Gender Issues in Education

Target audience: All

This tool provides a short overview of the many existing disparities between boys and girls/men and women.

Gender parity in school enrolments is not achieved.\(^{17}\)

- In the world, only 59 of 176 countries with data available have achieved gender parity in both primary and secondary education.

- In Asia and the Pacific:
  - In primary education: Out of 47 countries with data available, 20 countries have not achieved gender parity.
  - In secondary education: Out of 43 countries with data available, 30 countries have not achieved gender parity.
  - In tertiary education: Out of 30 countries with data available, 29 countries have not achieved gender parity.

Out-of-school children are mostly girls.\(^{18}\)

- 38% of all out-of-school children are in Asia and the Pacific.
- Of the 72 million out-of-school children in the world, 55% are girls.
- 58% of the out-of-school children in South and West Asia are girls.

Adult illiterates\(^{19}\) are mostly women.

- Of the 757 million adult illiterates, two-thirds live in Asia and the Pacific.
- Two-thirds of adult illiterates in Asia and the Pacific are women.
- Female illiterates account for:
  - 55% in the Pacific
  - 63% in South and West Asia
  - 68% in Central Asia
  - 71% in East Asia

National data hides sub-national disparities.

- National data may show gender parity, but if we look at the sub-national data, we may find disparities that disadvantage girls and boys.

For instance, if we look at national data, Sri Lanka has achieved gender parity at the primary level, with a Gender Parity Index of 1 for primary net enrolment.\(^{20}\) However, in some provinces, reports indicate that girls can be significantly disadvantaged.\(^{21}\)

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20 UNESCO Institute for Statistics Database, September 2007
21 Sri Lanka EFA Mid-Decade Assessment draft report
Boys, too, are concerned.

- In Central Asian countries and some East Asian countries, disparities favour girls.
- Disparities that disadvantage boys within secondary education are growing, especially in East Asia and the Pacific.
- Girls tend to do better once in school, stay longer in school than boys, and have lower repetition and drop out rates.

There is a strong link between poverty and gender inequalities in education.

- Children in poor households are less likely to attend school than children from wealthier families.
- Children of illiterate mothers (predominant in poor households) are more likely to be out-of-school.
- Gender disparities are inversely related to wealth. They rise for girls born into the poorest households.
- Countries with the smallest educational gaps between men and women have higher Gross National Product rates.22

Education is a feminized profession, but:

- There are gradually less female teachers as we look at figures from lower to higher levels of education.
- The lack of female teachers is one of the major obstacles to girls' access to education in South and West Asia.
- Education and school systems throughout the region are largely managed by men.

Gender equality in education is more difficult to achieve.

- Gender differences persist in learning outcomes and subject choices.
- School-based factors partly explain these differences.
- There are also social, cultural and economic forces that structure different expectations, aspirations and performance for girls and boys, women and men.

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