The following figure shows the distribution of NER across provinces for school year 1997-98.

**Figure XX: Net enrolment ratio by provinces (1997-98), Lao PDR**

Source: Ministry of Education, Lao PDR

The Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) for primary education for Laos in 1997-1998 was 76.2 - 79.8 for males and 72.4 for females, representing a gender parity index for 0.9. This should be compared with a NER target of 80 and a gender parity index target of 1.0 set in 1990. The NER of 76.2 should be interpreted in the context of a GER of 114.3 as there is a high incidence of over age enrolment.

In comparing the NER in 1991-92 (58%) with the 1997-98 NER (76.2%), the NER has increased by 18.2% in the last 7 years. However, there remains a wide sub-national disparity in NER across provinces with ratios varying from a low of 44.5 in Sekong to a high of 99.8 in Vientiane Municipality.

The disparity between boys and girls in primary school enrollment exists all over the country. Out of 18 provinces, only Vientiane Province including its municipality met the international norm of GPI\(^1\). Oudomxay is the lowest among the provinces with GPI of 0.72. More than half of all provinces have a GPI of less than 0.9. Those are – Savannakhet, Xiengkhouang, Louang Prabang, Bokeo, Attapeu, Louang Namtha, Saravane, Saysomboune, Houaphanh, Phongsaly, and Oudomxay.

In addition, there are significant numbers of out of school children in the provinces with large ethnic minority populations. As mention above, lowest percentages are children in Sekong - 55.5% of total school age children are not enrolled, 53.4% of which are boys and 57.7% of which are girls. This is followed by children from the provinces of Oudomxay (48.1%), Phongsaly (44.6%), Attapeu (44.3%), Luangnamtha (43.9%), and Saravane (40.8%).

\(^1\) Gender parity is sometimes considered to have been attained when the GPI lies between 0.97 and 1.03 (Global monitoring report 2003/4)