Rapid developments in information and communication technologies (ICT) have brought about improvements in the speed and modes of communication in recent years and are resulting in important changes in the way we live and work.

Of particular interest to educators is that, when used effectively, ICT also have the potential to change the way we teach and learn. ICT can also improve access to, and enhance the quality of, education.

The right conditions need to be in place, however, before the educational benefits of ICT can be fully harnessed. In many cases, significant efforts are required at the national level, including careful planning for ICT integration and the implementation of a system of ongoing professional development for teachers. Furthermore, steps need to be taken at the school and learning-centre level. Aside from acquiring locally-appropriate forms of ICT, schools need to obtain technical support and motivate and train teachers to make better use of those ICT tools for enhancing education.

In 2002, recognizing that there needs to be a comprehensive and informed approach to integrating ICT into education, UNESCO launched the Asia-Pacific "ICT in Education" programme. This programme, supported principally by Japanese Funds-in-Trust, seeks to identify the advantages of using ICT in education, the possible pitfalls involved in acquiring and utilizing ICT, the pre-conditions for their successful use, and the most effective approaches for integrating ICT into education in the Asia-Pacific context. In addition, the programme aims to empower learners, teachers, educators, managers and leaders to use ICT judiciously and effectively for expanding learning opportunities and ensuring educational quality and relevance. The programme also aims to facilitate wider access to ICT among teachers and learners in the Asia-Pacific region.

This publication describes the progress of the ICT in Education programme in recent years and presents its plans for the future. The following pages also provide information about current partnerships and explain how interested groups and organizations can become involved and share in this programme's activities and achievements.

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