to be about 68% in 2015 (World Bank, 2010).

#### Low Birth Weight

About 19 million infants in the world have a low birth weight and over half of them were born in South and West Asia. About 25% of children in South and West Asia region had a low birth weight and about 45% of children below 5 years in Bangladesh, India (8.3 million), and Nepal are

underweight. On the other hand, smaller percentages of children are born with a low birth weight in the East Asia and Pacific and Central Asian regions. There are few exceptions – the incidence of low birth weights in Myanmar, Micronesia, and the Philippines are 15%, 18%, and 20%, respectively.

We know the causes and solutions for poor indices of child well-being. Countries need to implement strategies for the delivery of effective health services, food supplementation and education to pregnant mothers and poor children living in rural areas or city slums (along with the concomitant training of teachers, health professionals and parents). What is lacking is the political will to co-ordinate effectively, to invest in long-term gains, and to pursue policies that are in the best interest of children.

### Maternal Health

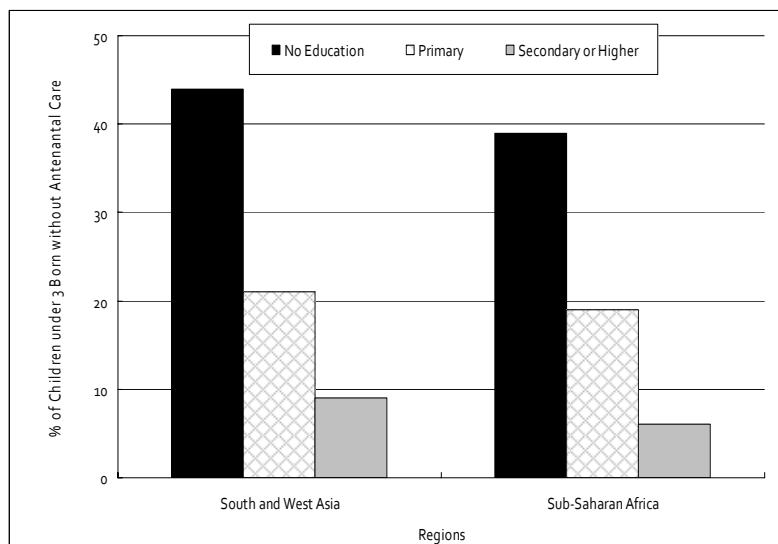
Goal 5 of the MDGs is to improve maternal health. As noted earlier, ECCE is closely related to attainment of all the MDGs. Maternal health, both before and after childbirth, has significant influences on children's developmental and educational outcomes, and along with child health, are considered vital factors in the promotion of well-being.

“A key to healthy early childhood development is a continuum of care for mothers, neonates, infants and young children at a time when they are all particularly vulnerable to a range of risks. In the very early years, health care and a healthy environment play pivotal roles in child survival and development and build the basis for a healthy adult life. Mothers and children need the continuum of care from pre-pregnancy through pregnancy and childbirth and through to the early days and years of life. Safe and healthy environments, including good quality housing, clean water and adequate sanitation facilities, safe neighbourhoods, and protection against violence, are all essential. Good nutrition begins *in utero* and depends on adequately nourished mothers. The initiation of early and exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life is as important as ensuring access to healthy diets for infants and young children. These measures can be assured by improving food security and changing prevailing knowledge, attitudes and practice.” (Aga Khan Development Network, 2009)

Mothers who are malnourished are more likely to deliver children with low birth weights, and health systems in South and West Asia do not provide adequate pre-natal, delivery and post natal care. Skilled

attendants are present only for 41% of births in South and West Asia (UNESCO, 2009c). Further, 50% of mothers with no education received no antenatal care, but only 10% of those with secondary education did not do so. The same pattern is evident in Sub-Saharan Africa. South and West Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa have the highest maternal mortality rates in the world. As shown in Figure 3.4 below, the often overlooked relationship between education and healthcare is critical to both maternal and child outcomes.

**Figure 3.6: The Relationship between Maternal Education and Receiving Antenatal Care**



Source: UNESCO (2009a).

These data also highlight the well-known fact that women's education benefits children's well-being. Lack of education, poverty, and belonging to an ethnic minority are inter-related, and vulnerable and excluded mothers who need the most care before, during, and after birth are the most disadvantaged, perpetuating the cycle of social disadvantage. Further, it has been found that half of the children-stunting observed occurs *in utero* and the rest from birth to 2 years. This again, highlights the importance of providing services to both, pregnant mothers and the under threes.

However, as is shown in Nepal and Bangladesh, maternal and child survival can be increased. According to data from the National Demographic and Health Survey in Nepal, the maternal mortality rate decreased from 539 per 100,000 live births in 1996 to 281 in 2006. More recent analysis suggests a further decline of about 20% over the past 10 years (DFID, 2008). Evidence from Nepal suggests that providing free maternal (and child) health services and having trained community health workers can increase access to services (UNESCO, 2009a). Bangladesh has also made steady and significant progress in reducing the Maternal Mortality Rate. It has fallen from 574 in 1990 to 322 in 2001. This has been attributed to increased contraceptive use, girls' education, the presence of skilled birth attendances (DFID, 2008).

As in the case of Goal 4 of the MDGs, it is unlikely that the target of decreasing maternal mortality ratio associated with Goal 5 of the MDGs will be attained. However, extant evidence from South Asia suggests that it is possible to galvanise progress toward these two MDGs (which are closely intertwined to EFA Goal 1). This can be done by (i) improving maternal and child health services (Bangladesh and Nepal); (ii) providing free maternal and health services (Nepal); and (iii) having both child and health care and supplementary feeding programmes for the poor (Viet Nam). It should be noted that it is not enough to have well-conceptualised and designed programmes to improve maternal and child health. For example, India's Integrated Child Development Services programme targets both maternal and child health but insufficient progress has been made on reducing stunting (UNICEF, 2009a). According to India's National Family Health Surveys, 50% and 43% of children under five were stunted in 1999 and 2006, respectively. This means that India has 61 million stunted children followed by quite a distance by China which has 12 million (UNICEF, 2009a).

## **Preschool Access and Equity**

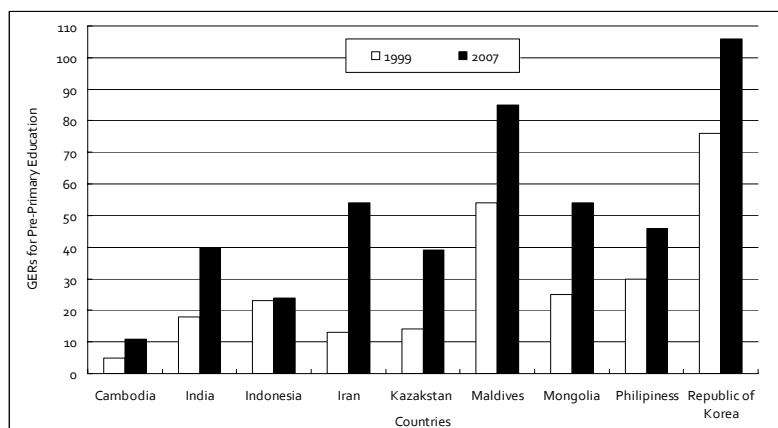
A review of studies conducted in the developing world concluded that preschool attendance benefited participating children (Engle, et al., 2007) and more recent research conducted in Asia has confirmed this finding. From Bangladesh (Aboud, 2006) to Cambodia (Rao & Pearson, 2007), and to four countries in East Africa (Mwaura, Sylva, & Malmberg, 2008), children from economically deprived backgrounds who attended preschool programmes have been found to have better developmental outcomes than those who did not. Access to early childhood services reduces inequalities and is particularly important for

these children as they typically have less stimulating family environments and fewer resources for learning in the home and in the community. Head Start-type early intervention programmes compensate for these less favourable conditions and can reduce disparities in school readiness and achievement. According to the cognitive advantage hypothesis, preschool participation promotes school preparedness and continues to benefit children through their school years. Therefore, in these cases, preschool programmes have “helped level the playing field for disadvantaged children as they entered primary school” (UNESCO, 2006a, p.113).

### *Improved Access*

It follows that ECCE is particularly important in the developing world where 86% of the world’s children reside (UNICEF, 2003), as it promotes children’s rights to survival and development, can compensate for early disadvantage and can bring long term economic benefits to society (UNESCO, 2006a). Figure 2.3 showed that the GERs for pre-primary education increased in all sub-regions of the Asia Pacific between 1999 and 2007. GERs in 2007 for Central Asia, East Asia, the Pacific Islands and South and West Asia were 28, 47, 67 and 36 in 2007, respectively, with the sharpest increase in South and West Asia (UNESCO, 2009a).

**Figure 3.7: Increases in Gross Enrolment Ratios for Pre-Primary Education in Selected Countries**

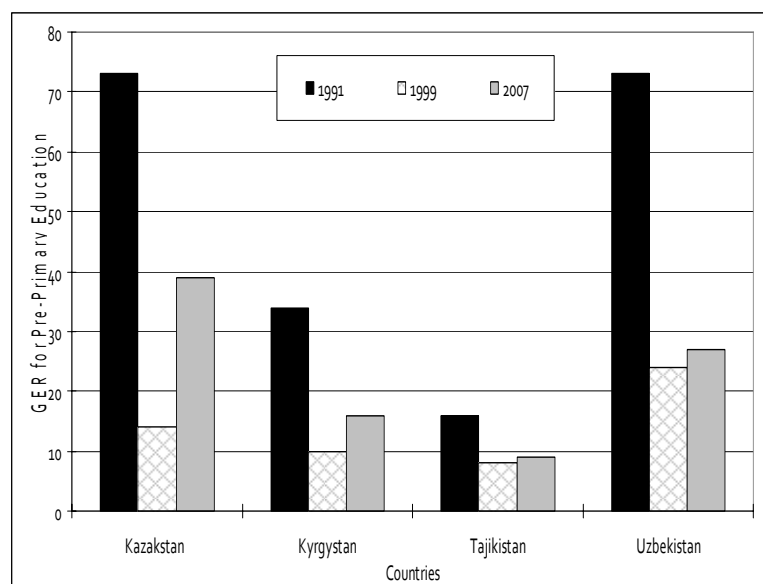


Source: UNESCO (2009a).

Figure 3.7 shows the countries in the region which have recorded the largest increases in GER between 1999 and 2007. Most countries have increased but there are some exceptions. For example, GERs decreased in the Marshall Islands (59 to 45), Samoa (53 to 48), and in Tonga (30 to 23). Further, the GER in Thailand decreased from 97 in 1999 to 95 in 2008.

While all countries in the Central Asian region have increased in their GERs from 1999, they have not reverted to the 1991 levels. Figure 3.8 shows the trends in enrolment in these countries. The marked decrease is due to changes in the economies and political structures with the break up of the former Soviet Union. As governments work to increase access to ECCE, an innovative Sesame-street type TV programme in Kyrgyzstan is providing children with important basic life skills and school readiness skills. Sesame Workshop International also co-produces the programme, Sesame Street, in Bangladesh, India and Indonesia to foster the development and learning of young children in these countries (Sesame Workshop, 2010). The programme has also been translated and/or adapted in Afghanistan, Cambodia and Malaysia.

**Figure 3.8: Changes in Gross Enrolment Ratios for Pre-Primary Education in Central Asian States**



Source: UNESCO (2009a).

**Box 2: Using the Media to Improve Children's School Readiness: The Magic Journey in Kyrgyzstan**

The years following the dissolution of the Soviet Union saw the dramatic reduction of budgets for early childhood programmes and the sale of many kindergarten facilities in Kyrgyzstan. The impact of this loss has been devastating. During the Soviet era, the State was largely responsible for child rearing. As a result, the culture and practice of parenting shifted; even today, parents do not see themselves as competent to support their children's development. In addition, high rates of migration have left many women to manage large families and farming on their own. Many mothers worry that they have neither the time nor the knowledge to help their children learn, grow and develop.

In 2007, 10% of children ranging in age from three to six years received pre-primary education in state kindergartens; a rate the Government is working actively to expand. In the meanwhile, the remaining children are not forgotten, thanks to Magic Journey, a remarkable locally-produced cartoon watched by 95% of young children and their families. Aktan and Akylai, the main characters, teach young children basic life and school readiness skills, and have become heroes and friends to children across the country. Importantly, Aktan and Akylai also teach parents just how much young children can learn at home.

Magic Journey airs daily in 5-minute episodes during the early evenings, when families gather around their televisions. The show is supported by the ECD Project under the President's Office, Kyrgyz National Television and Radio Corporation, UNICEF, the Soros Foundation, and the Aga Khan Foundation.

Source: UNICEF (2009b).

Despite the increases in enrolment there are still millions of children in the Asian region who do not receive ECCE services and these are the children who would most benefit from them.

In fragile states like Afghanistan which has the highest infant mortality rate in the world, data on current enrolment in pre-primary education in Afghanistan are not available but GERs are likely to be low. International aid agencies have been playing an important role in providing services to young children.

**Box 3: Role of International Organisations in Improving Access to Early Childhood Services in Afghanistan**

Since the late 1970s, Afghanistan has experienced a continuous state of civil war. The deteriorating security situation has adversely affected the demand and number of the early childhood centres. According to the Education for All 2000 Assessment for Afghanistan, Afghanistan developed early childhood development programmes for children ranging in age from three to five years in the 1980s and the GER was 1% per cent in 1985. Despite the continued armed struggle and migration of refugees to neighbouring countries, the number of pre-schools increased steadily from 27 in 1980 to 195 in 1990. However, the impact of continued instability and destruction of economic infrastructure started to show in 1995 when the number decreased to 88 with an enrolment of 2,110 children.

Against the background of political instability in Afghanistan, international aid agencies have been providing early childhood services. For example, Save the Children (USA) has been supporting community-based Early Childhood Development (ECD) playgroups in four provinces of Afghanistan since 2003. While communities provide facilitators and the room to conduct the playgroups, Save the Children provides training to the facilitators, ECD play kits and parenting education. Informal evaluation of the programme suggests that primary school teachers find that children who attended the playgroups are more confident, disciplined and co-operative than other children.

Source: SPPD Project (1999); Stanikzai (2009).

There are many gaps in the data on enrolment in private pre-primary institutions in the Asia-Pacific. While the proportion of enrolment in private institutions is negligible in Central Asian countries (less than 1%) it accounts for 56% of enrolment in East Asia.

*Including the Marginalised*

The GMR 2007 (UNESCO, 2006a) considered rural residence, being a girl, and poverty as the most prominent barriers to participation in ECCE programmes. However, the latest GMR 2010 (UNESCO, 2009a) used more sophisticated analyses and suggested that poverty and low

parental education, irrespective of age, gender and place of residence are distinct barriers to participation. A recent analysis of preschool attendance in 52 developing countries including many countries in the Asia Pacific region showed that the most important factors in preschool attendance were age of the child (older children attended more), mothers' education (secondary level sent more children), and family wealth (the highest quintile sent more) (Nonoyama-Tarumi, Loaiza, & Engle, 2010). This suggests that the most deprived children are the least likely to attend preschool, and that for all, attendance occurred rather late in their developmental trajectory.

In Viet Nam, children from the wealthiest 20% of households were nine times more likely to participate in ECCE programmes than those from the lowest quintile. Comparable figures for the Philippines indicate that the odds ratio for the likelihood of participation in ECCE is 12. Lack of access can also be associated with cost and distance from the early childhood programme (UNESCO, 2009a).

The GMR 2010 (UNESCO, 2009a) has measured marginalisation in education, focusing on education poverty (less than 4 years of education) and extreme education poverty (adults with less than two years of education). There was clear evidence of wealth (people from the lowest quintile are more likely to be in extreme educational poverty) and gender (girls from the poorest households are most likely to be in educational poverty) effects. There are other factors such as language, ethnicity, place of residence, urban-rural differences, disability which can exacerbate disadvantages presented by poverty and low parental education. These data have implications for increasing access to ECCE services for the vulnerable.

The GMR 2007 (UNESCO, 2006a) compared participation rates of three- to four-year-olds in ECCE programmes between the richest 40% of households and the poorest 40% of households in 47 countries (including Viet Nam, India, Philippines, Myanmar, Lao PDR) based on household survey data. Children from poorer households participated in ECCE programmes at significantly lower rates than those from richer households in all these countries.

Unlike participation in primary and secondary education, gender does not seem to be an issue for pre-primary participation rates in the Asia-Pacific. However, language in early childhood programmes is an important issue related to primary school retention and achievement. Research supports the use of the mother tongue in the early years but in many countries, the official language and not the child's mother tongue is used as the language of instruction in primary schools. Since young children tend to acquire a second language easily, exposure to the

official language through ECCE programmes particularly benefits children from linguistic minorities (Carrasquillo & Rodriquez, 2002).

## Quality of Programmes

### *Dimensions of Quality in Early Childhood Programmes*

The quality of early childhood programmes is typically assessed in terms of structural and/or process dimensions. Structural measures of programmes include staff-child ratios, staff qualifications, teaching experience and stability, health and safety factors, and the physical setting. Process measures refer to the quality of interactions between staff and children.

It has been argued that definitions of preschool quality should be culturally and contextually relevant. Given wide variations in economic development, resource availability, and in cultural beliefs, definitions of **high quality** will vary across contexts. Nevertheless, there is some agreement about the factors which define high preschool quality regardless of circumstance. These include the physical and psychological environment, curriculum, learning and teaching approaches, teacher-child interactions, programme management, and community integration (Association for Childhood Education International, 2006). Among these, teacher-child interactions are considered the most important determinant of quality (UNESCO, 2007) and teachers interact with young children through the curriculum.

### Curriculum

National or state/provincial ministries in most countries typically only issue guidelines about early childhood programming and do not mandate a rigid national curriculum for teachers to deliver. The reluctance to offer detailed requirements is closely related to the nature of ECE curriculum and our understanding of society, young children and their learning (UNESCO, 2004). On one hand, the ECE curriculum has to be holistic and include children's overall development. On the other hand, there are dramatic diversities in children's needs, cultural traditions, parenting practices, and family expectations from one context to another. General guidelines or curricular frameworks can help establish the value and programme standards for the country and encourage a shared sense of purpose between stakeholders. Examples from New Zealand and China illustrate the purpose and actual implementations of national curriculum guidelines.

**Box 4: Early Childhood Curriculum in China:  
A Hybrid of Traditional Chinese and Western Ideas**

Early educational concepts and practices which originated in Europe (e.g., the Project Approach from Reggio Emilia, Italy), North America (High Scope) and Japan have now been embraced in the early childhood national curriculum. These are, in some ways, at odds with the traditional Chinese educational notions (such as teacher authority, discipline, and acquisition of knowledge through memorisation) which are considered important for both early learning and cultural transmission. As a result, China has been seeking a balance between adopting the Western ideas and maintaining Chinese traditions in early childhood education.

Tobin et al. (2009) observed kindergarten classroom activities and interviewed kindergarten teachers in China, Japan, and the U.S. in the 1980s and in the 1990s. They found evidence of a hybrid form of Chinese early childhood education, which fuses constructivist, child-centred principles with Chinese emphases on social mindedness, skill and subject mastery, and the use of critical feedback for self-improvement.

In a similar vein, Rao and Li (2008) found that Chinese kindergarten teachers have a unique way of fusing constructivist notions of development and learning promoted in the national early childhood curriculum and their traditional beliefs. The early childhood educational reform document emphasised free choice activities in kindergartens. However, Rao and Li (2008) found that free play accounted for only about 17% of activity time in kindergartens and they used the term “Eduplay” to refer to a form of play-based education with “Chinese characteristics” which appears to be prevalent in Chinese preschools.

Source: Rao & Li (2008); Tobin, Hsueh, & Karasawa (2009); Zhu & Zhang (2008).

**Curricular continuity between pre-primary and primary education.** Policy makers have been often concerned with the lack of attention paid to the transition of children from pre-primary to primary education. They have been concerned about how well children entering primary school are able to adjust to the new physical setting, larger class size, and curricular focus.

Pre-primary programmes in some countries in the region may go too far in presenting a formal academic curriculum, using inappropriate teaching methods for children below the age of six. However, the implanting of some basic academic skills in children at an early age is not necessarily a developmentally inappropriate practice. In particular, teaching these and other school-readiness skills and behaviours is of vital importance to children from disadvantaged backgrounds to enhance their entry into primary school. The same is true of young children with potential learning difficulties or disabilities. Government curriculum

#### Box 5: Te Whāriki:

##### New Zealand's Bicultural Early Childhood Curriculum

Te Whāriki, created in 1996, is the New Zealand government's early childhood curriculum policy statement. Early childhood education programmes in New Zealand have to serve very diverse communities. Against this background, Te Whāriki was developed to acknowledge cultural diversity in communities and to regulate a variety of different ECE programmes.

Te Whāriki is the Maori term for "a mat for all to stand on" and the curriculum has received world wide recognition. It is a curriculum appropriate for a country with diverse cultures. This integrated curriculum has been specifically designed for children aged from birth to school entry and emphasises the critical role of the social context in children's learning and development: teacher, parents and families are learning partners and teachers weave a holistic curriculum in response to children's specific needs. Te Whāriki is also the first bicultural curriculum statement developed in New Zealand. It contains a Maori immersion curriculum within New Zealand to strengthen the "Te Reo Maori" – the Maori language.

The crucial principles of this curriculum can be categorised as: **empowerment** of the child to learn and grow; **holistic development** of children, **relationships** between family and the community and among people, places, and things. These principles are interwoven within five strands: well-being, belonging, contribution, communication, and exploration. Specific goals have been articulated for infants, toddlers, and young children within each of the five strands.

Source: Ministry of Education of New Zealand (1996).

guidelines we have seen typically adequately consider curricular continuity between pre-primary and primary education and no attempt should be made to reduce the coverage of beginning literacy and numeracy teaching to below the level suggested by government guidelines.

The belief that the curriculum should include some basic academic skills also has implications for the professional training of early childhood teachers. The curriculum used with trainee early childhood educators, while fully respecting and being underpinned by a developmentalist philosophy, should also give due attention to teaching approaches to young children's acquisition of basic skills.

### *Measurement of Quality*

The GMR reports use two proxies for educational quality: teacher-child ratios and children's performance on cross-national tests of achievement, such as the TIMMS and PISA. However, these two indices are not totally relevant for the early years.

#### *Teacher-Child Ratios*

Cultural beliefs about early education affect the form of preschool education. Hence, small group size, stringent teacher to child ratios and "developmentally appropriate" curriculum models are considered hallmarks of high preschool quality in only some societies (Prochner, 2002). Tobin (2005) points out that the high teacher-child ratios in Japan and France would be considered to represent low quality early education by U.S. standards but children in these contexts appear to be developing appropriately. Further, early childhood services are provided in a number of different settings (for e.g., home-based, community-based, kindergartens) and it is difficult to come up with a defensible common metric.

As noted earlier, the interaction between the carer and the child, or process quality, is a critical element for ECCE. With lower adult-child ratios and smaller group sizes, children can receive more individual attention and teachers can more effectively cater for diverse learning needs. There has been a rapid expansion of pre-primary programmes for children over three in the some parts of the region. This has led to a concern that an expansion of quantity is associated with less favourable teacher-child ratios and, in turn, a concomitant decrease in programme quality. Hence for example, in South and West Asia, the average teacher-child ratio increased from 36 in 1999 to 40 in 2007. However,

other sub-regional averages indicate that the ratios decreased from 26 in 1999 to 21 in 2007 in East Asia and were steady over the same period in Central Asia and in the Pacific Islands (UNESCO, 2009a).

#### Cross-National Tests of Achievement

Good quality ECCE is holistic and is concerned with more than children's academic achievement. Hence, the IEA Pre-Primary Project assesses multiple domains of children's development. Montie, Xiang and Schweinhart (2006) found that a predominance of child-initiated activities, higher levels of teacher education, more educational materials and less time in whole group activities were associated with better developmental outcomes in 10 countries (including Hong Kong China, Indonesia and Thailand). However, there is a dearth of cross-national research which has identified the features of high quality care in different countries.

#### *Preschool Quality and Child Developmental Outcomes*

Research indicates that children who attend preschools are better prepared for school, more likely to stay in school and less likely to repeat grades than those who have not. Preschool experience equips them with cognitive, behavioural and social skills which contribute to their school preparedness. However, the quality of this experience matters and the potential for harm from low quality child care is a concern (UNICEF, 2008). While the existence of adequate resources for learning, including having professionally qualified early childhood educators, is a prerequisite for high quality programmes, many developing countries lack the resources to attain standards for quality set in the developed world. In fact, many programmes in the developing world would be considered of extremely poor quality using the benchmarks of the developed world and western observers may argue that children are better off staying at home than attending these low quality programmes. What does research from the Asia Pacific region tell us?

There is a dearth of studies on the relationship between preschool quality and child development in the developing world. Myers (2006) reviewed longitudinal studies on the effects of ECCE programmes on children in the developing world and noted that few studies assess quality concurrently and longitudinally. On the basis of a critical review of 20 studies conducted in developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America which evaluated the effectiveness of early childhood programmes, Engle et al. (2007) concluded that holistic, intensive, long-

lasting, **high quality** early childhood interventions are effective in promoting child development and averting the loss of young children's development potential.

Four studies conducted in South Asia have specifically evaluated preschool quality and child outcomes. Research conducted in Bangladesh (Aboud 2006; Aboud, Moore, & Akhter, 2008) and in India (MSSRF, 2000; Rao, 2010) found that even in programmes which would be considered to be of low to mediocre quality using western benchmarks for quality, preschool quality was positively associated with child developmental outcomes controlling for potential confounding variables.

Such findings further underscore the necessity of looking at quality in context and for using contextually appropriate tools to evaluate quality. In contexts where maternal literacy is very low and children are very socially disadvantaged, even the minimum input provided by programmes which include food supplementation and some adult-centred cognitive and psychosocial stimulation seem to make a positive difference to young children.

#### *Preschool Quality and Programme Type*

Centre-based programmes tend to offer higher quality services than home-based ones. Rao and Pearson (2007) found that children attending preschool programmes located in primary schools in Cambodia had better developmental outcomes than those who had attended less structured programmes community preschools and home-based programmes. The researchers used stratified random sampling to select children who attended state-run preschools, community preschools, home-based programmes, or no programmes (control group), and children's developmental functioning was assessed twice, one year before and just before entering Grade 1. Children who received any form of preschool education had significantly better developmental functioning than those in the control group. However, children in the higher quality centre-based state preschool programme had the best outcomes, and there were no significant differences between those who had attended community preschools and those who had attended home-based programmes. Aboud, Hoosain, and O'Gara (2008) also found that quality of preschool was related to child outcomes in Bangladesh but that there were no differences in the Grade 1 competencies of children receiving the same programme in either home-based or school-based preschools.

## Effective Practices

### *Characteristics of Effective Programmes*

Effective practice in ECCE is defined with reference to the 2000 Dakar Framework for Action. According to the Framework, family-based and more structured programmes should: (i) be comprehensive, focusing on all of the child's needs and encompass health, nutrition and hygiene as well as cognitive and psycho-social development; (ii) be provided in the child's mother tongue; (iii) be appropriate to the children's age and not mere downward extensions of primary education; (iv) include the education of parents and other caregivers in better child care, building on traditional practice; and (v) include the systematic use of early childhood indicators (UNESCO, 2000).

The GMR 2007 (UNESCO, 2006a) stressed that a universal model of early childhood provision does not exist and that high quality programmes were based on a country's circumstances. It did, however, conclude that strong programmes, shared some characteristics, regardless of context. These included: focusing on and offering support to parents in children's earliest years; integrating educational activities with other services, such as nutrition, health care and social services; providing relevant educational experiences during pre-school years; and easing the transition to primary school.

Effective early childhood programmes provide support to parents. Children are very sensitive to their physical and psychological environments and the most effective way to improve the home environment for young children is to work with parents. This is usually done through parent education programmes and parent support programmes. The former provide training and learning activities for parents and may go beyond parenting to livelihood skills and other activities. Parent support programmes which provide parents (or other carers) with information on how to give children the care they need to reach their potential (UNESCO, 2006a).

### *Examples of Programmes*

#### Home-Based Programmes

Most of these programmes work with groups of parents and carers who have children in the same age range. Although there is obvious didactic content, many people find their greatest satisfaction in the interaction with and support of the other parents. The learning that takes place does not just emanate from the leader in the group but becomes a shared and

collaborative exercise, which can have positive effects on group members themselves, increasing self-esteem and sense of efficacy (Rao & Pearson, 2007; UNESCO, 2008d). The Philippines has a long established national Parenting Effectiveness Service (Gordoncillo et al., 2009).

### Centre-Based Programmes

These are the most common form of early childhood provision for children ranging in age from three to primary school entrance age. These programmes typically have a curriculum that includes activities which promote children's psycho-motor, cognitive, language and social skills and gets them ready for primary schools. Centre-based programmes in some countries offer food supplementation. The Integrated Child Development Services scheme is the largest child development programme in the region.

#### **Box 6: The Parent Effectiveness Service in the Philippines**

The Parent Effectiveness Service (PES) was initiated in 1978 and is implemented by the local government units in the Philippines. It is a home-based intervention in ECCD to help parents, surrogate parents, guardians and other caregivers, particularly those belonging to the low income group, enhance their knowledge, skills and attitudes in parenting so they can assume the major educational role in their child's growth and development. In the Philippines, PES has become the major component of the home-based ECCD programme.

The following interventions are provided within the PES:

- **The Neighbourhood Parent Effectiveness Assembly** is the primary means for reaching parents and a group of 10-20 parents gather weekly to discuss common problems and their solutions.
- In the **Day Care Service Parents' Group**, parents of children from birth to six who are enrolled in the day care centre, child minding service or supervised neighbourhood play service are regularly provided parent effectiveness sessions in group sessions.
- **Home Training** is provided by the social worker to parent volunteers who, in turn, contact parents who are unable to attend Neighbourhood Parent Effectiveness Assembly or Day Care Service Parents' Group meetings.

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- **PES-on-the-Air programme** entitled *Pamilyang Pinoy sa Himpapawid* (Philippine Family on the Air) was launched in 1993. Parents in very remote areas who can not benefit from the above three programmes are given an opportunity to listen to live parenting programmes on radio stations or ones that have been taped.
- **Empowerment and Reaffirmation of Paternal Abilities Training** aims to enhance the knowledge, skills and attitudes of fathers as primary educators in the development of children. It also addresses the shared parenting tasks in the performance of familial responsibilities.

Specific materials, including a Manual on Effective Parenting, a Manual for Implementers and Father-Volunteers, and a Manual on ECCD School-on-the-Air, have been prepared to assist in the delivery of the PES programme.

Source: UNESCO (2006).

### **Box 7: Home-Based Early Childhood Programmes in Cambodia**

There are four major types of preschool programmes in Cambodia: State Preschool; Community Preschools; Home-based Programmes; and Private Preschools.

The home-based programme focuses on mothers as the child's first and most important teacher and aims to support them as early educators. This is done by showing mothers how to engage their children in early learning activities in the home setting, thereby promoting child development and school readiness. This programme, which was established in 2004, caters to children from birth to 6 years.

Educational resources and opportunities are available to mothers to come together weekly as a group, led by a trained "core" mother, who provides instruction on how to promote children's development and well-being. She is selected by villagers as someone who is more educated and experienced than other mothers. The core mothers attends monthly meetings where they are given hand-outs and hands-on practice with children in homes and peer support, and taught co-operative problem solving skills.

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Support to mothers' groups and core mothers is on-going and consistent, with less dependence on external bodies for physical and human resources required for successful operation. Meetings of mothers' groups and their children are typically held for one hour a week, for 24 weeks a year. At these meetings, mothers are trained how to use everyday activities to stimulate their children's development and how to introduce basic concepts to them. A Calendar of Activities for 5- to 6-year-olds developed by UNICEF, Cambodia, is a significant added strength of the home-based programmes and is clearly appreciated by the core and group mothers.

There were 13,447 children enrolled in the home-based programmes in the school year of 2005-2006 (total ECCE enrolment is 119,893) in Cambodia. Research has indicated that children attending home-based programmes before primary school had better learning outcomes than those without any preschool experiences; but no significant differences were found between children with home-based and community-based preschool experiences.

Source: National Education for All Committee of Cambodia, (2007); Rao et al., (2010); Rao & Pearson (2007).

### *Mother Tongue Teaching*

Given the linguistic and cultural diversity in many countries in the region, early childhood programmes have to pay particular attention to the languages of instruction used. The colonial or political history in some countries as well as globalisation has led to the official or foreign language being seen as a means of upward social mobility and the mother tongue is seen to be subordinate. However, research has clearly indicated that children learn better in their mother tongue and should do so at least until age eight, although the official language can be introduced orally earlier. With appropriate bridging programmes, children can transfer the reading and writing skills they have already acquired in their mother tongue to the second language by primary school age. Cambodia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam have introduced bilingual language policies and practices in their early childhood programmes that have shown promising results. As shown in Box 10, some kindergartens in Kazakhstan are promoting multi-lingual language experiences for young children. Early childhood programmes should adopt practices that value local languages, foster bilingualism and

counter prejudice towards linguistic and cultural minorities to include children from ethnic and linguistic minorities (UNESCO, 2006a; 2008d).

**Box 8: Integrated Child Development Services in India**

The **Integrated Child Development Services** (ICDS) scheme, the world's largest child development programme, has been the Indian government's major early childhood intervention strategy and in 1995 the government made a commitment to universalise the ICDS for all eligible beneficiaries. This has led to a marked expansion of the programme which serves over 121 million children under the age of six. Under this nationwide programme, children up to the age of six, and expectant and nursing mothers, benefit from a package of services that includes medical checks, immunizations, referral services, supplementary feeding, preschool education, and health and nutrition education. The ICDS provides services through a network of Anganwadi Centres (AWCs) or "courtyards" and is organised on a project basis. This has helped decentralise the programme and reach beneficiaries directly.

The findings of studies with national samples indicate that the ICDS has played a significant role in improving the survival rate, health and nutritional status, and educational outcomes of children from economically disadvantaged families. However, the programme has also been criticised for its focus on health and nutrition over social and cognitive development. It has been pointed out that there is no mechanism to ensure that supplementary nutrition and services actually reach the neediest sector of the population. Furthermore, child care workers are often overworked, and the health, outreach, and education components of the ICDS do not receive adequate attention.

Sources: Government of India (2009); Rao (2010); World Bank (1999).

**Box 9: Multiple Languages Used in  
Kazakhstan Kindergartens**

In Kazakhstan, the Constitution (1995) endorses Kazakh as the state language. However, Russian is used in state organisations and local authorities as the second official language for multi-national communication. In comparison to other Central Asian countries, Russian has retained a more prominent role here. 40% of schools operate in Russian, compared to 10% and 2% for Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, respectively.

As Kazakh has gained prominence in the recent years, the percentage of Kindergartens operating in this language increased dramatically from 27% (2003) to 46% (2006), while Russian remained relatively static at around 53%. Slight increases in availability of kindergarten classes in other languages (Uzbek, Uighur, Korean, German) are noted, but still total less than 1% of provision. Given the long dominance of Russian, the promotion of Kazakh language in early childhood education remains a key priority. Currently the national strategic focus is made on tri-lingual education including equal share of Kazakh, Russian and English as well as on the creation of multi-lingual environments.

Over 60% of the citizens of Kazakhstan are ethnically Kazakh, so for many in this majority ethnic group, mother tongue-based kindergartens remain elusive, though the trend is positive. The percentage of Russian-dominant kindergartens far surpasses the proportion of ethnic Russians in the population; this group has easy access to kindergarten in their mother tongue, but more than ever before, they are also learning the national language. Unfortunately, smaller minority groups, like the Uzbeks and Uighurs, who total over 4% of the population, have minimal access to programmes in their mother tongue. Nationally, though, only 30% of children have access to kindergarten at all; the Government's continued efforts to expand access while promoting multi-lingual approaches is a step in the right direction to ensuring access to mother tongue-based multi-lingual early childhood care and education in Kazakhstan. The promotion of tri-lingual education at pre-schools is ongoing to support children's integration in the world around them, as well as to broaden their opportunities for development and success into adulthood.

Source: UNESCO (2008b).

### Gender Bias and Stereotyping

As noted earlier, in most countries in the region, boys and girls are equally likely to attend early childhood programmes. Girls who attend preschool programmes are more likely to both enrol and complete primary school than those who do not and preschool participation significantly improved the ratio of boys to girls in Nepal (Arnold, Bartlett, Gowani & Merali, 2007). Effective programmes challenge gender stereotypes and foster gender equality. In many countries in Asia, curriculum resources are gender biased. For example, visual displays show women staying at home, cooking and doing housework while men are portrayed at work, making decisions, and performing skilled tasks. Further, teachers give more attention to boys than to girls. Effective programmes not only have gender neutral curriculum materials but have teachers who are sensitive to gender issues. Most early childhood educators in Asia are female, so males need to be encouraged to join the profession. However, at the same time, we should be aware that Asian parents may feel less comfortable with men, who are not members of their extended family, taking care of female children. This may be a barrier to girls' participation in ECCE programmes.

### Children Living in Poverty

Children from poor families who will benefit the most from ECCE are often marginalised and excluded from these services. Large segments of the population in Sub-Saharan Africa and different parts of Asia live in poverty and will not reach their developmental potential. Many governments in Asia are providing targeted services for these groups through comprehensive, holistic, head start programmes. In Indonesia, integrated health and education community-based services have benefited young children in disadvantaged areas UNESCO (2007b).

**Box 10: A Mother Tongue-Based Preschool Programme for Ethnic Minority Children in Viet Nam**

There are 54 ethnic groups in Viet Nam and 53 of them use their own languages in communication. The Vietnamese government encourages ethnolinguistic communities to learn both, their spoken and written language, and the Education Law of 2005 states, "at ethnic preschool classes, the teaching and learning process will be implemented mainly by the ethnic minority languages." But upon entering the first grade, ethnic children have to learn Vietnamese.

Against this background, the Early Childhood Education Department of the Ministry of Education and Training in cooperation with the Gia Lai Education and Training Service carried out a mother tongue-based preschool programme, in Gia Lai, Viet Nam from 1998-2000. The objectives of this programme were to facilitate children to use the minority language and culture to improve the learning of both J'Rai (the minority language used in the Gia Lai region) and Vietnamese and to promote children's overall development.

Teaching materials with content related to the daily life and traditional culture (including pictures, folk songs, rhymes, verses, and information about local festivals) were prepared. Original poems, songs, games, and stories were also composed. Teachers for the programme received specific training in mother tongue-based education methods and teaching Vietnamese as a second language.

The programme was implemented in the preschool classes for 5-year-olds with a curriculum based on the 26-week national curriculum focusing on three major themes: playing, learning, and hygiene/life skills. The duration of the programme was also 26 weeks and children attended school for two hours and 45 minutes each day. As they began school, the mother tongue was the initial language of instruction; and it was used less and less and Vietnamese gradually replaced the mother tongue as the language of instruction. In addition to language instruction, teachers in the programme also encouraged children's confidence in learning and established appropriate classroom environments to support optimal learning.

After the two-year programme, children could speak their mother tongue more fluently and about 80% of the children could recognise Vietnamese letters and use Vietnamese to communicate with other children in the classroom. Children were also more confident and willing to interact with others. Based on these results, Gia Lai Education and Training Service is extending this programme to other parts of the region.

Source: Huong (2009).

**Box 11: Inclusive Classrooms in the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee Preschool Programme**

**Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC)** is a large-scale non-governmental development organisation. Aiming to “empower people and communities in situations of poverty, illiteracy, disease and social injustice”, BRAC has been working actively in the field of education, including education for children with special needs.

The key to the BRAC approach is the elimination of discrimination against children with special needs. There is an inclusive education policy, which is designed by staff with specialised training in BRAC, to ensure that the children with special needs can participate in mainstream education.

A unit was created in 2003 to identify ways to integrate children with special needs in BRAC schools. These schools adopt a holistic approach and staff are provided technical support by consultants who have extensive experience in inclusive education.

BRAC provides corrective surgeries, along with devices like wheelchairs, crutches, hearing aids, glasses and ramps to classrooms to make schools more accessible to physically challenged children. Children with special needs are placed in front of the classroom and paired with normally developing children. Textbooks highlight special needs issues to raise awareness of these among children and teachers. This has resulted in a substantial number of enrolments of children with special needs in BRAC schools. There are moves to expand the range of disabilities that teachers can handle and to improve the quality of education for children with disabilities.

By 2009, 53,436 children with mild and moderate disabilities were enrolled in BRAC schools or received services provided by the organisation.

Source: BRAC (2009).

*Children with a Disability*

There is a lack of comprehensive data on the number of children with disabilities or the incidence of special impairments in many developing countries (UNESCO, 2009a). Early childhood education is particularly important for children with disabilities as it can aid identification, increase the possibility of treatment, and prevent the development of secondary handicaps. Governments in the region vary in terms of their

approaches to meet the needs of young children with disabilities. Some governments favour segregation and provide special schools. For example, in Myanmar, the government provides non-integrated schools and care homes which cater solely to children with disabilities (Union of Myanmar, 2007). On the other hand, in Bangladesh, the inclusion of children with special needs is considered as an integral part of strategies to achieve Universal Primary Education by 2015 (Government of Bangladesh, 2008).

### *Supporting the Transition to Primary School*

ECCE eases children's transition to primary school and research has shown that children who attend preschool programmes are less likely to drop out of school. Three factors determine the success of children's transitions to primary education. These include characteristics of the children, the schools, and the learning support that children receive from their family and community (Gertsch, 2009).

Children must show "school readiness" which usually includes physical well-being and psycho-motor readiness, social and emotional development, approaches to learning, language and cognitive development, and general knowledge. "Ready schools" need classes of reasonable size, trained grade teachers, and adequate learning materials and must be able to teach in a language the child understands. Continuity between the curricula in the preschool and primary school also facilitates the transition. Where ECCE is conceptualised at policy level as incorporating birth to 8 years, the more likely it will be that national policies and administrative structures will be in place to facilitate transition. The reality is that in many countries in Asia, large numbers of children have no pre-primary experience. Even so, their entry into primary school can be eased by having them visit the school before admission, perhaps spending several half days participating in a class; having first grade teachers visit children in their homes and having low teacher-pupil ratios in Primary 1. A School Readiness Programme (SRP) was conducted in the first two months of Grade 1 of primary school in Cambodia to reduce the high repetition rates in early years of primary school in the country. During the intervention, the participated children were provided a specialised curriculum that prepared children without pre-primary experiences for eventual exposure to the formal school curriculum. Children who participated in SRP outperformed those not participating in the programme in terms of both school readiness skills and longer term school learning outcomes (Nonoyama-Tarumi & Bredenberg, 2009). Therefore, the interventions, like SRP, provided

before or at the beginning of primary education, may be considered as one approach to preschools in countries where access to pre-primary education is limited to smooth the transition to primary school.

## **Governance and Funding**

### *The Role of the State*

The data presented in Section 3.2 clearly demonstrate the positive relationship between family wealth and access to health care and ECCE services. Governments are in a unique position to facilitate the development of more inclusive systems which meet the needs of the disadvantaged and marginalised sections of society. They need to ensure that the disadvantaged are not further handicapped and that inequity and educational poverty are not transmitted to the next generation. In low resource environments, governments can implement pro-poor policies and focus on programmes targeted to the disadvantaged, as an interim strategy, before providing universal access to high quality ECCE (Gertsch, 2009).

The GMR 2009 (UNESCO, 2008c) made a strong case for the role of good governance in promoting equity in access to services. Governance in ECCE is defined with reference to the GMR 2007 (UNESCO, 2006a). The core components are the allocation of responsibility for decision making and delivery across government departments, levels of government, and public and private sectors. Hence we consider administrative leadership, decentralisation, and the role of the private sector in the following sections.

“Good governance can ensure that services attain quality standards, are affordable, meet local demand, promote cost-effectiveness and achieve equity goals. As the early childhood field expands and becomes increasingly complex, policymakers need to address governance to ensure more coherent ECCE policy across government agencies, levels of government and programmes.” (UNESCO, 2007a)

### Administrative Leadership

In many countries in the Asia Pacific region, a number of ministries, NGOs and community organisations are involved in the provision of ECCE. For example, in Myanmar there are five government ministries, four international agencies, two international NGOs and twelve national NGOs providing services (Union of Myanmar, 2007). Effective, co-

ordinated provision requires that different ministries and agencies work together, but this is difficult when they have different approaches to service provision and/or different agendas. A danger of having multiple ministries involved is that it can lead to fragmentation, overlap and duplication of services, and a diffusion of responsibility. Hence, some countries in the region have nominated a lead ministry, usually education, to coordinate and implement ECCE. This is the case in Viet Nam where the Ministry of Education and Training has had this role since 1986.

Having the Ministry of Education function as the lead ministry has both advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand there is a focus on children's learning and the transition to primary school. On the other hand, early childhood is typically the Cinderella of an education system and has to compete with her stepsisters, Primary and Secondary for the allocation of resources (Rao & Li, 2009). Further, as we have previously noted, under-five mortality and malnutrition rates are very high in many parts of South and South-East Asia. In such cases, ministries of public health may be in a better position to cater to children's needs (UNESCO, 2007a).

In some countries, there is an independent lead ministry that focuses on ECCE and integrated ECCE services, which are "characterised by a unified management system, pooled funds, common governance, whole systems approach to training, information and finance, single assessment and shared targets ... Partners have a shared responsibility for achieving the service goals through joint commissioning, shared prioritisation, service planning and auditing. Joint commissioning can be one of the major levers for integration, service change and improving the delivery of children's services ... Ultimately, joint commissioning may lead to the merger of one or more agencies, who give up their identities for a shared new identity" (Horwath & Morrison, 2007).

In the case of India, ECCE services are co-ordinated by the Ministry of Women and Child Development which oversees the flagship Integrated Child Development Services scheme. The Ministry collaborates with the Ministry of Human Resource Development (includes school and tertiary education), the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, and the Ministry of Rural Development (Sharma, Rajesh, Sethi, Gupta, Sen & Tandon, 2009). In India, the lead ministry is accepted by other ministries and has the power to convene the National ECD council and to execute decisions.

The Philippines has a National ECCD Council, formerly known as the Council for the Welfare of Children. The Council is co-chaired by the Department of Health, Department of Social Welfare and Development, and the Department of the Interior and Local Government.

The National ECD Council in India and the National ECCD Council in the Philippines have been successful in advancing the ECCE agenda. However, if coordinating bodies or lead ministries only have advisory functions, they may not be successful in doing so.

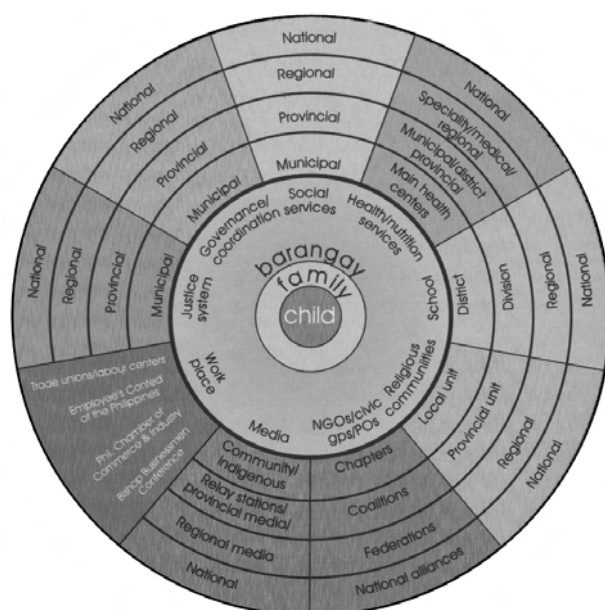
By contrast, there is a sharp distinction between care and education in the ECCE services in many countries for historical reasons. Early childhood care was often developed as a welfare measure for children from working-class families who needed care when their parents were at work; early childhood education, known as kindergarten or pre-primary education, provided middle-class or all children with educational-related activities before children entered primary school (Kaga, Bennett, & Moss, 2010). Indonesia is a country with this type of split ECCE system.

### Decentralisation

Decentralisation is an issue in large countries wherein central and provisional/state governments take joint responsibility for early childhood services. Many countries in the region have adopted decentralisation of ECCE as a strategy to promote greater transparency, ownership and implementation of services. However, since resources and expertise are not equally divided throughout the country, it can lead to further inequity. It has been argued that decentralisation of services is often a disguise for the withdrawal of central state funding and may lead to the collapse of provision, except for those who can pay. In China, decentralised finance for primary education had unintended effects and schools started charging poor parents for school-related expenses which was analogous to an education tax for the poor (UNESCO, 2008c). Furthermore, when the national level abdicates responsibility for financing, it also loses leverage in ensuring the provision and quality of services. Services such as ECCE frequently become marginalised.

**Box 12: The ECCD System in the Philippines**

The ECCD system refers to comprehensive, integrated and sustainable policies, programmes, and implementing structures and mechanisms designed to ensure the well-being, optimum growth and development of children from age 0-6. In the Philippines, the implementation of ECCD programme is cost-shared between the provincial or city government and the Council for the Welfare of Children, which functions as the national coordinating council in partnership with local governments and their respective Early Childhood Care and Development Coordinating Committees. It is imperative that the coordinating bodies, which are in place at the national and local levels, in the ECCE system, coordinate and collaborate effectively and ensure an efficient integrated delivery of services.

**The Child Friendly ECCD System in the Philippines**

Source: Council for the Welfare of Children (undated); Ministry of Education of the Republic of Philippines (2008).

**Box 13: The Split ECCE Services in Indonesia**

There are five types of ECCE services in Indonesia: Kindergartens (*taman kanak*), Playgroups (*kelompok bermain*), Childcare Centres (*taman penitipan anak*), Posyandu (Integrated Service Post), and Mothers Programmes (*bina keluarga balita*). Kindergartens function under the auspices of the Ministry of National Education (Islamic kindergartens are under the responsibility of the Ministry of Religious Affairs) and provide services for two hours a day for 4- to 6-year-olds. The Playgroups and Childcare Centres are supervised by the Ministry of Social Welfare, with the former catering to children ranging in age from 2 to 6 years, and the latter to children from 3 months to 6 years. The Playgroups are open for 2 hours daily, and 3 times per week, but the Childcare Centres are open for 8 to 10 hours a day. The Posyandu and Mothers' Programmes are under the responsibility of Ministry of Health and Ministry of Women's Affairs, respectively. They offer 2 hours of service twice a month.

The main purposes of these ECCE services are different: Kindergartens provide pre-primary education and promote school readiness for the participating children; Playgroups offer play-based education and facilitate social and emotional development; Childcare Centres integrate the service of childcare for working parents and child development; Posyandu combine health and parenting education; and Mothers Programme focus on parenting education and activities for children.

Source: Kaga, Bennett, & Moss (2010); Mushafa (2007).

Research on the decentralisation of government expenditure on ECCE is scarce and it is difficult to make broad generalisations. However, the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre and Save the Children in India are in the process of examining the governance and funding issues in disadvantaged contexts (Gertsch, 2009).

*The Private Sector*

NGOs including international developmental agencies, charitable organisations, faith-based groups, and for-profit organisations have been a major provider of ECCE services in many countries in the region. While the role of the private sector is negligible in Central Asia, private

pre-primary services account for over 99% of the provision in Indonesia, Samoa and Fiji (UNESCO, 2009a). The not-for-profit private sector can provide more innovative and flexible facilities than state-run services and are more open to the involvement of parents. They often provide much needed services. However, there is a growing concern about the role of private for-profit services.

The number of private preschools has been expanding rapidly in the Mekong Delta and South Asian sub-regions. For example, enrolment in private institutions accounted for 22% of the total enrolment in Cambodia in 1999 and 30% in 2007. Comparable figures for Viet Nam are 49% and 57% (UNESCO, 2009a). While market mechanisms encourage competition, efficiency, and parental choice, poorer families are excluded by their inability to pay.

In some countries within the region, government schools are considered poor quality and poor families send their children to low-fee

#### **Box 14: Private Preschools in India**

In India there has been a rapid proliferation of for-profit early childhood services which are now even in rural areas. There are no government regulations for registering and operating preschools, no curriculum guidelines, and no requirements for staff to have professional qualification. This has led to a lack of reliable statistics on the number of centres and children enrolled in the private sector. There are an estimated 10 million children who receive early childhood services from privately owned and operated programmes. While a few prestigious private schools offer very high quality programmes, it has been estimated that 95% of the preschools in the private sector use age-inappropriate methods, focus on academic objectives and are downward extensions of primary education. While the government has been focusing its efforts on meeting the needs of the most vulnerable section of society, it did not pay attention to the quality of private centres which are also now also serving poor families. Hence ECCE services fall into a "dual track" mode. On one track, government and NGO services where the former aims to promote holistic development and on the other track are the majority of the private preschools which focuses on the 3Rs (Reading, wRiting and aRithmetic).

Source: Rao & Sharma (2002); Shanmugavelayutham (undated).

private schools (UNESCO, 2008c). The same pattern is evident for preschools. When there are both public and for-profit centres, there is a likelihood that a dual track system develops. But the differences across the two tracks vary across countries. In some countries, children from wealthier families attend costly, higher quality private programmes while other children attend free or no cost poorer quality programmes. In others, public sector programmes are designed to be more holistic and child appropriate while private sector programmes are more “schoolified” (Rao & Sharma, 2002). For example, in India, low income families in India are choosing to send their children to preschools in the rapidly expanding private sector. However, the private sector is poorly regulated and many programmes are predominantly inappropriate downward extensions of primary education. Hence the quality of these centres is a concern.

### *Financing ECCE*

In many countries in the region, the cost of ECCE programmes is met by families, communities, NGOs and international donor agencies. It is very difficult to calculate total national expenditure on ECCE for several reasons. First, there are a number of public and private providers and a range of different sources of financing. Expenditure on pre-primary provision if it is fully in the public sector is the only thing that can be precisely calculated. We know that governments allocate more money to primary than pre-primary education, suggesting that they consider primary education as being more important than pre-primary provision.

Tables 3.1 and 3.2 show the percentage of public expenditure on education allocated to primary and pre-primary education for countries in the Asia-Pacific for which the data were available. Countries tend to spend about 30-50% of their education budgets on primary education and the proportion increased between 1999 and 2005 for all countries for which we have data. Notwithstanding the point that it is difficult to calculate total expenditure on early childhood services, countries spend considerably less on the 1-3 years of pre-primary education than they do on primary education. With the exception of Mongolia (20%), Kyrgyzstan (6.47%) and Thailand (5.44%) most countries allocated less than 2% of their education budget to pre-primary education. Mongolia has increased its allocation to pre-primary education but Bangladesh, Nepal and Thailand decreased their allocation over time. Bangladesh increased its allocation to primary education from 38.3% in 1999 to 43.4% in 2007 but decreased its allocation to pre-primary education

from 7.73% in 2000 to 2.4% in 2006. A similar pattern is evident in Nepal where allocation to primary education increased from 52.7% in 1999 to 62.9 & in 2008 but the percentage of public expenditure on pre-primary education decreased from 4.34% in 2003 to 1.69% in 2009. While governments may be focusing on care and health services (through allocations to Ministries of Health and or Social Welfare) and/or meeting EFA Goal 2, the proportionate decrease in the allocation of the funds to pre-primary education is disappointing.

International donor organisations also give more to primary than to pre-primary education. 19 out of 22 who provided information for the GMR 2007 (UNESCO, 2006a) allocated less than 10% of what they gave to primary education to pre-primary education. This is disturbing in the light of recent research which highlights the larger economic

**Table 3.1: Current Public Expenditure on Primary Education as % of Public Current Expenditure on Education**

Region	1999	2007
<b>EAST ASIA</b>		
China	34.3	
Mongolia		27.1
<b>PACIFIC</b>		
Cook Islands	53	
Niue	31.9	
Samoa	32.4	
Vanuatu	38.9	
<b>SOUTH &amp; WEST ASIA</b>		
Bangladesh	38.9	43.4
Bhutan		26.9
India	29.9	35.8*
Iran		29.5
Maldives		54.1*
Nepal	52.7	62.9**
<b>CENTRAL ASIA</b>		
Tajikistan		27.1*
<b>MEKONG REGION</b>		
Lao PDR		45.9*
<b>INSULAR SOUTHEAST ASIA</b>		
Philippines		53.6*

Note. \* 2005 data; \*\* 2008 data.

Source: UNESCO (2008c).

returns of government investment in early childhood compared to adulthood.

With the exception of some international developmental agencies and charitable organisations, donors tend to support centre-based care (formal) rather than home-based or community-based (informal) programmes. As we have seen, children in many countries in the region do not have access to ECCE and governments cannot afford to provide universal services. In such cases, it is typically recommended that governments target certain groups as a step on the way to universal access. Targeting is usually achieved in one of three ways – geographical, by income, and for vulnerable children such as those with a disability or in conflict or emergency situations. Here, equity is achieved by raising the level of the most vulnerable to a standard enjoyed by the rest and by providing the same level of provision for all. Most countries in the region targeted spending on disadvantaged, remote and mountainous areas; school meal programmes; and teacher training for children with special needs. Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka have committed to including children with disabilities in education (Jennings, 2008). However, the balance between central, local and international funding is important. Even in low resource environments, governments have to make a sufficient financial commitment to ECCE to reach Goal 1.

Table 3.2: Percentage Distribution of Public Current Expenditure on Pre-Primary Education

Region	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
<b>EAST ASIA</b>										
Mongolia			14.61		18.97			20.02		
<b>PACIFIC</b>										
Fiji					0.20					
Samoa	2.32									
Vanuatu		0.15							0.53	
<b>SOUTH &amp; WEST ASIA</b>										
Bangladesh	7.73	6.95					2.40			
India						1.29	1.14			
Iran		0.95	0.95	1.01	0.85	1.10	1.73	0.97	1.11	
Nepal				4.34						1.69
<b>CENTRAL ASIA</b>										
Kyrgyzstan			6.70	6.33	6.11	6.25	6.35	6.47		
Tajikistan						4.35				
<b>MEKONG REGION</b>										
Cambodia	2.55	1.15								
Lao PDR			4.21			2.61				
Thailand		10.81							5.44	
<b>INSULAR SOUTHEAST ASIA</b>										
Philippines	0.13	0.13	0.12	0.13	...					
Malaysia	1.20	1.30	1.16	1.00	0.93		1.66			
Indonesia								0.80		

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (undated).

**Box 15: Block Grants: Public Financing of Privately  
Delivered Early Childhood Services in Indonesia**

There are different resources for financing early childhood education in Indonesia: the Ministry of National Education (MONE) (the principal source of funds); local district-level governments; beneficiaries (most ECE programmes) and international organisations that support grants and loans. The government is instituting policies, programmes, and innovative financing strategies to encourage early child development (ECD) programmes that combine education and care. A key financing strategy is the use of public monies to fund competitive block grants that are awarded to villages.

Since 2002, the MONE has funded block grants to encourage the private sector to participate in the ECE services for poor children and families by offering subsidies to private institutions and not-for-profit organisations to expand and operate ECE services (both formal and non-formal) in privately owned facilities. The amount of each grant varies depending on the service to be supported.

To match the funds and community decisions better, the MONE designed a different model for providing block grants to support community-based non-formal ECD services in 2006. The new model addresses the involvement of local and district governments and the community-driven approaches and mechanisms. The block grants also support integrated ECD services under the new model.

The outcomes of the block-grant programme in Indonesia are encouraging. It is estimated that 738,000 children below 6 years living in the poorest villages in the poorest districts, will have access to ECD services with the help of the block grant. Furthermore, the proportion of children from birth to 6 years having access to the block-grant funded ECED services is expected to increase by 8% by 2009. On average, this increase would raise the participation rate from 23% to 31% percent for children aged 3 to 6 years in targeted districts. It is expected that the gap in access to ECED services between rich and poor children would fall by 9%: the rate of participation in ECED programmes among children in the poorest socio-economic quintile would increase to 27%, while that of children in the richest quintile would remain at 39%.

Source: Sardjunani, Suryadi, & Dunkelberg (2007).

## Early Childhood Care and Education Policy

As noted earlier, the GMR 2007 (UNESCO, 2006a) drew attention to the need for good governance in order to attain Goal 1. Hence, since its publication, many countries in the Asia Pacific region have exerted much effort to develop and implement ECCE policy and to increase investment and attention to early childhood development. A special issue of the *International Journal of Early Childhood* in 2008 focused on, “Policy Change in Early Childhood in the Asia Pacific Region”. The editors of the special issue pointed out that there has been considerable momentum in early childhood policy in Asia which had been achieved in three ways. These include supporting policy reviews, the drafting of national laws, and the conduct of scholarly research. The last is considered the basis of good policy (Rao & Pearson, 2008).

### *Policy Reviews, Advocacy and Networks*

#### Policy Reviews

**National Policy Reviews.** These have been carried out under the auspices of International development agencies. UNESCO and UNICEF facilitated a regional policy review project which was launched in September 2006. The overall goal of this project was to assess the state of early childhood policy in the region and in turn, support countries in the Asia Pacific region to meet Goal 1. Specific objectives were (i) to support national governments and enhance capacity for the development and implementation of policy related to young children and their families; and (ii) to share experiences and perspectives in policy development and implementation within and among countries on early childhood services/provisions.

Eight countries including China, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, and the Philippines formed multi-disciplinary teams. These included researchers and representatives from different ministries involved in early childhood services namely, Health, Social Welfare, and Education. Three policy review workshops were held. Countries presented their findings at the Third Policy Review workshop held in February 2008. The overall review indicated that: few countries have a comprehensive early childhood policy; that policies are sometimes fragmented and there are both gaps in policy and in its implementation (e.g., Indonesia); there is an increasing awareness by governments of the importance of ECCE (e.g., China, Lao PDR, Papua New Guinea); there is a dearth of data on children’s participation in

ECCE and even when they exist they are not disaggregated by age and other important variables (e.g., the Philippines); there is a lack of awareness of the importance of ECCE for child development in vulnerable and marginalised populations (Lao PDR, Nepal); not enough resources are allocated to the development of ECCE (e.g., China, Pakistan); services are fragmented at the family and community levels (e.g., Indonesia, the Philippines) (Horn, 2008). Given the mounting evidence on the importance of ECCE, the lack of awareness of the significance of ECCE and the dearth of resources allocated to early childhood services is a concern and impacts on the attainment of Goal 1.

As a result of the policy review process important recommendations on how similar policy reviews can be carried out in other countries/regions were made. These included paying attention to the composition of the review team and the data collection, analyses and dissemination processes (Evans, 2008).

Another important policy review workshop was organised by the Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood (ARNEC) in Singapore in December 2009, with the theme “Early Childhood Development: From Policy Idea to Implementation to Results”. Government personnel and policy experts from Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei, Cambodia, Canada, China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Mongolia, Nepal, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor Leste, United States, Vanuatu and Viet Nam participated in the event. The workshop and subsequent documentation highlighted the importance of the following for ECCE in the regions:

- “1. Identifying measurable goals and outcomes and conducting an initial needs assessment to support the policy and planning process and to identify what is to be accomplished through the chosen implementation and delivery strategies.
2. Defining clear governance to answer the questions of who are the partners to be involved (government and/or private partners) and where the responsibility lies amongst those partners for service provision.
3. Generating estimated costs to understand the potential financial commitments needed alongside the potential short-term and long-term benefits of those investments.
4. Providing consistent (and innovative) financing and funding to provide stakeholders an understanding that there is a financial commitment to the policy as well as providing the appropriate incentives to align programme delivery to the desired outcomes.

5. Creating valid and reliable monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to provide stakeholders an understanding of progress made towards the desired outcomes.” (ARNEC, 2010 p.10)

Although participating countries were in different stages in terms of their ECCE policy development and implementation, the workshop was a valuable capacity building exercise. Most countries shared their experiences on the initial needs assessment or on ECCE programme outcomes (ARNEC, 2010).

***Planning for ECD in Emergencies.*** It has been estimated that the hundreds of thousands of children in the Asia Pacific region will be affected by natural disasters such as earthquakes or cyclones brought about by climate change. The effects of these emergencies have tended to be only felt in places that have been affected and may not be reflected in human development indicators in all parts of a country. The influence of these disasters will be exacerbated by factors such as urbanisation and food shortages and children below 8 years will be particularly vulnerable to the effects of these disasters. Notwithstanding the devastating effect of these disasters on families, communities and nations, civil society and professional organisations have played a major role in the rebuilding and rehabilitation efforts. While disaster risk reduction and emergency planning for ECCE require much more than safe buildings, the construction of safe and child-friendly premises will contribute to the future development of ECCE in the region.

However, few countries in the Asia Pacific region have national emergency preparedness plans which include Early Childhood Development. Against this background, UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office and Save the Children Alliance organised a workshop in May 2009 to assist governments and communities to plan for ECD in emergency situations and to develop an associated Tool Kit. Participants in the workshop included educational and health specialists from governments and NGOs in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Vanuatu and Viet Nam and officers from UNICEF and Save the Children Alliance (UNICEF, 2009c).

**Box 16: Early Childhood Programmes in China  
after the Sichuan Earthquake**

A devastating earthquake which measured 8 on the Richter scale occurred in Sichuan Province, China on May 12, 2008. This disaster led to a death total of at least 68,000 people. There were approximately 15 million people (including 10 million children) living in the affected area. Early child education in the earthquake area was severely affected: thousands of kindergartens were damaged, and many teachers were killed or missing.

Efforts were made to normalise life soon after the disaster. In addition to government efforts, non-governmental and professional societies, for example, the China National Society of Early Childhood Education, sent teams of volunteers to the affected region. University professors and research students in early childhood education as well as experienced kindergarten teachers from Beijing, Shanghai and Nanjing, went to the most severely destroyed and dangerous areas to support the reconstruction work of early childhood education under the “Moving Kindergarten Project”. They worked in portable dwellings and provided daycare and psychotherapy service to children and parents and rebuilt kindergartens.

An appropriate next step from these efforts would be for China to articulate a national emergency plan for early childhood services which includes guidelines on how to respond to national emergencies and effective strategies for providing services for young children in the face of emergencies. This plan should be informed by lessons learned from the Sichuan earthquake.

Source: Zhou and Chen (2010).

Advocacy

Soon after the publication of the GMR 2007 (UNESCO, 2006a) it was felt that a practical policy reference document for policy-makers in ECCE in the South-East Asian region would be useful. UNESCO commissioned a report to highlight how and in what ways the global recommendations from the GMR could be applied to the particular context and needs of the Southeast Asia sub-region. Policy experts from Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, Viet Nam were involved and experts analysed their own country’s ECCE policy in

terms of the history, governance, access, quality, financing and the focus on the under threes (UNESCO, 2008d).

A few months later, UNICEF, UNESCO and Save the Children, jointly organised a Regional Forum on the Benefits of ECCE for children in South Asia in April 2008, and the World Bank put Early Childhood Development on the Agenda for their forum, “Beyond Basic Education in the Asia-Pacific”, which was held in August 2008. It is clear that international developmental agencies have emphasised sharing of important messages and good practices relevant to ECCE since the publication of the GMR 2007.

### Networks

A result of the Early Childhood Policy Review discussed earlier was that the ARNEC (Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood) was launched in February 2008. ARNEC aims to strengthen advocacy, policy reviews and development, research and innovative practices in early childhood at national and regional levels with the goal of aligning these to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and achieving the objectives of optimal holistic development for all children. Support for ARNEC’s establishment was provided by core donors, UNICEF, UNESCO and Plan Asia, and it is currently also supported by Open Society Foundation, Save the Children and the SEED Institute. Despite its relatively short existence, ARNEC has been highly visible and effective as a network ([www.arneec.net](http://www.arneec.net)). It has established three task forces dealing with Research, Policy and Advocacy and Communications. It publishes newsletters, issues monthly new flashes, and has published two policy reports. Country profiles relevant to Early Childhood in the Asia Pacific region have been compiled and the documentation of noteworthy early childhood practices in the region is in progress.

ARNEC is the regional partner of the long established Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development which has provided important support for its development.

### *Evidence-Based Policy*

Both documentary analyses and empirical research are very important in the policy development process. Sharma, Sen and Gulati (2008) provided a critical analysis of government policy toward young children in India taking a historical perspective. They documented changes in the government’s early childhood policy. This type of analysis was the

basis of suggesting child development strategies, policies and interventions to enhance the well being of the young child in India.

Systematically conducted and methodologically rigorous research about children's development and the factors which influence it should be the basis of national child and social policy. It is vital to help policymakers make decisions about scaling up ECE programmes or otherwise. Although there is a dearth of such research in Asia, it is slowly accumulating. A few studies in Bangladesh, India, Cambodia and China have examined the effectiveness of different ECCE programmes on child outcomes in the Asia Pacific region.

Drawing on a case study conducted in the Lao PDR, Britto, Cerezo and Ogbunuga (2008) provided a framework, both for developing and analysing early childhood policy. As the authors point out, links between scientific evidence and policy in early childhood are often ambiguous. Their three-pronged policy analysis protocol provides countries and analysts, with a basis upon which to establish and clearly discern such links.

## **Monitoring and Evaluation**

Despite mounting evidence on the importance of investment in early childhood for children, their families, communities and nations, there is considerably less investment in early childhood than in primary education. One reason for this is that not enough attention has been accorded to collecting accurate data during the early years (Gertsch, 2009). The Dakar Framework for Action did not specify indicators for progress towards Goal 1 and there is no framework for collecting data. It is not clear the extent that a country has to "expand and improve" its early childhood services before it has been deemed to have attained Goal 1. Further, how should "improvement" be measured? As noted earlier, it is very difficult to get accurate data on the under threes and different countries have different definitions of ECCE. Even when data are available, they are often not disaggregated by age, grade, and type of programme attended.

Benchmarks have been developed to assess the ECCE provision for OECD countries which include Australia, Japan New Zealand and the Republic of Korea from the Asia Pacific region (UNICEF, 2008) and it has been suggested that similar benchmarks be developed for developing countries (Gertsch, 2009).

### *The Education for All Mid-Decade Assessment*

The Mid-Decade Assessment was undertaken to assess progress towards the 2015 target of meeting the Education for All goals. It aimed to also identify and locate the remaining gaps in terms of quality and equity sub-nationally, with a focus on disadvantaged and excluded populations. As part of the Asia-Pacific EFA Mid-Decade Assessment process, countries in the region carried out their national assessments. This was a very valuable exercise because other than capacity-building, it highlighted problems in existing data for ECCE.

### *Evaluation of Policy*

Policy evaluations must be conducted to ensure that public policies and programmes are effective from planning, implementation and fiscal perspectives and that they are sustainable. In many parts of the world there has been an emphasis on evidence-based policy making and this is beginning to happen in the Asia Pacific region. The policy reviews conducted in Asia have focused on the impact of policies/programmes on participants, the implementation of policies and the economic efficiency of programmes. They have used input, process and or/output indicators and have typically been done using data from national statistics, programme evaluations or through interviews with stakeholders. They have used direct child assessment and/or adult reports (see previous section and Rao & Pearson, 2007).

As we have noted earlier, good ECCE policy is holistic but there are problems associated with evaluating holistic and converging interventions. Further, it is much easier to measure survival/health and access than it is to measure the quality of services and we know that quality is critical. Currently many countries within the Asia Pacific region have a number of practical constraints in carrying out policy evaluations as they lack the technical and financial resources (Rao, 2009). However, since they are in the process of developing ECCE policy, they have an opportunity to build policy evaluation into the policy development process.

### **Box 17: A National Roadmap for Early Childhood Care and Development in Thailand**

Systematic Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) provision has a relatively short history in Thailand but much progress has been made in the past decade. A milestone for ECCD was the publication of the *Long-Term Policy and Strategy for Early Childhood Care and Development (0-5 Age Group) 2007-2016* in 2008. This document provides useful and much needed guidance for ECCD services for all stakeholders.

In recognition of the importance of early childhood and education, the current situation in Thailand and problems associated with promoting early childhood development, the document provided a clear vision for early childhood care and development in Thailand. It specifies that by 2016, all children will be given an opportunity for desirable, suitable, all-round and balanced development to meet their potentiality as a foundation for their subsequent development. The family will serve as the main anchor for achieving this vision and its efforts will be supplemented by the community and society.

There are three main strategies providing the concept and orientation for translating the policy into concrete operational plans, including: (1) strategies for strengthening early childhood development; (2) strategies for strengthening parents and persons concerned for early childhood development; and (3) strategies for strengthening the environment conducive to early childhood development.

Source: Office of the Education Council Ministry of Education of Royal Thai Government (2008).

### *Teacher and Programme Standards*

Pupil-teacher ratios (PTRs) measure the number of teachers in relation to the size of the pupil population (UNESCO, 2006a) and it is a proxy for quality. PTRs demonstrate the extent to which countries are keeping up with increased demand for pre-primary education. The Asia Pacific region had a decrease in overall pre-primary PTRs between 1999 and 2007, except in South and West Asia, where PTRs rose from 36 to 40 in the same time period (UNESCO, 2009a). This is attributable to enormous growth in the number of pre-primary pupils relative to the number of pre-primary teachers in the region (Wallet, 2006).

In most developed countries, private preschools have to be registered with the government which has the authority to determine, monitor and enforce standards for preschool education. Government regulation can be either provider focused (qualifications of staff), facility focused (health and safety standards), or child focused, and depending on the stringency of their standards. They can have a strong influence on preschool quality (for example, minimum qualifications for preschool teachers or teacher-child ratios). Singapore is a good example of how governments can enhance the quality of early childhood programmes through increasing the level of professional and academic qualifications required for early childhood educators. However, in some countries (e.g. India), there are no requirements for teacher qualifications in the private sector and in others (e.g., China) rural preschools are not able to meet government standards for teacher qualifications. In some countries (e.g. India), the private sector is unregulated. Whereas in other countries (e.g., China), rural preschools are not able to meet government standards for teacher qualifications.

### *Monitoring Child Development*

It is critical to monitor the influence of different ECCE services on children's developmental outcomes in order to decide which programmes to scale up or otherwise. We need to know which implemented policies are working and which programmes benefit children the most (Young, 2007). We are beginning to see these kinds of programme evaluations being carried out in parts of Asia.

UNICEF in partnership with Columbia University launched the Early Learning and Development Standards project in 2002 to deal with the lack of appropriate instruments for assessment and monitoring children's early development. By 2009, this Standards approach had been used in 43 countries all over the world and is relevant to the development of culturally and contextually relevant early childhood policy. By 2009, 10 countries in the East Asia Pacific region: Cambodia, China, DPRK, Fiji, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Mongolia, Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam, were either in the process of or had developed holistic Early Learning and Development Standards. Miyahara and Meyers (2008) have suggested that future steps might be to build on the regional partnerships that have developed through this process, and to work towards producing a pan-Asian "ELDS Index" that would be relevant and accessible for all countries in the region.

**Box 18: Improving the Quality of Early Childhood Services  
by Enhancing Teacher Quality in Singapore**

The government of Singapore has exerted much effort to improving the quality of early childhood programmes in the past decade. There are standards for the physical setting, health, nutrition and safety, curriculum guidelines, staff-child ratios and teacher qualifications. In recent years, the government has increased the requirements for staff qualifications as a means of improving the quality of early childhood provision.

Those wishing to qualify as preschool teachers have to now pass at least five subjects (instead of three) in the secondary school certificate examinations. Further English language teachers have to now meet language benchmarks for English so that they will be good models for children. The professional qualifications for those teaching children above 4 years has been raised from the Certificate to Diploma level and all teachers in kindergartens (for children from 4 to 6 years) must now have a diploma and all kindergarten principals and child care centre supervisors must have additional qualifications in Leadership. However, those teaching children up to 4 years still only require a Certificate level qualification. As the field matures, it is likely that qualifications expected will rise to perhaps the diploma level for teachers of the below fours and to degree level for kindergarten level.

Singapore is an economically advanced country in the region but provides a good example of how government policies and support enhance the quality of early childhood education through a focus on teacher training and professional qualifications.

Source: Choo, K.K. (2009).

Another measure that is being used to measure child outcomes in the Asia Pacific region is the Early Development Instrument (Janus & Offord, 2007). This is a population-based measure for communities. Teachers report on the different domains of children's school readiness and it has been used throughout Australia and we understand that the Early Development Index is being trialled in some Asian countries.

While governments collect information on survival, health and nutrition during the early years, not enough effort has been put into monitoring ECCE services for the under threes, particularly if they are provided in non-formal settings. Supervision and support are critical to

improving the quality of services when preschool teachers do not have relatively high academic and professional qualifications (Rao, 2010).

## Chapter 4

### Conclusions and Recommendations

This study considers progress made in the Asia Pacific region over the last few years toward meeting Goal 1 of the Education for All goals, namely “to expand and improve comprehensive early childhood care and education”. While data on enrolment and the percentage of Grade 1 children who have had preschool experience are routinely collected, there are neither specific indicators nor frameworks for collecting data for Goal 1. For example, to what extent should a country “expand and improve” its early childhood services before it has been deemed to have met Goal 1? Should quality be assessed on the basis of teacher qualifications, teacher-child ratios, curriculum practices or combinations of them? What indicators should be used to assess progress towards Goal 1 for the under threes?

The Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2007 *Strong Foundations for Early Childhood Care and Education* (UNESCO, 2006a) provided compelling reasons for investment in the early years. The report summarised research evidence on the short- and long-term benefits of early childhood programmes for children and nations, provided examples of high quality services and effective national policies, and recommended strategies to develop effective ECCE programmes and policies. These included following a holistic approach to ECCE; accordingly more attention to ECCE policy and integrating ECCE into national policy strategies for children; identifying a ministry to coordinate ECCE; regulating and enhancing programme quality; increasing funding of ECCE; targeting the most vulnerable and excluded children and improving the monitoring of ECCE and its effects on primary school performance.

The following conclusions and recommendations are based on the body of the monograph. However, many of them are similar to those made in the GMR 2007 and applicable to other regions of the world.

1. The Asia Pacific region is very large and diverse and the distance from Goal 1 varies markedly in countries in Asia and the Pacific. This is a function of differences in: cultural geography; levels of economic development; the extent of poverty and inequality; government expenditure on education and early services; social inclusion and educational policies and the degree to which they are implemented; and the political will to meet interrelated Education

for All and Millennium Development Goals.

- Recommendation: Taking socio-contextual factors and the distance from Goal 1 into account, governments of countries in the region should take steps to (i) increase demand for and supply of programmes; and (ii) develop the technical expertise to successfully implement and evaluate programmes.
2. Over the past few years, countries in the region improved on indicators of child well-being but many in South and West Asia and in South-East Asia have high under-5 mortality rates and stunting rates over 30%.
    - Recommendation: Efforts should also be directed at improving child health and providing integrated and holistic ECCE to improve children's survival and well-being, particularly in South and West Asia and in South-East Asia.
  3. Several countries in South and West Asia also have high maternal mortality rates and there are significant relationships among maternal health, child health and educational outcomes. There have been improvements in maternal and child health and successful methods of increasing access to health service have been documented in low-income South Asian countries. However, many countries in South and West Asia are not going to achieve EFA and MDG targets related to maternal and child health by 2015.
    - Recommendation: Governments should provide free maternal and child health services; encourage the presence of skilled attendants at birth; and provide supplementary nutrition services to both pregnant mothers and young children.
  4. Most countries in the region increased in access rates for pre-primary education, but millions of children in the Asia Pacific region still do not have access to services. Access is positively related to family wealth and parental education. Rural residence, ethnic minority status, language, and disability exacerbate disadvantages presented by poverty and low levels of parental education.
    - Recommendation: Inclusive, holistic, integrated, high quality care and educational (formal, informal and non-formal) pro-

grammes should be increased for all children from birth to primary school entry. When governments cannot afford to provide universal services, they should initially target children from poor families and those likely to be excluded as a step towards universal access. The key ingredients for the government to overcome marginalisation are: ensuring accessibility and affordability of ECCE; improving learning environments in the schools for children from poor families; and providing entitlement and opportunities of greater equity for excluded children.

5. The rapid expansion of pre-primary programmes for children over three years in many parts of Asia has led to a concern that an expansion of quantity is associated with less favourable teacher-child ratios, which is considered an indicator of programme quality. Teacher qualifications are also related to programme quality and in many countries in South and South-East Asia, preschool teachers are not very highly qualified.

➤ Recommendation: Governments should ensure that an increase in provision of ECCE is not associated with a decrease in the quality of the services provided. They should also provide support to teachers and monitor programme quality.

6. Not enough attention has been accorded to collecting accurate data related to ECCE in the Asia Pacific region. Data on access to ECCE for the under threes is very hard to obtain and different countries have different definitions of ECCE.

➤ Recommendation: Governments should exert efforts to collect accurate data on ECCE access which are disaggregated by age and type of programme attended. Countries should develop culturally and contextually appropriate tools to collect population level data on child development. These data can be from curriculum-referenced evaluations which assess children's progress or readiness for school. Sub-regions should also specify contextually appropriate benchmarks to assess the quality of ECCE provision.

7. Governments should provide services for children under three in light of research on the importance of the earliest years.

- Recommendation: Governments should give as much emphasis to the under threes as they do to older children. In the face of limited resources, governments can replicate health, early care and parenting programmes which have been shown to be effective in resource-poor environments.
8. Studies conducted in contexts where maternal literacy is very low and children are very socially disadvantaged have shown that even programmes which would be considered to be of low to mediocre quality using western benchmarks for quality, made a positive difference to child development outcomes compared to no programmes. A caveat was that even in these contexts preschool quality was positively associated with child developmental outcomes controlling potential confounding variables.
    - Recommendation: Governments should at least provide programmes which include food supplementation and some cognitive and psychosocial stimulation as something is better than nothing. They should also develop and evaluate low cost early learning initiatives.
  9. Many countries in the region are using what are considered good practices in ECCE programmes. These include promoting the use of the mother tongue in early childhood programmes, educating children with disabilities in mainstream programmes and providing interventions to facilitate children's readiness for school.
    - Recommendation: Countries should scale up the number of programmes using these noteworthy practices to different parts of the country. These practices should also be widely disseminated for use by other countries in the sub-region and/or other regions, if appropriate. Governments should (i) promote the use of the mother tongue in early childhood programmes; (ii) encourage the inclusion children with disabilities in early childhood programmes; and (iii) develop and evaluate specific short-term interventions to facilitate children's readiness for school.
  10. In many countries in the Asia Pacific region, a number of ministries, NGOs and community organisations are involved in the provision of ECCE and services are fragmented.

- Recommendation: Governments should nominate a respected lead ministry (for example, Education), form a ministry (for example, Ministry of Women and Child Development), or a Council (for example, co-chaired by the Ministries of Health, Social Welfare and Education) to coordinate and implement ECCE.
11. Many governments in the region have adopted decentralisation of ECCE as a strategy to promote greater transparency, ownership and implementation of services in the region.
- Recommendation: Governments should ensure that decentralisation does not exacerbate inequity through careful monitoring of indicators.
12. Governments and international donor agencies allocate more money to primary than pre-primary education and allocation of funds to the earliest years is typically very low. This is disturbing given the extant evidence on the importance of the early years for human development and human capital development. Millions of children particularly in South and West Asia and the Mekong Delta are not going to reach their potential.
- Recommendation: Governments (and donors) should make a substantial financial commitment to ECCE to enable countries in the region to reach Goal 1 and to benefit communities, countries and humankind.
13. There has been considerable momentum in the development of early childhood policy in Asia and the Pacific through supporting policy reviews, the drafting of national laws, the conduct of scholarly research, and the formation of the Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood (ARNEC).
- Recommendation: Strengthen and continue mobilising partnerships in the region to support evidence-based advocacy and policy development for ECCE.
14. Quality is a critical element in early childhood programmes and the quality of programmes must be monitored. Measurable aspects of early childhood quality include teacher training and qualifications, programme standards, and the implementation of a holistic

and integrated curriculum. Governments in some countries have focused on meeting the needs of the socially disadvantaged and consequently neglected regulating the for-profit sector which has been growing rapidly in parts of South and South East Asia. In some countries in the region, private sector programmes are predominantly inappropriate downward extensions of primary education.

- Recommendation: Governments should ensure that only trained staff provide services to children and that early childhood educators are provided opportunities for refresher training and continued professional development. They must regulate the establishment and implementation of community-based and centre-based programmes and give adequate attention to health and safety standards, teacher qualifications and teacher-child ratios. Governments should also ensure that curriculum guidelines are followed and that programmes are holistic, integrated and consistent with current professional knowledge and not merely a downward extension on primary school. The for-profit sector should be regulated. To effectively monitor programmes, appropriate action must be taken when programmes fail to meet contextually relevant standards.

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## Notes on the Authors

**Nirmala RAO** is a Professor in the Faculty of Education of the University of Hong Kong. Her research focuses on early child development and education in Asia, and she has published widely in the area. She has been an adviser on early child development and education for international developmental agencies, and is actively involved in professional organizations concerned with the well-being of young children.

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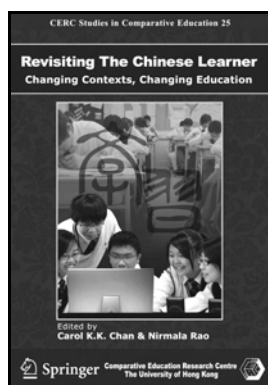
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## Revisiting The Chinese Learner Changing Contexts, Changing Education

Edited by  
**Carol K.K. Chan & Nirmala Rao**

Publishers: Comparative Education  
Research Centre and Springer  
ISBN 978-962-8093-16-8  
June 2009; 360 pages  
Price: HK\$250/US\$38

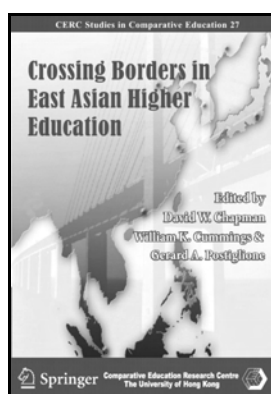
This book, which extends pioneering work on Chinese learners in two previous volumes, examines teaching and learning in Chinese societies and advances understanding of 'the Chinese learner' in changing global contexts. Given the burgeoning research in this area, pedagogical shifts from knowledge transmission to knowledge construction to knowledge creation, wide-ranging social, economic and technological advances, and changes in educational policy, *Revisiting the Chinese Learner* is a timely endeavor.

The book revisits the paradox of the Chinese learner against the background of these educational changes; considers how Chinese cultural beliefs and contemporary change influence learning; and examines how Chinese teachers and learners respond to new educational goals, interweaving new and old beliefs and practices. Contributors focus on both continuity and change in analyzing student learning, pedagogical practice, teacher learning and professional development in Chinese societies. Key emerging themes emphasize transcending dichotomies and transforming pedagogy in understanding and teaching Chinese learners. The book has implications for theories of learning, development and educational innovation and will therefore be of interest to scholars and educators around the world who are changing education in their changing contexts.

**Carol K.K. Chan** is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education at The University of Hong Kong. Her research areas include learning, cognition and instruction, computer-supported knowledge building and teacher communities for classroom innovation. Dr Chan has received Outstanding Teaching Awards from both her Faculty and University. She is currently Co-Director of a Strategic Research Theme on Sciences of Learning at The University of Hong Kong.

**Nirmala Rao** is a Professor in the Faculty of Education at The University of Hong Kong. She is a Developmental and Educational Psychologist whose research focuses on early childhood development and education. She has also been actively involved, at the international level, in several professional organizations concerned both with the well-being of young children and research on early child development.

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## Crossing Borders in East Asian Higher Education

Edited by  
**David W. Chapman, William K. Cummings & Gerard A. Postiglione**

Publishers: Comparative Education  
Research Centre

ISBN 978-962-8093-98-4

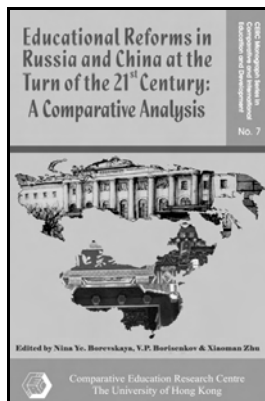
June 2010; 388 pages

Price: HK\$250/US\$38

This book examines issues that have emerged as higher education systems and individual institutions across East Asia confront and adapt to the changing economic, social, and educational environments in which they now operate. The book's focus is on how higher education systems learn from each other and on the ways in which they collaborate to address new challenges. The sub-theme that runs through this volume concerns the changing nature of cross-border sharing. In particular, the provision of technical assistance by more industrialized countries to lower and middle income countries has given way to collaborations that place the latter's participating institutions on a more equal footing. At the same time, there is a greater number of partnerships that link higher education systems in the East Asian region to one another. Even as boundaries become more porous and permeable, there is growing acceptance of the view that cross border collaboration, if done well, can offer mutually beneficial advantages on multiple levels. There is a new recognition that the intensified international sharing of ideas, strategies of learning, and students is not only of enormous value to systems and institutions but essential to their long term survival. To this end, the chapters in this volume examine various motivations, goals, mechanisms, outcomes and challenges associated with cross-border collaboration in higher education.

**David W. CHAPMAN** is the Birkmaier Professor of Educational Leadership in the Department of Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development in the College of Education and Human Development at the University of Minnesota. **William K. CUMMINGS** is Professor of International Education and International Affairs at George Washington University. **Gerard A. POSTIGLIONE** is Professor and Head, Division of Policy, Administration and Social Sciences, and Director of the Wah Ching Centre of Research on Education in China, Faculty of Education, the University of Hong Kong.

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**Educational Reforms in Russia  
and China at the Turn  
of the 21st Century:  
A Comparative Analysis**

Edited by  
Nina Ye. Borevskaya, V.P. Borisenkov &  
Xiaoman Zhu

Publisher: Comparative Education Research Centre  
ISBN: 978 988 17852 4 4  
Date: 2010; 115 pages  
Price: HK\$100/US\$16

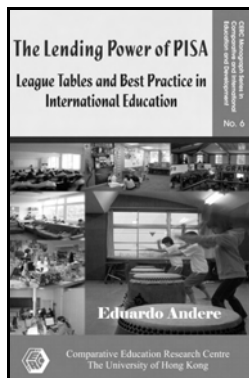
This important study of educational reform in Russia and China brings to the global research community in comparative education a detailed and thoughtful analysis of the parallel yet divergent educational policies and developments in the two societies over the past 25 years. The intent of the study is both academic and ameliorative—scholars from both countries who contributed to the volume are interested in what can be learned from the experiences of the other, and in understanding more generally the common and divergent patterns of educational transition. Striking comparisons between the two societies come up in the dialogues on many related themes. Differences between the “shock therapy” approach to political change in Russia and the gradual change of the Chinese communist system, and their respective educational implications, constitute a central feature of the analysis in this volume.

“Borevskaya’s carefully argued summary knits together many of the broad arguments that run through the volume as a whole, while at the same time bringing in nuances and questions that reveal an extraordinary grasp of historical context in the tensions she identifies among three core models in both societies: ‘an outdated purely state model, a market oriented educational model, ... and a culture oriented educational model which is congruent with the Chinese and Russian educational traditions, as well as with global tendencies toward humanization.’”

**Ruth Hayhoe, *Comparative Education Review***

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CERC Monograph Series in Comparative and  
International Education and Development No.6



**The Lending Power of PISA  
League Tables and Best Practice  
in International Education**

Eduardo Andere

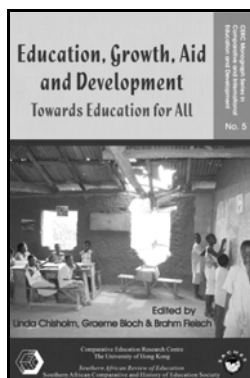
Publisher: Comparative Education Research Centre  
ISBN: 978 988 17852 1 3  
Date: 2008; 138 pages  
Price: HK\$100/US\$16

The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is a project of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) designed to provide policy-oriented international indicators of the skills and knowledge of 15-year-old students. In this book, Eduardo Andere suggests that the 'lending power' of international studies such as PISA is limited. PISA might be a good instrument for measuring and comparing some educational inputs and outputs but, suggests Andere, this is not enough for translation across contexts. He finds that PISA is not a very powerful instrument for explaining causal relationships in educational achievement, nor for making claims about models or directions of education systems across the world. Basing his arguments on a qualitative study in 19 countries around the world and on a review of the centralization/decentralization and policy borrowing/lending literatures, Andere presents some of the conflicting evidence about the different meanings of education policies and ideas in different contexts. He suggests that it is problematic to compare policies, processes and practices across the different contexts of school education, thus rendering transferability across educational jurisdictions even more challenging. To understand the reasons behind performance or underperformance in school education, we have to construct, he concludes, a coherent narrative of a particular school and of the model of education in which the school is embedded.

**Eduardo Andere** is a part-time researcher at the Mexican Autonomous Institute of Technology (ITAM). He is a lecturer at or adviser to universities and schools in Mexico, and an adviser to the Mexican government. He is a member of the Mexican National Researcher System, and holds a PhD in Political Science from Boston College and Masters degrees in Economics and Public Administration from Boston University and Harvard University respectively. He received his Law degree from *Universidad Iberoamericana* in Mexico City. He is the author of four books about education policy, world schooling and school education in Mexico, and has published papers in both Mexican and international journals. He is an op-ed writer and columnist.

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CERC Monograph Series in Comparative and  
International Education and Development No.5



**Education, Growth, Aid  
and Development  
Towards Education for All**

Edited by  
Linda Chisholm, Graeme Bloch &  
Brahm Fleisch

Publisher: Comparative Education Research Centre  
ISBN: 978-962-8093-99-1  
Date: 2008; 116 pages  
Price: HK\$100/US\$16

This book brings together leading authors in the field of education and development, who draw on decades of research and personal experience to assess what we have learnt from research over three decades on school effects, the utility and sustainability of target-setting in education, and the role of global and local forces in shaping change in African education. The chapters expose to critical scrutiny the targets and benchmarks associated with the Education for All (EFA) initiatives and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The book's contributing authors raise questions about the false expectations of target-setters, the failures of international development aid processes to assist the achievement of the MDGs, the denial of local context and history in the target-setting processes, the arbitrary selection of targets, the choice of definitions that enable manipulation of data to show they have been achieved, and the inability of individual countries to sustain reforms initiated with development aid without aid.

Here is a rich set of reflections on development thought and practice at the start of the twentieth century, representing the cumulative wisdom and judgement of scholars who have made an indelible mark on educational thought. They present a formidable set of conceptual, practical and political challenges for consideration by the development world in its target-setting processes, especially in the field of education.

**Linda Chisholm** is a Director of education research at the Human Sciences Research Council in Pretoria, South Africa. **Graeme Bloch** is Education Specialist at the Development Bank of Southern Africa. **Brahm Fleisch** is a Professor of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.

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In 2000, the global community set six goals as part of the Education for All (EFA) agenda. This monograph considers progress towards Goal 1, namely “to expand and improve comprehensive early childhood care and education”.

Compelling reasons have been provided for investment in the early years, and much progress has been achieved in Asia and the Pacific. Particularly important are improved access and strengthened quality in early childhood services. However, much remains to be done to enhance childhood and maternal health, enhance the quality of services, and expand access particularly for children below the age of three. Further progress will require improved monitoring and attention to legislation. The book shows that policy priority and funding for early childhood care and education should markedly increase throughout the region.

**Nirmala RAO** is a Professor in the Faculty of Education of the University of Hong Kong. Her research focuses on early childhood development and education in Asia, and she has published widely in the area. She has been an adviser on early childhood development and education for international developmental agencies, and is actively involved in professional organizations concerned with the well-being of young children.

**Jin SUN** is a Post-Doctoral Fellow in the Faculty of Education of the University of Hong Kong. Her professional interests include child development in social contexts, early childhood bilingual development, and early childhood education for disadvantaged children.

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