Gender Disparities in Education: When Does the Problem Start?

International Women’s Day 2016 calls on us all to “Step it Up for Gender Equality” and Asia-Pacific countries need to do just that when it comes to accelerating progress toward gender parity in education and achieving the vision of Sustainable Development Goal 4, which aims to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning for all.”

At this occasion, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) is launching the UNESCO eAtlas of Gender Inequality in Education, which shows the gender gaps from primary to tertiary education using the latest available data from the UIS. With about 100 interactive maps and charts, the eAtlas shows the educational pathways of girls and boys in more than 200 countries and territories.

The gender gap is small until post-secondary non-tertiary education, then disparities become apparent at the doctoral level, with males dominating the researcher level.

Males outnumber females in education enrolment at all levels of education apart from post-secondary non-tertiary education. The most significant gender disparity occurs at the tertiary level.

Figure 1: Share of female and male students participating in different levels of education in Asia and the Pacific (2013 or latest available data)

At which level of education do gender disparities become most noticeable?
Although gender equality has more or less been attained at the basic education level, disparities remain at the tertiary level and the gap widens even further at the researcher level.

Figure 2: School life expectancy, primary to tertiary education, 2013


How long do females and males stay in school?
Since 2000, the average number of years that both females and males are likely to spend in school has been increasing and the gender gap in this area has been narrowing.

Website: www.uis.unesco.org/datacentre/pages/default.aspx
UNESCO eAtlas of Gender Inequality in Education is available at http://on.unesco.org/gender-map
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