

Eastern and South Eastern Asia – 2020 GEM Report.

Please note that this factsheet only contains some of the mentions from the region. The full Report and all regional mentions can be found here: bit.ly/2020gemreport

Embargo : 23 June



Headline statistic: 27% of countries in the region did not target the marginalised in their education response to Covid-19

Persistence of exclusion:

- 33 million children and youth are out of school
- Analysis of [World Inequality Database on Education](#) data shows that in Eastern and South-eastern Asia, lower secondary completion among the poor is, on average, 7 percentage points lower than the national average, dropping to 11 points lower among those who in addition experience gender disadvantage and, among those, 12 points lower if they are also in a disadvantaged location.
- The share of females among illiterate youth has decreased rapidly in Eastern and South-eastern Asia since 1990. The share of females among illiterate adults, however, has remained constant for the past 20 years at around 63%. Eastern and South-eastern Asia may have the highest gender parity index (moving towards parity) and highest adult female literacy rate but also has the highest share of women among illiterate adults over age 65.
- Less than half complete secondary education in Cambodia (41%), and this drops by 25 percentage points for the most disadvantaged. In the **Philippines** it drops from 71% to 24%.
- Less than 3% of 15-year-olds, including those out of school, were proficient readers in **Cambodia**.
- 15- to 29-year-olds with disabilities in Indonesia and Vietnam were half as likely to have attended school as their peers.
- Early school entry can be harmful. In **Viet Nam**, disadvantaged girls who start school early are more likely to experience teenage marriage and/or childbirth
- Exclusion can happen even when in schools: Over half of 11- to 15-year-olds have experienced bullying in school in the **Philippines**
- School violence, including by teachers, is the main reason children dislike school, with shares rising to over half in **Viet Nam**.

Inequitable foundations: Alongside today's new Report, the GEM Report has launched a new website, [PEER](#), with descriptions of laws and policies on inclusion in education for every country in the world.

- 67% of countries provide an official definition of inclusive education, and of those 42% have a definition that is inclusive of all learners, regardless of background.
- In the region, a third of countries only target people with disabilities in their definitions of inclusive education
- In the region, no countries have an education law that is inclusive of all learners, no matter their background, identity or ability
- In the region, all countries have laws on people with disability, 31% have laws on gender in education, 35% on ethnicity and indigeneity and 71% on language
- 44% of countries in the region have laws calling for children with disabilities to be educated in separate settings, while 11% had laws calling for inclusion.

- In **Malaysia**, the education system is expected to support national unity. However, alternative private streams, organized by ethnicity and differentiated by quality, have developed in parallel, contributing to ethnic stratification despite government measures to desegregate schools
- The **Philippines** Department of Education issued a gender-responsive basic education policy in 2017 that called for an end to discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation and gender identity. The policy outlined measures for education administrators and school leaders, including enriching curricula and teacher education programmes with content on bullying, discrimination, gender, sexuality and human rights

Curriculum and textbooks can exclude too:

- **China** recognizes 56 ethnic groups. Analyses of secondary school history textbook content, language and organization have documented how representation of non-Han people changed in the late 1970s from non-Chinese to Chinese, following the principle of interethnic equality. History textbooks have since covered minority histories and contributions to China, even downplaying the role of Han figures that could be relatively controversial for other ethnic groups. However, the process has not always been uniform. Other analyses argue that moral education textbooks both under-represent minorities and are more likely to use stereotypes in their imagery. With respect to language of instruction, the 1984 Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law stated that schools should use textbooks in their own languages and also use these languages for teaching, whenever possible. In Xinjiang province, Uighur was replaced as language of instruction in primary and secondary education in 1999 and a bilingual education policy imposed, which was extended to preschools in 2005. While there are two teachers in many bilingual preschool classrooms, one of them Uighur-speaking, most were instructed and trained to teach in Chinese only.
- Women only make up 44% of people in secondary school English textbooks in **Indonesia** and **Malaysia**. A Malaysian primary school textbook suggested girls risked being shamed and ostracized unless they protected their modesty. The Ministry of Education acknowledged weaknesses in quality control and sent a sticker to cover the graphic in question
- In **Indonesia**, the grade 10 civic education textbook presents official identity-forming principles: Bhinneka Tunggal Ika (unity in diversity or, literally, out of many, one) and Pancasila (five principles: belief in god, just and civilized humanity, national unity, representative democracy and social justice). The textbook describes religious, ethnic, sub-ethnic and linguistic diversity with respect, and speaks in favour of openness, tolerance, inclusion and respect for human rights. At the same time, it does not shy away from sociocultural and inter-religious conflicts or human rights violations, providing detailed information on abuses of power and violent riots in recent national history. The textbook emphasizes domestic inclusiveness and does not refer to the various ethnic and tribal groups as minorities.
- In the **Philippines**, textbooks have been prepared and translated in 14 languages to support the curriculum for indigenous people. Indigenization of learning materials is encouraged in the Occidental Mindoro and Oriental Mindoro areas
- In many countries, students with disabilities are explicitly taught a special education curriculum. In **Malaysia**, special education curriculum, also known as alternative curriculum, was developed in line with the 2013 Special Education Regulations. Tailored curricula were also designed for specific groups, such as blind learners. No curricula for students with learning disabilities, such as autism, have yet been introduced

Education systems often assume that all children are the same.

- A review of language policies in six South-eastern Asian countries noted that only **Myanmar** recognized three languages – mother tongue, Burmese and English – in its language policy, introduced in 2016. **Cambodia** developed a multilingual education curriculum using Khmer and five indigenous languages. An evaluation positively appraised the 2014–18 Multilingual Education National Action Plan but called for providing the curriculum and materials for pre-primary and primary schools in more languages and strengthening teacher capacity
- Only 40% of schools in **Malaysia** and barely any schools in **Myanmar** are adapted for students with disabilities. Aid programmes have helped disseminate universal design principles. All schools built under Indonesia's Basic Education Programme, with support from Australia, had to install accessible toilets, handrails and ramps. The government later adopted similar measures for all new schools.
- Less than half of schools in the **Philippines** and **Cambodia** have basic sanitation facilities important to ensure girls stay in school while menstruating.
- In the **Philippines**, a new law mandates provision of neutral desk appropriate for left and right handed to 10% of the student population at all levels, including technical, vocational and higher education, within a year. Once rules and regulations are formulated, administrative penalties may be imposed for non-compliance
- **Thailand's** new course and textbooks on physical and health education in grades 1 to 12 introduced in May 2019 cover sexual diversity.

Equitable financing is needed

- Eastern and South-eastern Asia had the lowest spending levels of any region in the world in terms of both GDP (around 3.5%) and total public expenditure (11%). **Cambodia** is one of the lowest spenders globally at 2.2% of GDP and 8.8% of total public expenditure, and has not changed its spending pattern in nearly 20 years,
- In **Cambodia**, teachers questioned the feasibility of applying child-centred pedagogy in a context of overcrowded classrooms, scarce teaching resources and overambitious curricula
- Small changes could make all the difference: In a randomized experiment in a poor rural area of **China**, dropout halved among myopic lower secondary school students when they were provided with free corrective glasses.
- In **Indonesia** and **Viet Nam**, public universities must provide financial aid to at least 20% and 10% of their respective student populations.
- In **Indonesia**, Program Keluarga Harapan (Family Hope Programme) began providing quarterly cash transfers to very poor households in 2008. Initially equivalent to 15% to 20% of income, their real value fell to 7% within six years. Eligible households have certain demographic characteristics, such as children under age 15 or children aged 16 to 18 who have not completed nine years of education. Conditions for payments include an 85% school attendance rate. A six-year follow-up evaluation showed enrolment rates among 13- to 15-year-olds rose by up to nine percentage points, equivalent to halving the share of those out of school. Increases of between four and seven percentage points were observed in the secondary school completion rate among 18- to 21-year-olds, with the effect concentrated among young men. The government aimed to scaled up the programme from 3.5 million to 10 million households by the end of 2018, equivalent to 14% of the population
- In **Thailand**, households were more likely to spend on girls' education, especially at ages 12 to 19, an effect stronger in rural areas. The bias towards girls was more apparent in the amount spent on education than in the decision to enrol children in school. In Thailand,

daughters are favoured in education spending decisions because they are expected to be primary caregivers to elderly parents and more likely to send remittances

Teachers need and want training on inclusion

- In **Cambodia**, teachers' perceptions of the possibility of inclusion of students with disabilities depended on the type of disability to be accommodated. At least half the respondents considered inclusion of students with learning, physical, visual and hearing impairments 'very possible' or 'possible'. However, less than 20% felt the same in the case of students who were blind or deaf, had intellectual disabilities or had severe and multiple disabilities
- Teachers in **China** had less favourable perceptions of rural migrant students – and their parents – than of their urban peers. Conversely, the latter reported that their teachers, across subjects, asked them to participate in class and praised them more than their migrant peers. Children left behind in rural areas by parents migrating to urban areas felt their teachers were less likely to call on or praise them.
- In the **Lao People's Democratic Republic**, the Ministry of Education and Sports and its pedagogical institute, have been revising the national curriculum, teaching methodologies, teacher guides and in-service teacher training. All primary school teachers have been covered from the beginning, although the reform is being rolled out by grade, starting with grade 1 in 2019 and finishing when these students reach grade 5 in 2024. The inclusion orientation has two elements. First, the curriculum has been made more relevant locally and culturally, considering the officially recognized 49 ethnic minorities, which account for about half the population. Second, a pedagogical approach promoting active learning will engage students in lessons through activities to encourage them to process information and apply knowledge.
- In **Viet Nam**, a 2007 decision established the need for teachers and education managers to be trained in inclusive education. Training institutions in Kon Tum and Ninh Thuan provinces developed pre-service modules on inclusive education of children with disabilities. At the national level, education faculties at Hanoi Pedagogy University, Ho Chi Minh City Pedagogy University, Ho Chi Minh City National Pedagogy College and the National Pedagogy College provide formal training in special education. An optional sign-language module is available at the undergraduate level and in short-term, non-formal training courses
- About 40% of teachers in the 2018 TALIS reported a high need for personalized learning training in **Viet Nam**. 60% of head teachers reported a high need for professional development in promoting equity and diversity.

Parents can resist inclusion too:

- In **Hong Kong, China**, 59% of parents felt that students with special needs disturbed other students' learning and 39% that they used too many school resources. It is not uncommon for parents to oppose admission of children with developmental disorders, such as autism, despite government efforts towards more inclusive education systems

There is a chronic lack of quality data on those left behind.

- Household surveys are key for breaking education data down by individual characteristics. But 39% of countries – corresponding to 12% of the region's population – did not have surveys with publicly available data.
- Countries lacking technical means to identify children and families most in need have simpler ways of targeting. For instance, **Cambodia's** Second Education Sector Support

Project used geographical targeting based on district gross enrolment ratios to expand disadvantaged children's access to early childhood care and education

- The Inclusive Data Charter, launched in 2018 by 10 partners, includes multilateral agencies, non-government organizations, and governments, including the **Philippines**. The charter promotes five principles consistent with the spirit of the SDGs: All populations must be included in the data; all data should be disaggregated wherever possible; data should be drawn from all available sources; there must be accountability in and for data collection and statistics production; and data capacity must be improved, including through increased financing. Signing up to the charter requires a commitment to develop an action plan, which is made publicly available. An inclusive paradigm should inform the understanding and interpretation of the indicators themselves. No indicator should be interpreted as having improved when, in practice, more people are being excluded from measurement. Any indicators defined on the in-school population must be contextualized with an indication of who is excluded.

Signs of moves towards inclusion: The Report and its [PEER](#) website note many countries using positive, innovative approaches to transition to inclusion. Of those noted in the report:

- In **Hong Kong, China**, the government launched a programme in which schools with strong whole-school approaches to inclusive education serve as resource centres for other schools
- In **China**, several schools and universities have established student-led, school-based clubs where LGBTI students can meet and interact safely. Open to all learners, they aim to challenge discrimination and homophobic bullying
- Some countries have established satellite classes, i.e. special classes in mainstream schools, including Australia (for students with autism spectrum disorder) and China. In Zhejiang province, **China**, satellite classes, defined as a placement for students with disabilities 'between special schools and supplementary reading classes', follow the principles of resource pooling, proximity and two-way coordination. They are directed at students with intellectual disabilities, cerebral palsy and autism spectrum disorder. Per-capita funding of satellite students is at least 10 times that of mainstream students at the same level in the same area. In Sichuan province, China, the Shuangliu District Special Education School's 1+5+N model aims to integrate learners with special education needs through a three-level resource system. The main, first-level resource centre for the district, founded by the local government, provides professional help to other resource room centres (1); secondary resource rooms established in five mainstream schools (5) receive help from the district special education centre and help all other resource centres in regular schools (N)
- Average participation in early childhood care and education worldwide has been rising at a rate of just over two percentage points every five years. Some of the fastest progress in early childhood care and education in the 2010s was observed in the **Lao People's Democratic Republic** (38% to 67%) and the **Philippines** (41% to 83%)
- In Ho Chi Minh City, **Viet Nam**, as part of a programme run by a local NGO in partnership with CBM, an international NGO, blind students can choose between attending the mainstream school or remaining in segregated classes in a resource centre with boarding facilities. Viet Nam has established inclusive education development support centres in 20 provinces and cities. Students who moved to the mainstream school reported missing the resource centre's extracurricular activities and vocational training. In response, the centre and school worked together, with the centre offering more support to the school, including in-service teacher education

Many are going out of their way to accommodate different learners' needs:

- In **Hong Kong, China**, all mainstream schools are requested to include students with special needs using a three-tier intervention model. The first tier integrates students with mild or temporary difficulties into mainstream classrooms. The second involves small group learning and pull-out programmes for those with persistent learning difficulties. The third covers support for learners with severe learning difficulties and is based on an individualized education plan, regularly reviewed with parents.
- Since 1998, a programme in **Malaysia** has given better university admission and course enrolment chances to ethnic Malays and natives of Sabah and Sarawak, or bumiputra. In 2019, the government announced that the pre-university matriculation programme ethnic quota (90% of seats reserved for bumiputra) would remain in place. In response to protests, the total number of students admitted to the pre-university programme was increased from 25,000 to 40,000
- Education programmes targeting students compensate for disadvantage: **Viet Nam** granted preschool tuition fee exemptions to poor and remote households in 2018
- **ENDS –**

For more information, b-roll, photos, for interviews, videos or animations please contact Kate Redman k.redman@unesco.org 0033 6 71 78 62 34

Notes to editors

Visit the Report's [electronic press kit](#) containing Report and multimedia materials. [password: AllmeansAll]

The Global Education Monitoring Report (GEM Report) is developed by an independent team and published by UNESCO. It has the official mandate of monitoring progress in meeting the fourth Sustainable Development Goal on education, SDG 4.

The PEER Website will be publicly available from 23 June. Until that point, journalists can access the site using the following passwords:

- <https://www.education-profiles.org/>
- Username: team
- Password: gemprofiles246!

A [youth report](#) is also available, containing case studies, and online campaigns around the 2020 Gem Report's recommendations.

Two regional reports will be released on the theme of inclusion and education later in the year: A Report on Latin America and the Caribbean in October, and a Report on Central and Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia in December